

Book Proposal – Dr Portia Roelofs

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Notes to readers - June 2023:

- 1) I'm sharing this book proposal with the aim of helping to demystify academic life. Along with tips for CVs and cover letters, information about how to craft a book proposal is often shared informally between friends and colleagues. However, this can replicate pre-existing social inequalities as our personal networks are often narrow, thus I'm putting it online to make it more publicly available.
- 2) This is just one example of what a proposal looks like. Publishers have different requirements for what to include in a proposal so please check with whoever you plan to submit to before you start writing. This should either be on the publishers' websites, or you can email them directly asking for a template.
- 3) Proposals are aspirational documents. They make promises and stake out ambitions for the future. As such, the book described below is very different to the one that was eventually published. Please refer to the final published copy and do not quote any of the provisional material below.
- 4) Proposals are promotional documents. I'm somewhat uncomfortable about sharing this as it shows the level of self-promotion involved in a document that was not originally written for public consumption. Again, I think it is nonetheless valuable to share it in the spirit of transparency so that aspiring academic authors can see what is characteristic of the *genre* of academic book proposals.

The book was eventually published by Cambridge University Press as “[Good Governance in Nigeria: Rethinking Accountability and Transparency in the 21st century](#)” in April 2023

Title:

What Nigeria can teach us about good governance

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Rationale

This book opens up new ways of thinking about good governance by looking at Nigerian debates and disagreements over what leaders should do and how they should act. The core insight that power must be socially embedded is extended through chapters addressing alternative conceptions of accountability, transparency and inequality. Along the way it touches on key issues in 21st century politics: the face-off between technocracy and populism, the role of identity and community in shaping people's political commitments and the material issues of distribution, whether through public policy or patronage. Oyo State forms the core of the case study analysis but brings in comparative insights with Lagos, the UK and the US.

The standard account of 21st century Nigerian politics from a state of corruption to good governance is the departure point for the analysis presented in this book. The subnational politics of southwest Nigeria in what is referred to as the Fourth Republic explode this simple binary of corruption versus good

governance. Since the celebrated but surprisingly controversial transformation of Lagos under Bola Tinubu and Babatunde Fashola, neighbouring Oyo State has been in the mega-city's shadow and trying to emulate its glossy success on less than a tenth of the budget. Many of the key insights that this book has to offer on good governance revolve around the controversies over the 'Lagos Model' as a blueprint to copy, and how successive politicians have sought to make sense of the paradoxes of the city's success. The chronology of the book roughly charts the story of the first 4 years of the Lagos Model in Oyo State: from the election in 2011 of Abiola Ajimobi on a platform of transformation to his struggles to win a second term in 2015. Almost as soon as the Lagos Model was accepted as a viable template for transformation by donors and neighbouring state like Oyo and Ekiti, its electoral appeal was radically put into question. Existing scholarly and commentator accounts would credit this apparent backlash to the resilience of patrimonial norms among politicians and voters, which short-circuit democratic accountability. On closer inspection this cannot explain the depth and sincerity of debates that were sparked by the Lagos Model. These included questions like: what does it mean for a leader to be accountable? How can progress be reconciled with the inequality it brings? What does development look like and what sort of society do we want to create? These are not the sort of questions that scholars of politics in African countries over the last 30 years have spent much time on. However, the debates over the Lagos Model are instructive not only because they complicate the binary narrative of elections in Nigeria but because they indicate much more serious gaps in our understanding of good governance.

At its most basic this books argues that different people think about good governance in different ways. At first sight this is obvious: why would we need democracy if we all agreed on what the government should do? But it has far-reaching consequences for how we think about the values associated with good governance that have long been treated as so uncontroversial as to be beyond debate. The twin values of accountability and transparency in particular have transcended being mere buzzwords to occupy an almost magical status as universally recognised 'good things'. Indeed, as this book will show, accountability and transparency are widely demanded from leaders, but the specific way in which they are understood have significant variations. By paying attention to the various ways in which these terms play out in Oyo, Lagos and beyond this book shows that Nigeria has much to teach us about good governance.

Key words: Governance, Nigeria, Democracy, Accountability, Technocrats, Populism

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5	Transparency in people: making politicians knowable and social networks legible
6	Accessibility: when accountability is at odds with technocratic good governance (sample chapter available)

7	Patronage and Human Face: rival conceptions of how distribution relates to good politics
Conclusion:	What Nigeria can teach us about good governance

Overview and chapter summaries

The introduction starts with a juxtaposition between recent events in British and Nigerian politics, using snappy examples to set up two opposing views of how politicians are held to account as they move in and out of public office. The dominant model of democratic accountability where losing office is the ultimate sanction comes into question in light of recent cases of leaders in the UK and Europe who enter office, make disastrous policy decisions and then retire to enjoy a life of private luxury. The chapter introduces the possibility that the contrasting motif of Nigerian politicians who are subject to similar expectations of responsibility and generosity whether in office or not, may hold lessons for democratic practice more widely. Weaving in a brief history of good governance in Nigeria and a review of the relevant academic literature on good governance and neopatrimonialism, the chapter sets out the main thrust of the book: that there are multiple different conceptions of good governance concepts like transparency and accountability.

Part 1 of the book sets up the major theoretical debates over good governance and shows how these debates are encapsulated in the rise of a progressive technocratic project in southwest Nigeria – the Lagos model - from Independence to 2015.

Chapter 1 sets the foundations for the key themes that recur through the book and form the basis for comparisons between first Oyo State and Lagos, and second Nigeria as a whole and the West. These are: populism and technocracy, the role of identity and community, and how distribution relates to good politics. These three themes are interlinked with populism often expressed through idioms of locality and familiarity. Identity and distribution collide in the question of who gets what, but also in the way that the allocation of material goods is justified by and reflects deeper beliefs about rights, entitlements and responsibilities, which are not spread uniformly. It puts these debates into historical perspective, with an analysis of progressive and conservative populist legacies in the southwest. The history of political competition in Oyo can thus be seen as each side coming to power on the promise to meet certain key popular demands, and yet failing to meet others, creating the space for their opponents to leverage alternative ideas of good governance.

Chapter 2 traces these dynamics as they led up to the election of Abiola Ajimobi as State Governor on a platform of bringing the Lagos Model to Oyo in 2011. Since the return to democracy, these rival legacies can be seen in the shifting fortunes of a number of 'godfather' figures who were decisive in determining who was able to control public office. Whereas most commentary on godfathers emphasises the role of violence and patronage in their ongoing power, each drew on different normative basis for their authority. In practices 'godfathers' use combinations of normative, material and religious resources to legitimate their influence, and are not immune from popular efforts to hold them to account.

Chapter 3 introduces the apparent fairy tale transformations achieved by politicians who subscribed to the Lagos Model in southwest Nigeria and presents the existential challenge of the surprise 2014 Ekiti state election result.

Chapter 4 focuses on Ajimobi's flagship policy: urban renewal. It uses debates over the demolition of informal roadside shops and new infrastructure to examine the way that ideas of good governance espoused by elite actors are variously adopted, tweaked and resisted by people on the ground. Using in-depth interviews from 2015 and 2018 the chapter shows how both the Governor and the roadside traders he misplaced are forced to consider the trade-offs of making sacrifices in the present for the hope of a transformative future. Debt at the private

and governmental level provide a material constraint on otherwise bilious aspirations. Here, themes that run through the book in more or less abstract forms, like technocracy, progress and the future, take on remarkably solid shape. Debates about good governance in Oyo are linked to literatures on class, aspiration and the inequalities of capitalism as they play out in Lagos, India and the UK. Urban politics provides an ideal point of comparison with other projects aimed at building 'world class cities' around the world.

Part 2 uses empirical material from Nigeria to advance the core theoretical contributions of the book. Each of the three chapters takes a different core value from good governance and puts contemporary debates ongoing in Nigeria into comparative perspective with both the received scholarly wisdom and urgent dilemmas of democracy in the West. Linking these three chapters together is the recurrent importance of politics as a collection of processes through which power relations are socially embedded.

Chapter five looks at how transparency can be applied not only to data and documents but also things and people. It is increasingly recognised in public administration that the relationship between trust and transparency is not straightforward. Recently right-wing populists have risen to power, rejecting transparency requirements based on documents whilst claiming that they 'hide nothing'. Clearly, existing scholarly conceptualisations are insufficient for understanding how transparency operates as a value in real world political contestation. An analysis of state- and national-level politics in Nigeria reveals that, whilst always retaining a core informational component, there are multiple competing conceptions of transparency. Popular demands for transparency express a belief that not only should data be made transparent, but also the social networks in which politicians are embedded. 'Transparency in people' can clash with more traditional, technocratic transparency practices centred on data. By re-thinking who or what should be made transparent – data, things or people – this chapter offers fresh theoretical insights on the complex politics of transparency and trust.

Chapter six considers alternative conceptions of accountability that focus on accessibility and contact between politicians and their constituencies. It starts from the premise that elected representatives should be accountable, but what does accountability mean? Over almost three decades of governance reforms lead by international donor institutions accountability has become a buzzword in the good governance agenda. The underlying assumption of accountability as essentially a principal-agent interaction has been surprisingly resilient, withstanding waves of critique and reform to donor programming. Insights from in-depth qualitative fieldwork in southwest Nigeria suggest that actually existing conceptions of accountability – that is, the things that politicians do that render them accountable in the eyes of their constituents – differ radically from dominant donor ideas. Accountability as accessibility expresses the importance of a relationship between rulers and the ruled as one requiring visibility and direct communication, even in the absence of those in power delivering any tangible benefits. This chapter elucidates a new conceptual framework to make sense of accountability as accessibility. Combining African scholarship on the post-colonial state with work on 'conversational democracy' in the UK, accessibility emerges as a key means by which power is made accountable, not just in Nigeria but in a variety of non-African political contexts.

Chapter 7 Whereas transparency and accessibility are positive components of good governance chapter seven deals with a political practice that has been seen as antithetical to it: the distribution of patronage. There has always been a blurred line between a distribution that wins votes and vote-buying. The dominant approach in political science and development studies seeks to simplify the matter by defining the role of the state as to deliver public goods – common resources that advance development – and discouraging the distribution of private goods aimed at ad hoc consumption. Cases studies from the run up to Ajimobi's re-election bid in 2015 show how the Lagos Model had to adapt to popular demands that good governance required leaders to show that they were willing to give out immediate economic benefits. Diverse initiatives both small and large show how patronage comes in many sizes and takes on multiple meanings. Moreover, for an outward looking governor concerned with his international image, the challenge is not only how to meet demands for material goods, but how to package this to make it acceptable to rival audiences.

The conclusion returns to the work of Nigerian political theorist Peter Ekeh, who observed that whilst the divide between public and private defined good governance in the West, in Nigeria things played out differently. Within mainstream conceptions of liberal democracy, the public-private divide both helps define the job of government as the pursuit of public interest as well as specifying its opposite: corruption. Despite anthropologists recognising the variety of on-the-ground arrangements, there remains an assumption in political science that good governance and accountability will be achieved through tighter enforcement of this divide. Instances of accountability outside of the highly circumscribed liberal notion of 'public-ness' end up being classed as somehow un-political. Empirical accounts of accountability that go beyond the duties of public office strictly defined tend to be sucked in to categories associated with the private realm, such as 'personalistic', moral or communal politics. The fore-going chapters show that more socially-embedded accounts of good governance are not necessarily limited to small-scale local politics, intra-ethnic communities nor rely on inter-personal relationships per se. Core concepts associated with good governance like transparency and accountability can be socially-embedded and yet remain essentially political concepts. Moreover, this insight allows for a more nuanced understanding of the core themes running through the book, technocracy vs populism, politics of community and the role of distribution. The book by drawing out the key lessons that Nigeria can teach us about good governance.

Comparison of book to thesis and already published sections

Chapter	Title	Balance of Thesis and new material	Material that has already been published	Word count (excluding references)
Intro:	Good governance, what's not to love? Same concepts different conceptions	New material - weaves in a highly condensed version of thesis literature review (1300) in accessible way.	None	5,500
1	The Fairy Tale Transformation and the populist threat: the Lagos model in southwest Nigeria	First half (6,000) is reframed version of chapter 5 of thesis. Updated with more comparative sections on Lagos and additional empirical material from fieldwork in June 2018 Second half (6,000) is fresh theoretical discussion placing the Lagos Model in the context of three key themes of rest of the book.	None	12,000
2	The politics of time and knowledge: Histories of progressive and conservative populist conceptions of good governance in Oyo State	This chapter uses secondary material from chapter 4 of my thesis but makes a new conceptual argument about the nature of conservative populism in general of which politics in Oyo State is just a case study. Presents new comparative analysis of Nigerian politics with conservative ideas of good governance in the Western canon.	None	8,000
3	Godfathers, democratisation and the journey to 2011	This chapter is an updated version of the second half of chapter 4 in my thesis.	None	6,000
4	Making sacrifices for development: urban renewal and good governance from above and below	This chapter uses the same empirical material from chapter 6 from my thesis but reframes it in line with the overarching questions of the book and brings in new empirical material from 2018 and comparative discussion.	Other material from chapter 6 is used in a journal article under review (R+R) at the journal <i>Africa</i> , but it is used to make a different argument and different interview material from 2015 and 2018 will be used.	8,000
5	Transparency in people: making politicians knowable and social networks legible	Draws on a small subsection of chapter 7 of the thesis	The main conceptual arguments of this chapter have been published	8,000

			as an open access article in Governance (forthcoming 2019)	
6	Accessibility: when accountability is at odds with technocratic good governance	Draws on material from chapter 7 of the thesis but heavily reworked with new conceptual argument and new typology of how accountability is conceived	None	6000
7	Patronage and Human Face: rival conceptions of how distribution relates to good politics	Draws on material from chapter 8.	One of three case studies from this chapter is included in a journal article under review (R+R) at Journal of Modern African Studies.	8,000
Conclusion:	What Nigeria can teach us about good governance	New material (builds on some ideas elaborated in skeleton form in chapter 9)		8,000 Sub-total 70,000 plus references Maximum with refs: 80,000

Schedule

If the contract was agreed by the end of March 2019 I would plan to deliver a full draft by the end of December 2019. I would host a book workshop in the Department of International Development at the LSE either in Michaelmas term 2019 or Lent Term 2020.

Definition of the market

This is an accessible and provocative book that provides a clear empirical contribution to the study of politics in Nigeria as well as theoretical contributions to debates around good governance, clientelism and democracy more broadly. With a comparative angle throughout, the book will both appeal to students, scholars and residents of south-west Nigeria as well as being engaging to a wider general audience, looking for an innovative angle on current crises of democratic legitimacy more widely.

My priority in choosing which publisher to approach has been to make sure that the book is available to a Nigerian readership in addition to European and American markets. The book itself is written with a dual audience of Nigerians and non-Nigerians in mind: it aims to speak to ongoing discussions both outside of and within Africa. Practically this has implications for price and distribution networks. A model I would seek to replicate is the publication strategy used by recent publications on Nigeria such as *Creed and Grievance* by Raufu Mustapha and David Ehrhardt.

- Publish in the UK at a reasonable price, going to paperback asap.
- Publish in Nigeria a price of around N4,500 or £10. Distribute to University book sellers and other outlets (e.g. Glendora Books). This could either be via an African edition with CUP or by reserving the rights for the West Africa region and working with a local publisher.

Potential reading lists

It would fit well onto 3rd year under graduate or masters' level reading lists in two core areas:

- **African Politics** courses, as a rejoinder to many of the afro-pessimist writings that foreground corruption, clientelism and neopatrimonialism as dominant frames. It engages directly and robustly with mainstream work on politics in Africa by the likes of Bayart, Chabal and Daloz and Mbembe.
 - Indicative courses include GV4F9 "The Challenges of Governance and Conflict in Sub-Saharan Africa" at LSE and Week 5 of "Government and politics in Africa" a full year course at SOAS with around 100 students, and Politics of Sub-Saharan Africa, a 2nd /3rd year FHS module at the University of Oxford.
- **Development Studies** courses that have a week on good governance and institutions. This both engages with long-running debates about good governance as well as more recent literatures on the developmental state, developmental patrimonialism and 'going with the grain'.
 - Indicative course: DV400 Development History Theory and Practice Week 8 on Governance and Institutions, the core course for development studies masters' students at LSE, upwards of 100 students and DV418 African Development, convened by Thandika Mkandawire.

There are a further two sub-disciplines in which the book would be a useful addition to reading lists:

- **Specialist courses on governance and institutions in comparative perspective**, such as the half-unit GV4K1 "Transparency and Accountability in Government" run by Dr Daniel Berliner at the LSE. The book engages closely with mainstream, often quantitative, political science looking at how political institutions in Africa and elsewhere deliver accountability and transparency. It provides a distinct alternative interpretation that is written in terms understandable to scholar and students from more quantitative positivist methodologies.
- **Comparative Political Thought courses** such as on the newly set up Ms Comparative Political Thought at SOAS and the MA in Comparative Political Theory and Global Politics that is under-development at Goldsmiths.

The book would fit in J> JF Politics (General)> Political Institutions in library subject classifications.

Competing or related titles

This book fills gaps in both the trade and academic market.

In terms of a general interest audience, since the Brexit referendum in the UK and the election of Donald Trump to the Presidency of the USA in 2016, there has been a wave of books aimed at re-imagining democracy. Titles like *Can governments earn our trust?* (Donal E. Kettl 2017 Polity) *How Democracies Die: What History Reveals About Our Future* (Stephen Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt 2018 Penguin), *Responsible Parties: Saving Democracy from Itself* by Frances McCall Rosenbluth and Ian Shapiro (Yale university Press 2018) and *The People vs. Democracy: Why Our Freedom Is in Danger and How to Save It* by Yascha Mounk (Harvard 2019) reveal Western democracies in a state of crisis. This book cogently offers a contribution to this public discussion but from the unique vantage point of learning from democracy in Nigeria.

The justification for the academic market is the more straightforward: there is increasing interest in Nigerian politics both academically and among policy-makers. Oxford University Press has published three titles in the last 5 years, including *Dictators and Democracy in African Development: The Political Economy of Good Governance in Nigeria* by A. Carl LeVan (2014) and the more generalist introductory volume *Nigeria: What Everyone Needs to Know* by John Campbell and Matthew T. Page (2018) OUP. Most recently *The Oxford Handbook of Nigerian Politics* Edited by A. Carl LeVan and Patrick Ukata (2018) is over 44 chapters long and covers a variety of political and economic topics. Other publishers like Zed Books have published more popular titles on Nigerian religion and politics like *Pentecostal Republic* by Ebenezer Obadare (2018).

However, what distinguishes the proposed book from the current crop of academic titles on Nigeria is that it offers readers a radically different perspective on the traditional narratives of Afro-pessimism, corruption, religious conflict and state failure. Thus, it will benefit from growing interest and appetite

for books about Nigeria whilst adding a new and provocative voice to debates. Some recent titles, such as Political Thought and the *Public Sphere in Tanzania: Freedom, Democracy and Citizenship in the Era of Decolonization* by Emma Hunter (2015 CUP) demonstrates that there is a space for work that uses African experiences to speak back to major themes in political theory.

Promotion and Marketing

In terms of promoting the book within the UK I would arrange launch events in London (jointly with the LSE Firoz Lalji Africa Centre and Department for International Development), Oxford (with the African Studies Centre or QEH) and either Leeds or Edinburgh where I also have links to Africanist academics. I have close links with the widely read Africa@LSE Blog for which I have written 3 times and will get to review the book. I have my own website and am active on twitter (@whowhywherewhen), with active engagement in the African Politics and Academic twitter communities. I will write a blog article summarising the main argument of the book for the Democracy in Africa website and Africa is a Country. Blog articles I've written in the past have been widely circulated showing I can write in an engaging and accessible way for general audiences (an article on the LSE Impact blog on clickbait and academia co-written with Max Gallien was shared over 5000 times of Facebook.)

In line with my intention to ensure that the book is part not only of Western discussions but reaches a Nigerian readership I will undertake promotion and marketing activities in Nigeria as well. I envisage launch events in Abuja, Lagos and Ibadan. In Ibadan I will draw on my long-standing collaboration with IFRA and the Department of Political Science at the University of Ibadan to organise a launch event that provides opportunities for real engagement and debate with Nigerian students and academics. For the Abuja and Lagos launches I would seek to partner with Premium Times (if they are the book's Nigerian publishers) and / or Republic (<https://www.republic.com.ng/>). Africa-focussed publications which I would target for articles or review include Chimurenga Chronic and online magazine Africa is a Country.

Suggested Reviewers

[6 suggested reviewers]

About the Author

I am an LSE fellow at the Department of International Development. I have degrees from Oxford, SOAS and the London School of Economics. I first visited Nigeria as an undergraduate in 2009 to study the effects of climate change in agriculture, in what later became the epicentre of the Boko Haram uprising. Thus started my relationship with Nigeria. My doctoral fieldwork took me to Lagos and Ibadan, conducting 6 months of in-depth fieldwork and over 150 interviews challenge dominant narratives of good governance in Nigeria. This book benefits from an ongoing engagement with the country since then including working on a research project for a major donor in Boko Haram affected areas in 2017 and return fieldwork in June 2018.