



Complex Frontiers

State Visions and Local Responses in Kenya's LAPSSSET project,
evidence from Lamu County

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Central thesis

- **EXISTING ANALYSIS:** 'New frontier' discourses work with private capital to build the coercive capacity of the state, by way of broadcasting state power in areas where it was formerly weak or non-existent (Fergusson, 1994, 2002; Scott, 1998; Planel, 2014; Chemuoni, 2014, Manji, 2015).
- **EVIDENCE FROM LAMU:** One, local responses to 'new frontier' discourses reveal state weaknesses, rather than power. Two, 'new frontier' discourses are not necessarily accompanied by a heavy extension of the state in peripheral areas.




Implication

- The lack of involvement of local actors and communities in project implementation along the proposed LAPSSSET corridor – given the waning authority of Kenya’s formerly centralized state – will lead to disastrous consequences, creating risks to communities, and to the project itself.




Presentation components

- Introducing LAPSSET
 - LAPSSET's initial challenges
 - The role of the state
 - LAPSSET's consequences
 - Concluding remarks
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1. Introducing LAPSSET

- Lamu Port and South Sudan Ethiopia Transport (Corridor) project, or LAPSSET
 - Publically announced in 2009
 - Launched in March, 2, 2012.
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LAPSSET's rationale

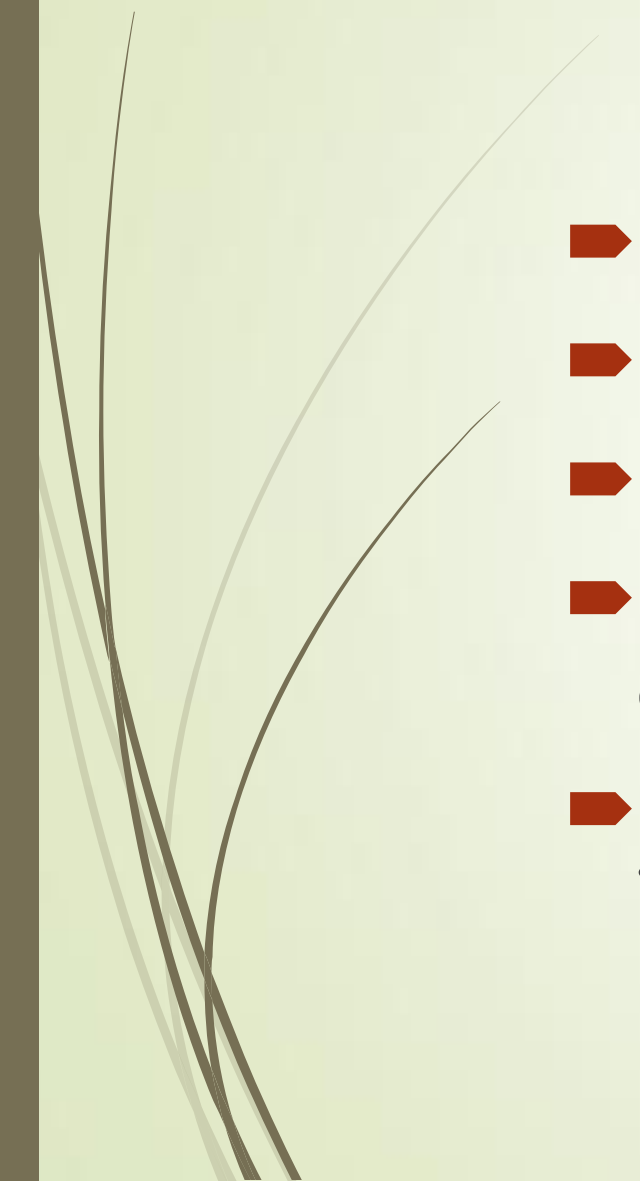
- ▶ To open-up' Kenya's formerly marginalized Northern Region through economic investments, agricultural commercialization and good governance.
- ▶ To relieve the existing, and overburdened southern corridor that currently runs from Mombasa on Kenya's coast, via Nairobi in central Kenya, and to Kampala in Uganda.
- ▶ To transport of oil, from South Sudan oil fields, Kenya's Lokichar and Hoima in Uganda.

LAPSSET corridor





2. LAPSSET's initial Challenges

- Fall in global oil prices
 - Renewed conflict in South Sudan
 - Disagreements with regional partners
 - Increased insecurity in Northern Kenya and in Lamu
 - Kenyan government's incoherent policy-implementation process
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LAPSSET's initial challenges






3. The role of the state

- ▶ While politicians and bureaucrats alike have appropriated the language of 'new frontiers', the state itself has undergone significant changes since the 1990s.
- ▶ In Kenya, elite fragmentation, state informalization, and privatization of public violence.
- ▶ Also, devolved system of governance and a strong language of public participation in policy processes has meant that there is an engaged and active citizenry, even at the margins.



4. LAPSSET's consequences

- 'Economies of anticipation' – land enclosures, privatization of public land, the instrumentalization of heritage, etc.
 - Historical struggles around access to land
 - Political participation
 - Extremist activity
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Concluding remarks

- ▶ Simplified narratives of 'empty', 'unexploited', and 'backward' frontiers can be complicated by local responses, driven by local histories.
- ▶ Local and private economic interests, driven by 'economies of anticipation', have produced unforeseen and unintended consequences that have seriously undermined the swift progress of LAPSSET
- ▶ This has shown the waning authority of Kenya's previously over-centralized executive-bureaucratic state.
- ▶ Lack of involvement of local actors and communities in project implementation may lead to disastrous consequences, creating risks to communities and to the project itself.