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Bayreuth African Studies
WORKING PAPERS

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The Kenya We Want! From Post-Colonial Departure to Recent Hopes

Dieter Neubert & Achim von Oppen

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Departure to Recent
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Dieter Neubert & Achim von Oppen, 2018

Bayreuth African Studies Working Papers

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Bayreuth Academy of Advanced African Studies

Established in October 2012 as a Centre for interdisciplinary research and debate within the *Institute of African Studies (IAS)*, the *Bayreuth Academy of Advanced African Studies* expands the horizon of the well-established field of African Studies at this University at international, national and local levels. Across a broad range of disciplines, it opens the dialogue with other Area Studies as well as with fields of research dedicated to 'systematic' (i.e. non-regional) approaches.

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- Beyond Europe: Narratives of the Future in Modern African History (Sub-project 1);
- Visions of Nature: Concepts of Appropriating and Conserving Nature in Africa (Sub-project 2);
- Middle Classes on the Rise: Concepts of the future among freedom, consumption, tradition and moral (Sub-project 3);
- Concepts of Future in Mediaspaces of Africa and its Diasporas (Sub-project 4);
- Revolution 3.0 - Iconographies of social utopia in Africa and its diasporas (Sub-project 5).

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The Kenya We Want!

From Post-Colonial Departure to Recent Hopes

Dieter Neubert & Achim von Oppen

1 Introduction

The image of Africa presented in the media is currently changing. Stories of conflict, disaster and poverty are today partly displaced by the contrasting narrative of a “continent of opportunity” or even of a “continent of the future”.¹ Slogans such as “African Lions chase Asian Tigers” (e.g. Berendsen et al. 2013) describe African economies as new boom areas, promising economic prosperity and markets of the future. Tales of astonishing growth rates in African economies are accompanied by the discovery of a rising middle class of consumers. Kenya is one of the cases often cited as evidence for this new turn in the image of Africa.

But is this optimism really so new? During its modern history, Africa has repeatedly been declared a region of hope and prospect for a better future. There is a distinct record of projections of

¹ For example, former Federal President of Germany Dr. Horst Köhler in numerous speeches; African Development Bank President Donald Kaberuka 2015 in Geneva <https://www.afdb.org/en/news-and-events/africa-is-a-continent-of-the-future-afdb-president-donald-kaberuka-tells-africa-ceo-forum-2015-in-geneva-14057/> (accessed 30 March 2017).

Africa's future by outsiders, from abolitionist missionaries through reformist colonialists to development experts. It is less known, however, that Africans themselves (and members of the African diaspora) have time and again also been dedicated producers of such visions. Arguably, the time around the achievement of independence from colonial rule and the establishment of African nation states, the 1950s and 1960s, was one of the most prolific periods in this respect – celebrated by Africa's leading historians as the “restart of history” (Ki-Zerbo 1972, 11).² Africa's independence was not only a political promise but was also linked to very optimistic projections of economic prosperity and social advancement. Ordinary Africans were as much invested in such hopes as their leaders, hoping for an “independence dividend” that would give them greater access to national revenues than under colonial exploitation and compensate for the hardships of liberation struggle. “Development”, a metaphor for universal improvement and overcoming backwardness that had emerged around World War II in conjunction with strategies for late colonial stabilization (which mostly backfired in practice), was resurrected after independence and enthusiastically embraced by the new African nations.³ Underpinned at the time by modernization theory with all its promises, “development” was understood as a process of economic growth and societal change that would quasi-automatically lead to freedom, democracy, and social advancement.⁴ Again, as we will see, Kenya offers an instructive example for the general development optimism of the time.

As we all know, at least for Africa, the promises of modernization theory were not fulfilled. It was precisely its contradictions that, once again, made Kenya a particularly interesting case. Its economy recorded better growth rates than its neighbors and many other African countries during the post-independence decades, while continuing to show typical signs of “underdevelopment”: dependence on agricultural exports, an increasing burden of debt, dominance of foreign capital, and mass poverty. Was Kenya a textbook case for “growth without development”, or would it eventually move on to a path of sustained “home-grown capitalism”, carried forward by an emerging African bourgeoisie? Fueled by the crises of the 1970s and 1980s, these were the key issues in what was called the “Kenya Debate” at the time.⁵

But the political economy approach dominating such debates paid little attention to the hopes, promises and plans developed in Africa itself. This is where the present study proposes a new departure. Despite, or even because of, all the disappointments with real processes, to uncover former hopes and promises is by no means futile. Visions of a (better) future, as much as disappointments, setbacks and even experiences of crisis, have always informed policies and

² For a broad review of expectations, possibilities and constraints in the historical moment of African Independence see Cooper 2008.

³ For a good overview of this transition, see Cooper 1998.

⁴ For an early debate on an optimism of linear development in current economic modernization theories, see Hirschman 1965.

⁵ Key contributions to the “Kenya debate” can be found in: Himbara 1994; Langdon 1986; Leys 1975 and 1996; Ogot / Ochieng 1995; Swainson 1987.

planning for the future as well as the politics that went along with them. Whereas actual strategies of economic, political and social change (or continuity) of African nation states have been widely studied, the visions behind these strategies have not yet been explored systematically. Contemporaries paid considerable attention to the broad visions developed by African leaders and intellectuals to underpin their longstanding struggle for independence and self-determination under colonial rule, notably *Négritude* (Césaire, Senghor), Pan Africanism and African Nationalism (Du Bois, Nkrumah, and others), and African Socialism (Nkumah, Nyerere, Cabral and others).⁶ These visions, however, have mainly been regarded as systems of thought or “ideologies”, to be analyzed for their “African” or western sources, for the outside allegiances they implied (an effect of the Cold War) and for their effects on internal development (often disappointing or even disastrous). Much more rarely, the opposite approach has been used so far: to scrutinize specific debates and policies of post-colonial “development” for the expectations, hopes and projections of future implied in them.

Such an approach, which is adopted in this study, is grounded in more general concerns about a “history of the future”.⁷ In our memory, we tend to privilege those views and events of the past that eventually were effective and successful since only those, it is believed, have played a role in shaping the historical process up to our present. In this way, a whole dimension of history is missed out which still has significance for our present. Unfulfilled expectations and projections, including experiences of disappointment and failure, shape human agency as much as successes or structural conditions. To understand the importance of such aspirations and to learn from them, requires us to put ourselves into the perspective of state and societal actors of their time. We have to ask how actors envisaged a future they did not know, and how they decided what processes and institutions would play which role in creating futures in this new age of “independence”. “Perhaps the most important lesson we might learn from returning to this moment [of African Independence] is not that any one of the political aspirations articulated at the time should be resurrected, but that the very sense of alternatives can broaden our sense of possibilities for the future” (Cooper 2008: 168).

More than fifty years after most of Africa became independent nation states it is thus time to look back and enquire into the specific visions of the future raised in their policies and debates around that moment of decolonization. Of course, we also need to examine how these visions and policies later changed, in interaction with subsequent experiences, and to what extent they are echoed, or challenged, in the new hopes rising in Africa today. We will tackle these large questions here in a very limited way, sketching out the case of Kenya as one particular example. The country lends itself to these questions not just because of its economic performance and social dynamism that has sparked particularly dense academic debate. It is also the intensity of policy debates that has

⁶ For instances of quite heterogenous comparative assessments of these conceptual approaches to post-independence future see Benot 1975; Hountondji 1983; Rosberg / Callaghy 1979

⁷ Koselleck 1986; for Africa, this approach is currently pursued in a sub-project “Narratives of the Future in Modern African History” at the Bayreuth Academy of Advanced African Studies http://www.bayreuth-academy.uni-bayreuth.de/en/teilprojekt/jenseits_von_europa/index.html (accessed 30th March 2017).

been, from the beginning, characteristic of Kenya. But it was also characteristic here that visions of the future were not expressed in broad political philosophies,⁸ but in distinctly pragmatic orientations and tangible objectives. This facilitates a “policy-based” approach to expectations, hopes and projections of future, as proposed in this study.

There are even more good reasons to choose Kenya as an instructive case for a “history of the future” in post-colonial Africa. In August 1962, on the eve of Kenya’s independence, leading politicians, civil servants and advisors congregated in Nairobi for a five-day convention to discuss visions of “social and economic development in the emerging Kenya nation” under the catchy title “The Kenya We Want” (Kenya: The Convention 1962). Despite its restricted participation in the convention, thanks to its coverage by the media, “The Kenya We Want” henceforth became a set phrase for public debates about policy visions of the future in the country. A remarkable series of other conventions and publications under the same or similar headings followed over the years. The latest such event was a mass convention in February 2009, in the aftermath of the traumatic 2007/08 post-election violence, raising enormous public interest. Its title “The Kenya We Want: One Kenya - One Dream” very deliberately conjured up the optimism of the original 1962 convention but directed it towards new hopes for political reconciliation and reform (Government of the Republic of Kenya 2009). This series of events and publications presents a remarkable body of evidence on changing topics and directions in policy debates about Kenya’s future. This evidence, to be analysed against the political and social background of their times, is the main source this study draws on.

According to their issues and topics as well as their backgrounds, these debates may be grouped into three distinct historical periods. This is reflected in the structure of this study. Its starting point is a closer look at the original “The Kenya We Want” convention in the context of the 1960s. The first chapter of this study therefore examines the political background of Kenya just before independence, the convention itself, and the first steps of its implementation. The second chapter addresses “The Kenya We Want” visions in the phase of economic crisis, restricted political debate and “structural adjustment” during much of the 1970s and 1980s. Chapter three describes the re-launch and increasing politicization of public debate during the global drive for democratization starting at the end of 1980s; the political environment and the political topics that became relevant with the reintroduction of the multiparty-system in 1992; the government change in 2002; and the turn to violence in 2007/08. The latest phase, explored in Chapter four, is marked by the large “The Kenya We Want” convention-cum-publication in 2009 and focusses on current debates, issues and visions for the future. In the concluding chapter, the ruptures and continuities between changing political contexts and the changing focus and topics of political visions in Kenya are reviewed.

⁸ Daniel arap Moi’s book “Kenya African nationalism. Nyayo philosophy and principles” (1986) may be seen as an exception.

2 “The Kenya We Want”: A Social Policy Vision of Independence

On the eve of independence, Kenya was full of social and political tensions. As a settler colony with a quasi-apartheid system, relations between the white settlers, the so-called Asians, and the large African majority had been the main political topic in the pre-independence era. Large areas of fertile land were in the hands of the white settlers and the rural African population had to live in restricted areas, so-called “reservations”. The small Asian minority were businesspeople, clerical and other qualified workers and had no access to agricultural land at all. Even in the towns, the housing areas were segregated by “race”, and Africans were restricted in their spatial mobility. This was the background for the violent Mau Mau conflict, an important facet of Kenya’s independence struggle during the early 1950s. Even after the British military had quelled the Mau Mau insurgency, the white minority feared a renewed outbreak of racial conflict after independence. But both sides, the British colonial government and the Kenyan politicians, were now willing to find a compromise and a peaceful transition to independence. Jomo Kenyatta, the leader of the main independence party, the Kenya African National Union (KANU), who had been detained during the Mau Mau conflict, was released in 1961 when the negotiations for independence at Lancaster House in London were underway. By 1962, both sides – the colonial government as well as the leading Kenyan politicians – were confident they would reach an agreement on the terms of independence for the future nation state of Kenya. Independence was eventually achieved in December 1963. Already in 1962, believing the negotiations at Lancaster House to have been successful, high-ranking African civil servants, British “technical advisers” and Kenya top politicians, including names such as Tom Mboya and Mwai Kibaki, organized the convention “The Kenya We Want”, as already mentioned in the introduction.⁹ Held from August 12 until August 17 in Nairobi, the convention gathered together more than 120 (mostly African) participants, mainly from the civil service, including the local government, from educational institutes (teachers and lecturers), as well as civil society activists and politicians, such as ministers and members of the legislative assembly. The collaborative nature of this event was underlined in the closing speech of the then Governor of Kenya, Sir Patrick Muir Renison. Apart from formal addresses by the Governor, the Mayor of Nairobi, prominent African leaders, and the representatives of the UN for East Africa, the convention was a working meeting. Participants were organized into several committees on the structure of the economy, on resources and production, on the development of human resources and capital, and on social development. The chairman of the convention, J.C. Likimani, described its purpose as follows: “This Convention wanted to project a realistic picture of the actual state of economic and social affairs now existing

⁹ Information on the Convention is mainly taken from the booklet produced with its results (Kenya: The Convention 1962).

in Kenya, and to stimulate constructive thinking in terms of the kind of Kenya her people would like after the achievement of independence" (Kenya: The Convention 1962: 1).

All in all, the main topics of discussion revolved around economic and social development. With regard to economic development, the main lines of thought envisaged a free market economy combined with government planning, underlining the importance of foreign capital and the recognition of "responsibly led" trade unions (ibid.: 9). There was a general agreement that agricultural development was of particular importance and should be based on individually owned farms and support for marketing cooperatives; no state farms should be created. But one point remained controversial: some of the committee members asked for a limitation of the size of agricultural holdings and a limitation of wealth in general, arguing for "socialistic planning". Another part of the committee, however, was in favor of free transactions of land and saw in the "relation of wealth (...)a chief incentive for private enterprise" and hence for economic development (ibid.: 22). This obviously marked a controversy over broader visions of socialism and capitalist market liberalism. This controversy loomed large in the contemporary East-West conflict, but also has to be seen in the context of plans to resolve the vexed Kenyan land problem by redistributing land sold by white settlers, and the question of who would benefit from this.¹⁰

Avoiding further discussion on the land problem, the convention preferred to focus on social development, a field in which there was much more consensus both in the analysis and in possible policies. "Social problems" were connected to social change, expressed in a focus on marriage and the family, with concerns about "deserted wives" and "wifeless men" in urban areas; in a call for the registration of marriages; for adoption laws; with a critique of female circumcision; a promotion of family planning; and provisions for old age security which had been missing so far. From today's perspective, the agreement among participants about models of gender roles and the family was striking; the participants obviously shared the same background of western (often missionary) education mixed with patriarchal aspirations. Further social problems identified were unemployment, housing, health, nutrition and crime, but under the section on marriage and family. The third large section referred to education, with a focus on primary and secondary schooling and promoting the organization of adult education. Higher education was absent from the discussion. Yet another section discussed the "communication of ideas", that is, the role of the media, centering on the need for a free press.

Considering the political turmoil and tensions of the time between white settlers, the so-called Asian minority, the African majority, and within the latter, it is striking that the whole convention report hardly refers to political issues. There is, for instance, only one soft sentence addressing "race": "whenever possible, commercial, industrial and financial bodies should be organized on a

¹⁰ For a recent summary of these policy disputes see Nugent 2004: 153-155.

non-racial basis“ (Kenya: The Convention 1962: 7). Perspectives on the political system or on land distribution (see above) were not discussed at all. There was also no echo of contemporary debates in the wider African and global context, where neocolonial dependence, racial discrimination and alternative models of the state were high on the agenda. One explanation is that political issues were the task of the Lancaster House conference; it seems that the participants of the convention trusted that these issues would be solved there in a satisfactory way. For instance, they seem to have been convinced that the post-independence political system would ensure African self-determination in a viable nation state. Instead, the focus was clearly on economic and social development. This is underlined by the opening speech of the Mayor Nairobi Alderman C. W. Rubia:

This Convention must be a success in producing a sound blueprint for development both economically and socially, demonstrating to the world at this important moment in our history that we have the ability, the foresight and the determination to direct our own future, and ensure for ourselves a worthy place among the nations (Kenya: The Convention 1962: 31).

This optimistic idea of policy based on a blueprint and solving “problems” en route to modernity, is fully in line with an understanding of development as ultimately a technical challenge, as it is understood in modernization theory.

This is corroborated when we look at who participated in the convention. A great majority of the participants were representatives of the Kenyan administration and of the Kenyan colonial government, including the participating ministers. The policy visions presented in the document therefore did not include a general vision of the political system but were to lay foundations for a comprehensive development plan. It was therefore primarily a technical vision of experts. On the other hand, most of them were Africans. The process of “Africanization” of both the administration and the political leadership was already well underway. This may be one reason for their confidence in the post-independence political system, since it would be governed by the same members of the African elite. Only a limited number of British nationals were part of the convention as “experts” from and on administration, business and science.

However, despite the assumed agreement on the political system, Kenyan independence actually began with a political debate. The issue was the power balance between the central government and the regions. Jomo Kenyatta and his KANU party were supported by a coalition based on Kikuyu and Luo loyalties, located mainly in the Central Highlands and in the West, respectively. KANU promoted a system of centralized government. The opposition party KADU (Kenya African Democratic Union), a coalition of smaller ethnic constituencies based in the Rift Valley under Daniel arap Moi (Kalenjin), demanded a decentralized system with more autonomy for the regions. After the clear victory of Kenyatta and his KANU in the 1963 elections, KADU and its

leader were co-opted into the new government and merged in 1964 with KANU. Therefore, Kenya was from the beginning a “de facto” one-party system. The new government had a very high legitimacy at this time. Even the land question seemed to have been solved, through a voluntary buyout of the white settlers, as negotiated in the Lancaster house conference.¹¹ Dissatisfaction with the very unequal redistribution of land, in regional as well as social respects, resurfaced only later.

The main goal of the new government was development as presented in the “Kenya We Want” convention. The most important documents for this were the First Development Plan (1964-1970)¹² and the Sessional Paper No. 10 of 1965 (Kenya Government 1965). Both documents did not refer directly to the “Kenya We Want” convention, but their main direction was in line with the proposals of 1962. The Sessional Paper especially had a focus on economic development and gave a clear answer to the question of the size of land holdings and to the debate on socialist ideas during the “Kenya We Want” convention. Despite the term “African socialism” in the title of the Sessional Paper, it was a clear statement in favor of market liberalism, establishing no limits to the size of land holdings, while at the same time promising to guarantee social services. Therefore, this paper can be seen as an outline for a kind of social democratic political orientation.

“Social development” in Kenya and East Africa was the topic of a number of conferences held between 1969 and 1971. Even though these conferences were held at the East African level (with Tanzania and Uganda), with one conference even including Central Africa, they directly referred to the “Kenya We Want” convention. This underlines that this early convention was seen as a kind of blueprint for social policy in Kenya which was partly adopted also by other East African countries. These conferences on social development were organized by the parastatal National Welfare Councils of the participating countries and supported by the International Council on Social Welfare, which also had a German chapter. The issues discussed in these conferences ranged from urbanization and its social problems and consequences, (Oloo 1970), to the development of “human resources”, (ECSW/German National Committee of the ICSW 1971), to the role of social services in East and Central Africa (TNCSSW/German National Committee of the ICSW 1971), and on youth (NCSSU/German National Committee of the ICSW 1970). Participants were mostly representatives of governmental as well as non-governmental social service institutions. The main agenda represents a vision of the social welfare state.¹³ Despite the challenges described above, these conferences were full of optimism and reflected the relative

¹¹ The land should be distributed to African small holders (million acre scheme). As it turned out later a part of African elite managed to own large estates. But this is not the topic of this paper.

¹² In 1966 a revised version was published (Republic of Kenya 1966).

¹³ The model of the welfare state, originally developed in Europe after World War II, impressed late colonial as well as post-independence politicians and planners in Africa (see Eckert 2006).

success of East African economies until the early 1970s. The trust in modernization and development seemed to be unbroken.

3 “The Kenya We Want” in Times of Restricted Political Debate: 1974 - 1990

During the following decades a number of publications and conferences still referred directly to “The Kenya We Want” as a slogan for policy visions. And it was re-used from time to time as a heading for new events. These conferences and publications and the policy visions they propagated as “The Kenya We Want” represented the changing political background and the reality of economic and social development in Kenya. The first decade of independence seemed to confirm the widespread optimism of the beginning, but before long, economic and political problems made themselves felt. The social and economic promises linked to independence proved to be too ambitious. President Kenyatta had the dominant role, but he was increasingly challenged by political critics. To ensure the control and the stability of the system, these critics were either politically co-opted or marginalized. After its first successes as a new opposition party from 1966, the Kenya People’s Union (KPU) with its stronghold in the Luo region was banned in 1969, following the assassination of KANU leader Tom Mboya. A greater challenge for the system and for the ruling party was the death of Kenya’s charismatic leader Jomo Kenyatta in 1978. Despite the strong regional and ethnic cleavages in the country, however, the political system survived and the then Vice-President Daniel arap Moi came to power in a transition process that exactly followed the constitutional rules. However, Moi’s power was unstable. Under his rule, one-party rule was formally established in Kenya in 1982, and all opposition parties were banned. Moi strengthened the single party KANU which had been weak under Kenyatta and developed it into an instrument of political control. Moi’s biggest challenge was a failed military coup in 1982. After this attempt to end his rule, the Kenyan government turned more and more authoritarian.¹⁴ Still, some scope for political critique was left as long as the president himself or the system as such were not attacked. Moi was supported by a new ethnic coalition based on the Kikuyu elite and ethnic groups from the Rift Valley that allied themselves as the Kalenjin. But at the same time, he reduced Kikuyu influence in the administration and saw strong Kikuyu and other ethnic leaders as major challengers for his position.

Right after its inauguration, the Moi government convened another “The Kenya We Want” conference in 1978 to discuss policy visions for Kenya. The overall topic was the discussion of the efficiency of different development strategies. But in contrast to the 1962 convention, the

¹⁴ In the regular election only a few seats were unopposed, for the majority of the MP seats different a competitive election between KANU candidates took place. Barkan and Okumu (1978) used the term “semi-competitive” to describe this system that in principle persists under Moi.

participants were exclusively members of the government, joined by top provincial administrators. Neither civil society organizations nor representatives of the economy or scientists were invited. This highlights the understanding that the government should have exclusive control over development policy visions. However, with regard to visions and policies developed there, this conference was much less important than its 1962 predecessor, and it hardly played any role in the ongoing political debate. The only reported outcome of the conference was a new regulation that prohibited political activities of ethnic organizations, which up to that time had been an instrument to organize political factions and coalitions under one-party rule (Widner 1992: 124, 142). The selection of participants and the restrictions on ethnic organizations signaled a new understanding of the role of the government under Moi. He himself took up the “Kenya We Want” phrase in his book “Kenya African Nationalism. Nyayo Philosophy and Principles” when, without explicitly referring to the conference, he described his understanding of leadership: “This way, leadership becomes an irresistible force for change; an insurance against subversion; and, thereby, it creates the Kenya we want, in peace, love and unity” (Moi 1986: 78).¹⁵ Whereas “The Kenya We Want” of 1962 was a vision developed by participants from inside and outside the government, Moi’s understanding of the slogan was linked to leadership.

However, there was no copyright for this set phrase, and it was also appropriated by non-governmental organizations and individuals to mark their visions and demands. There is a note in the biography of the church leader Bishop Kuria that refers to a series of seminars and workshops, starting after 1978, organized by the National Council of Churches in Kenya (NCCCK) to discuss the political instability (Kinuthia et al. 2011: 91). One chapter in the NCCCK publication “A Christian View of Politics in Kenya” of 1983 had the title “The Kenya We Want” (NCCCK, 1983: 58-65). While the booklet is presented as a Christian interpretation and support of Moi’s *Nyayo* philosophy, the chapter entitled “The Kenya We Want” contains a very carefully formulated plea for civil liberties and an indirect reference to inequality in the distribution of agricultural land that continued to create social and political tension in the society (NCCCK 1983: 61-65). After 1983, for about a decade, the slogan was not prominently used.¹⁶ This reflected the authoritarian rule of that time which left hardly any room for a public debate on policy visions. Even if the phrase “The Kenya We Want” was used by the government at the beginning, it followed a different notion. This corresponds to the generally restrictive political climate during this period (Adar / Munyae 2001).

¹⁵The book as a whole underlines the continuity with the Kenyatta era, presents the claim for a nationalist policy, and offers a short outlook on policies in the areas of education, health, women, youth, food, industrialization, environment, and administrative reform.

¹⁶ A handbook for education, published in 1987, had the title “The Kenyan We Want. An approach to social education and ethics” (Were 1988); but there was no connection to a conference or a public debate.

4 Democratization and the Re-Vitalisation of Political Debate: 1990 – 2007

At the very end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, the so-called “second wave of democratization” reached Kenya. The strict and authoritarian one-party rule was more openly criticized and the changes in other parts of the world and in Africa encouraged opposition activists to speak out. Parts of Kenyan civil society demanded a multi-party democracy and organized mass rallies and demonstrations that culminated in a three-day riot in 1990, after a mass rally had been violently dispersed by soldiers.¹⁷ The government tried to control the opposition with the force of the police, but political debate could no longer be stopped. Under pressure from the international donor community, the Kenyan government had to give in and announced multi-party elections that eventually took place in 1992.¹⁸

Right after the start of the first protests against authoritarian one-party rule, the Moi government tried to channel and thus control the critique by announcing a large new “The Kenya We Want” conference that would include citizens (*wananchi* in Kiswahili), church leaders, union leaders and lawyers, to provide a public forum for a discussion on democracy. (Sabar 2002: 214) However, the conference did not materialize. Instead, a KANU review committee was established after the riots from 1990 with the task of taking up the complaints of the citizens. Significantly, the conference title was changed to “The KANU We Want” (Sabar 2002: 224). However, this attempt to control the critique could not prevent the change to the multi-party system.

In December 1992, Daniel arap Moi and the former single-party won the election and Moi remained in power. One important reason for the KANU victory was the fragmentation of the opposition. In addition, the still dominant patronage system made it attractive to support (and elect) the potential winner to secure the chance of benefits as clients. Besides these shortcomings of the multi-party system, the space for political criticism now widened and the opposition made use of it. Even if the old government remained in power, this was a political turning point. The accompanying re-vitalization of the political debate triggered a new round of conferences and publications that again took up the “The Kenya We Want” slogan.

After the 1992 elections, similar activities followed which were convened by other civil society organizations. The central topic of these conferences and pamphlets was multi-party democracy and the drafting of a new constitution. The first and seemingly very influential initiative was taken

¹⁷ The mass rally was held on July 7; therefore, the rally and the riot are remembered in Kenya as *saba saba* (“seven seven” in Kiswahili).

¹⁸ A comprehensive look at the debates on multi-partyism with a special emphasis at the churches, who played a very important role together with other civil society organizations, especially the Law Society of Kenya, is given by Sabar (2002; 205-232) in a chapter entitled “The Kenya we Want: 1988-1990”.

by the Law Society of Kenya (LSK), the International Commission of Jurists and its Kenyan Section (ICJ-K), and the Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC). In 1993, they produced the paper “The Kenya We Want. Proposal for a model constitution” (Diepeveen 2010: 236). After a new draft constitution had been presented in 1994, the “Citizens Coalition for Constitutional Change” responded with another policy document under a similar title: “Our Stand on Constitutional Change. *Kenya Tuitakayo. The Kenya We Want*” (Njonge 1996). According to the author:

The purpose of this booklet is to make Kenyans, and all friends of democracy, aware of the challenging task which the Citizens Coalition for Constitutional Change has undertaken so far, its mandate and vision, and its plans for the future (Njonge 1996: 1).

In addition to the previously mentioned organizations (LSK, ICJ-K and KHRC), the citizen coalition included several influential churches (including Catholic, Methodist, and Anglican), professional organizations and human rights NGOs, all-in-all more than forty organizations. This coalition was supported by the Central Organization of Trade Unions, by the protestant National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK), and by the National Council of NGOs (Njonge 1996). With these members and supporters, the coalition represented most of the important and outspoken Kenyan civil society organizations. Its main purpose was not to present a new draft of the constitution, but a plea for an open, democratic process in its elaboration, through the participation of the civil society and “(...) in order to guarantee that the process and its results are not flawed, rigged, rushed, or in any way manipulated” (Njonge 1996: 41). While the process of constitutional change took much more time than expected, the coalition’s and other civil society organizations’ activities actually contributed to the appointment of the “Constitution of Kenya Review Commission” (CKRC) in 2000 (Diepeveen 2010: 232; *The people’s choice* 2002: 3). The most striking feature of this commission’s work was that it included visits to every constituency of the country to hear people’s views on the constitution (*The people’s choice* 2002: 11).¹⁹

The appointment of this commission was a clear sign that the Moi government was not able to go on with its authoritarian rule. President Moi finally accepted the limitation to two terms of government in the multi-party system and did not run again in the 2002 elections. The KANU candidate Uhuru Kenyatta, the son of Jomo Kenyatta, did not manage to become Moi’s successor and was defeated by Mwai Kibaki, the leader of the “National Rainbow Coalition” of opposition parties. With this change of power, the rule of KANU came to an end. The principle that the drafting of the new constitution should be based on a public debate, with contributions from a variety of stakeholders, led to further reports and statements. One of them again borrowed the slogan “The

¹⁹ The commission’s task was to examine the existing political, administrative and juridical structures, also including issues such as citizens’ rights, property and land rights, and to “(...) provide, examine and make recommendations on the necessity of directive principles of state policy” (ibid.).

Kenya We Want". In 2002, the Association of Local Government Authorities in Kenya held a convention and published a small policy document entitled "The Local Government We Want in Kenya" (ALGAK 2002). The document presented an outline of the chapter on local government for the draft constitution. However, the debate on the new constitution was highly controversial and led to a split of the coalition government. The constitutional reform was completed only after the 2007 elections and the end of the post-election violence.

This new debate on democracy in the 1990s was a kind of turning point for the visions of development presented under the slogan "The Kenya We Want". During the first decades of Kenya's independence, it had its focus on social development, while the political system was not debated in any similar manner. On the eve of colonial rule, "independence" and "democracy" (then mainly referring to African majority rule) were generally shared visions and carriers of hope, and there was no doubt that they would come. Since, at the same time, everybody expected a significant improvement of conditions of life after independence, the political challenge seemed to be the drafting and implementation of adequate policies, this was the experts' vision of 1962. Over the years, this vision, with its emphasis on social policy, lost its importance, but not because it was particularly successful. On the contrary, widespread disappointment with regard to social and economic development led to increasing criticisms of the government. Under the new conditions of the global quest for democratization, this critique could not be contained any longer. The new big question for the future was the structure of the political process itself. A democratic government was the carrier of new hopes for prosperity and freedom that the one-party government had not delivered. The improvement of living conditions was still, and probably even more, at stake after the crisis-laden 1980s, but the precondition for this was seen in political change through debate. This politicized vision of the future determined the following years and dominated the political debate after the displacement of the KANU rule by the oppositional coalition in the 2002 elections.

5 Political Visions for 21st Century

The victorious coalition government under Mwai Kibaki promised to present a new constitution with a new balance of power, including a restriction of the powers of the president and a stronger prime minister. But the two main factions in the coalition, one led by President Kibaki and the other led by Prime Minister Raila Odinga, could not agree on a new draft, leading to a split of the ruling coalition. As a result, the 2007 elections were marked by a heated and violent campaign. Mwai Kibaki was mainly supported by Kikuyu, Embu and Meru supporters, opposed by a Luo-Kalenjin coalition led by Raila Odinga, and supported by William Ruto. The election was highly contested and ended with a very close result. The electoral commission declared Kibaki the winner amidst numerous allegations of fraud. The opposition did not accept the electoral commission's decision and organized mass protests that escalated into physical fighting,

especially in Nairobi squatter areas, in Kisumu and in the Rift Valley. This escalated to the so-called “post-election violence”, with 1,000 to 1,500 casualties and some 300,000 internally displaced people. The violence was finally stopped by the military and thanks to international mediation as well as the activity of civil society organizations. The result of the mediation was a grand coalition government. (Human Rights Watch 2008; Klopp / Kamungi 2008; Lafargue 2009; Waki Commission 2008). The horrifying violence seen during the conflict set the scene for the further development of political structures in Kenya. Apart from an analysis of the conflict itself by the Waki Commission, (Waki Commission 2008) the future political system was the dominant topic of the public debates that finally led to the draft of a new constitution and its acceptance in the referendum of 2010.

The way to this constitution was paved by a convention in whose title the well-known slogan was brought up again and very deliberately: “The Kenya We Want: One Kenya - One Dream”. Under considerable public scrutiny, the convention was convened in 2009 by the Government of Kenya (Government of the Republic of Kenya, 2009). Its objective was not to draft the constitution itself but to reconcile a society shocked by the violence of 2008, and to open up a new future for Kenya:

This conference was organized to enable ordinary Kenyans and their leaders to discuss the underlying problems facing the country candidly, and to chart the way forward as one people, united by a common purpose and a shared vision of Kenya's future.

The overall objective of the conference was to bring Kenyans together to discuss the ethnic polarization that had threatened the integrity of the country in the opening months of 2008, and re-energize the sense of nationhood amongst its people. Ethnic polarisation was discussed side by side with economic inequality and injustices (ibid.: 5).

It was a mass convention with more than 4,000 participants from all parts of the country. There were 10 delegates from each of Kenya's 173 districts (public servants, community leaders, women and youth representatives), representatives of faith-based organizations and of further civil society organizations, including leaders of national youth and women's organizations, of trade unions and professional organizations, vice-chancellors of all Kenyan public and private universities, senior civil servants and heads of para-statal, members of parliament and of the Kenyan government, finally “ordinary Kenyans attending in their own capacity” (ibid.: 6).

In his opening address, Minister for Planning and Development Ambetsa Oparanya put this event in a clear line with the conferences of 1962 and 1979 (ibid.: xi). Another important link to the original 1962 “The Kenya We Want” convention was expressed by Mwai Kibaki. He had been one of the co-organizers in 1962 and contributed with a talk on education; (Kenya: The Convention 1962: 1, 70) as President of Kenya he made the opening speech in 2009. These explicit references

to the 1962 event as well as similarities in how a vision of the future was presented, also show the differences. The most obvious difference was the selection of the participants. What mattered was not so much the absence of European citizens, who still had a role in 1962, but the general composition of the convention. In 1962, the convention brought together politicians, top administrators, civil society leaders, business people, and intellectuals. They were part of what was called at that time the “African elite”. They represented a comparatively small group of educated Africans that had achieved middle class positions in the late colonial system and therefore also shared similar general values and views. They acted as competent experts and were seen as natural leaders of the large majority of Africans, many of them illiterate. In 2009, the top political leaders and the top echelons of administration took part as well. But at the same time, a much wider selection of the Kenyan society was included, especially through the delegates from the districts, community leaders, and local representatives of women and youth. This composition made a significant difference because the convention became a mix of experts on the one side and people from the grass roots on the other side and was not a mere expert meeting as in 1962. This holds true even if we consider that the delegates from the districts had leadership positions at the local level.

The 2009 meeting produced a vision of a national policy of unity instead of the expert’s development vision of 1962. The 2009 topics also take up issues such as land, education, youth, and gender, and we also still find the idea of development. But the general approach differs significantly. While in 1962, social development had been center stage, the dominating topic in 2009 was political unity and “harmony”. The roles of ethnicity, education, sports, media, civil society, religion and of the private sector were all discussed under this angle. A large part of the report refers to the reform of the political and juridical system and presents recommendations for a new constitution that should offer more checks and balances and strengthen the parliament, as well asks for an intensification of the fight against corruption. The parts that refer to social development also show a change in perspective. Instead of a general improvement of living conditions and of coping with problems of social change, as in 1962, the focus in 2009 was on marginalized and vulnerable groups,²⁰ and on equal access to social services. The notion of unity, national values and patriotism is visible throughout the report. Especially education is discussed under this perspective, and the Sessional Paper No. 10 of 1965 is referred to because of its definition of national values. By contrast, the question of economic and social development that dominated the 1962 report was now of minor importance. The importance of political and social harmony reflected the trauma of the post-election violence that had been one important starting point for the conference. The absence of development issues, or their reduction to the marginalized and vulnerable, respectively, might also represent a new self-image of Kenya as a

²⁰ It is remarkable that the development of “vulnerable groups such as women” is mentioned together with the one of “marginalized areas” and “the physically disabled” (Government of the Republic of Kenya 2009: 2).

country that is economically and socially advanced, at least by African standards, with a strong economy and a rising middle class.

This new self-image, and the differences from the situation of 1962, were clearly expressed in another policy program, the “Vision 2030” (Government of the Republic of Kenya 2007a). It resulted from a process already launched in 2006, including the production of the vision itself and a medium-term plan with development programs for its implementation. This was done by an expert group of experienced government officers. Besides their own planning they had the task of inquiring into and including the expectations of ordinary Kenyans and stakeholders such as civil society actors or private companies (KNBS 2012: 3). The vision includes “three pillars”: an “economic pillar”, referring to different economic sectors; a “social pillar” with classical elements such as poverty eradication, health, water, environment, gender, youth and vulnerable groups, housing and social equity; and a “political pillar”, presented on a few pages only, with a general declaration for democracy, transparency, and the rule of law. This would be based on a “foundation for socio-economic transformation”, referring mainly to public services including the promotion of technology and development, land reform, security and human resource development. The popular version (Government of the Republic of Kenya 2007b) highlights “flagship” projects and visualizes the concept with photographs and drawings, for example, of the new Nairobi airport or a skyline of the city (back cover). These drawings underline the expectations linked to the vision of a Kenya presenting high-modernity. The benchmarks presented for development are South Africa, sometimes Egypt, and Asian countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, China, the Philippines or Vietnam. East African countries, Uganda and Tanzania are only mentioned to show that Kenya is clearly ahead.²¹ The government presents Kenya as a country that is on her way and can be seen as an emerging market economy. This matches the idea of the “The Kenya We Want. One Country - One Dream” report that social development needs to be directed only towards marginal and vulnerable groups.

The “Kenya We Want” slogan has also been taken up by another, more critical report that was commissioned by two NGOs, the African Woman and Child Feature Service (AWC), and the Media Diversity Centre (MDC) and published by the German based “Friedrich Ebert Stiftung” (FES) in Nairobi in 2010 (Oriare / Okello-Orlale / Ugungu 2010). The report carries the title “The Media We Want: The Kenya Media Vulnerabilities Study” and points at general weaknesses of the Kenyan media. It concludes:

The main finding of this study is that the Kenyan media have been operating in an unpredictable and swiftly changing political, social, cultural, economic and technological environment that has heavily influenced its development. A hostile and

²¹ Government of the Republic of Kenya (2007a): especially pages 12 f., 17, 30 f., 80 ff., 95, 107, 1344 f., 138, 146; Comparisons with Uganda or Tanzania see: 72, 141.

inadequate political, legal, policy and regulatory environment continues to negatively impact on the media in Kenya. Unsophisticated liberalization of telecommunications since 1998 led to slow, uneven and haphazard growth in broadcasting” (Oriare / Okello-Orlale / Ugangu 2010: 6).

Despite this very critical view of the media, the 2009 convention had given this sector an important role in the promotion of national cohesion, and it qualified the Kenyan media sector as “diverse and free”(Kenya 2009: 59). The critical report on the media shows, however, that the optimism of 2009 convention still faced a number of serious challenges. At the same time the report on the media shows that a vivid public debate is on its way.

Comparatively new features of the public debate are social media and blogs. They were used widely in the 2007 election campaign and during the post-election violence as a means of mobilization and agitation. Generally speaking, they represent the diversity of political standpoints and of visions of the future in Kenya. Even in this landscape, “The Kenya We Want” set phrase is used too, as a few examples may show. For instance, there is a short statement at the website “My country” with the title “Making the Kenya We Want”²²; a webpage advertising voters registration has the title “The Kenya We Want”²³; and a positive statement about Kenya’s successes at the website “Sukuma! Kenya” with the title “Yes!! This is the Kenya We Want!”²⁴. And the French scholar Gerard Prunier published a critical article at the website “Open Democracy”, again under the title “The Kenya We Want”. He analyses the skepticism expressed by leading Kenyan politicians towards the Waki Report that blamed in 2009 both parties forming a grand coalition after the conflict for the post-election violence in 2007/8.²⁵ The set phrase coined in 1962 is obviously still very much alive and popular even among the wider public.

6 Conclusion

The continuity of the “Kenya We Want” phrase is remarkable. Since the first convention it has been used by successive Kenyan governments to mark political turning points (1962, 1978, 2009), sometimes including the Kenyan civil society and sometimes not. Civil society organizations themselves have appropriated the phrase to express alternative visions of Kenya in times of political turmoil and change.²⁶ In the title of a scholarly paper on popular thought over constitutional review in Kenya, the phrase has even been inverted: “The Kenyas we don't want” (Diepeveen 2010). Because of the continuing popularity of this phrase and its connection to

²² <http://abrahamrugomuriu.blogspot.de/2012/04/making-kenya-we-want.html> (accessed 18 September 2015).

²³ <http://kenyapoliticalscene.blogspot.de/> (accessed 18 September 2015).

²⁴ <http://sukumakenya.blogspot.de/2009/02/yes-this-is-kenya-we-want.html> (accessed 18 September 2015).

²⁵ <https://www.opendemocracy.net/article/the-kenya-we-want> (accessed 18 September 2015).

²⁶ ALGAK 2002, Njonge 1996; Diepeveen 2010, and a series of seminars announced in 1978 by the NCCK (Kinuthia 2011: 91).

notions of policy vision for the future, it opens up the possibility of a comparison between uses of the phrase in different times, as described in this paper. What conclusions can be drawn from this remarkable history of the future expressed in policy visions for Kenya?

The changes in those visions reflect alterations in political objectives and show indirectly also what was taken for granted and was at stake. In the period shortly before decolonization, independence and self-government were taken for granted by African political leaders. Accordingly, political problems such as the questions of race, land, or the political system were hardly mentioned in 1962. Independence promised unity and the solution to political problems. The question was how to use independence for the benefit of the population. And this was seen as the task of the then “African elite”. As experts in African development, they were invited to the convention to draw a road map for development. The result was an experts’ vision. It pointed at economic and social development, with the classical topics of social development (e.g. poverty, education, health). Two points stand out for comparison. First, under social development, special attention was paid to stabilizing family structures, under the pressure of rapid change. Second, the quest to limit the size of land holdings – one of the few points where the experts disagreed.

At least the first decade of independence seemed to fulfil the pre-independence expectations of economic growth, improvement of social services, and political unity. However, the unity was a result of a “de facto” one-party system that controlled the political debates. Following the line of the “Kenya We Want” conventions, political questions came increasingly to the fore from the 1978 convention after Moi’s inauguration. Its main outcome, the restriction of political activities of ethnic organizations, implied that political unity could no longer be taken for granted and political critique was controlled by a more and more authoritarian government. The political system was even more under scrutiny in 1989 when another “The Kenya We Want” conference was announced and later held under the title “The KANU We Want”.

The political attractiveness of the set phrase “The Kenya We Want” became obvious when the political opposition appropriated it to introduce their visions of a democratic Kenya into the debate on democratization. At first sight, this marked a fundamental change in the visions of future. In 1962, independence guaranteed African self-government and provided the frame for economic and social development. How to use this frame was the main purpose of the 1962 convention. At the end of 1980s, the political system was at stake, political change had been claimed, and the vision of the future was democracy.

On closer inspection, however, significant continuities become visible. In both cases, a positive development of the future was linked to a particular political system: self-government in 1962, and democracy at the beginning of the 1990s. Whereas in 1962 no one doubted that independence would come, the shift to full democracy was still pending in the early 1990s. But hopes for

democracy resembled the hopes for independence. In both cases, they seemed to be the stepping stones to a solution for all problems.

This focus of visions for the future on a reliable and democratic political system that provides fair participation and supports political unity was still the main topic of the 2009 convention. The risks of political instability had become most obvious with the 2007/8 post-election violence. This reference to the political system, either implicit and taken for granted in 1962, or explicitly described as the main challenge since the late 1980s, is an important marker of continuity in the history of “The Kenya We Want” visions of the future. The political system was and is until today seen as the key for economic and social development.

Another continuity is remarkable: the land issue. The size of land holdings was an issue in 1962, and it turned up again in 2009, with a reference to historical injustice under one-party-rule and with the promise of a land reform. (Kenya 2009: 28f., 34f.) At the same time, the land issue now has micro-nationalist undertones. Especially ethnic groups from Rift Valley claim a “traditional” right to land ownership.²⁷ This is an important indication that the political system might be the framework to solve problems but cannot be the solution itself.

When we compare Kenyan visions for the future, there are, however, also remarkable changes. Politically very significant is the change in attendance in the government-convened conferences. The expanded use of the set phrase “The Kenya We Want” points in the same direction. The 1962 vision was an experts’ vision, including officials and the civil society. In 1978, under Moi, the convention was mainly a government activity, and the 2009 convention was a mass convention that included many representatives from very local levels. It seems that today, a vision for the future is only seen as legitimate if the population at large is included. This is also shown in the “Vision 2030” since the experts responsible for drafting the vision underline that there has been a process of public consultation throughout the country. (Government of the Republic of Kenya 2007a: vii) Political visions are understood as a matter of public debate, not to be left to ethnic nationalists. The use of the “Kenya We Want” title by civil society conferences, publications and in blogs and internet sites offer impressive evidence that this is not only political lip service but responds to widespread demands in Kenya.

A last difference should be mentioned. In 1962, for Kenya as for most emerging African nations, the experts’ vision pointed at basic economic and social development. The 2007 experts’ “Vision 2030” sees Kenya on her way to become an emerging market like South Africa or Asian countries,

²⁷ This was one of the key issues in post-election violence (Lafargue / Katumanga 2008: 17-23).

well ahead of her East African neighbors. Even if this is a very ambitious vision, especially if we consider the large number of people still living in poverty,²⁸ it marks at the same time a remarkable change. Kenya has developed economically and socially and there is a new middle class that is one of the largest in Africa south of the Sahara²⁹. It is mainly this middle class that provides the societal background and the constituency for the civil society and expresses itself in social media and blogs. It is therefore part and parcel of the political development that is marked by the claim for political participation either in the political system or in the drafting of visions of the future. Whereas the visions themselves show remarkable continuities, the society of Kenya and the basic political attitudes have clearly changed. The production of political visions is no longer a task for political leaders but for public discussion including the civil society and its growing middle class social basis that demands to be included in the process.

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²⁸ According to the African Development Bank 41,7 % of the Kenyan population live below the poverty line of 2 \$ day (African Development Bank 2011: chart 20:20).

²⁹ 44.9% of the whole population (ibid.: chart 4: 5).

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