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Beyond the gatekeeper state: African infrastructure hubs as sites of experimentation

Jana Hönke

International Relations and International Organisations, University of Groningen, Groningen, The Netherlands

ABSTRACT

While Africa has often been portrayed as peripheral to major global economic flows, the copper mines in the South of the DRC as the port of Dar es Salaam are hubs of extraction and trade at the heart of the global economy. This article departs from the notion of the gatekeeper state, which describes the creation of islands of effective state territoriality around such gates in the colonial encounter, producing postcolonial states that essentially only control enclaves and corridors in their territory. These form the basis for an outward, extraction-oriented political economy. The article proposes a reconceptualisation of gatekeeping as a set of practices performed by a range of actors, including (but not limited to) governments. I argue that this brings into view how the political geography of gates is being transformed by a multitude of actors including from the Global South. It is also shaped by powerful transnational technical systems and logistics. Empirically, this will be explored through a study of Dar and Bagamoyo ports in Tanzania. Studying gatekeeping and gate-making practices around these ports diversifies our understanding of political transformations around gates and helps to go beyond the theories based on the more frequently studied extractive industries.

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Introduction

While Africa has often been portrayed as peripheral to major global economic flows, many parts of it are neatly integrated into networks of global production and trade. The copper and gold mines in the DRC as the port of Dar es Salaam are at the heart of the global economy. Debates about the political economy of the African state have long stressed how much the rents derived from controlling such sites – those that connect ‘*l’Afrique utile*’ with the outside world – have been a major source of revenue for the colonial and postcolonial state.¹ Territorial control has never been very effectively implemented by most African states,² partly because other strategies of rule have worked better. Territoriality has remained, however, an important governmental technology by which multinational mining companies govern concessions and generate revenues that governments can control thanks to the norm of sovereignty.³ Cooper’s notion of the gatekeeper state, the focus of this special issue, can be situated in this tradition of thought. It establishes the creation of islands of

CONTACT Jana Hönke  j.hoenke@rug.nl

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territoriality, and an outward, extraction-oriented political economy in the colonial encounter. This geography of islands, according to the argument, has been reproduced by postcolonial governments together with a plethora of international and transnational actors.⁴ Subsequent literature has stressed elite adaptation and the (re)centralisation of rents by governments,⁵ faction fighting, and state capture in the patronage-based politics of capitalist accumulation,⁶ and the reconfiguration (not decline) of the state through privatisation and the indirect discharge of state functions to private actors.⁷

It is important to note though that Cooper himself has always been committed to close historical work and attention to specificities and particularities.⁸ He therefore has argued for the necessity of looking beyond false dichotomies, such as those of Africa and the global economy, or market and state. There is, thus, little to support a sweeping categorisation of African states as gatekeeper states, different from states elsewhere.⁹ While it is a useful metaphor, I argue that privileging the state in analyses of gatekeeping limits its contemporary analytical purchase in regard to the growing number of large-scale infrastructure projects funded by traditional, as well as new actors. This is all the more crucial in times in which 'gateway' metaphors are ubiquitously used by donors for large-scale infrastructure projects promoted in their name.¹⁰ Putting questions about the host state first prevents us from asking other – equally relevant – questions about new infrastructure hubs, such as: What do these gates do? What geographies of power and authority emerge around them, especially when they are not gates that are easy to control, like point source extraction (oil, industrial mining), but part of the global transport infrastructure; such as ports.

To answer these questions, this article suggests understanding gatekeeping as a technology of governing, not a political system or type of African state. Gatekeeping practices are used by branches of government (gatekeeping being just one set of practices, among others, that governments use; thus, there is no assumption that they characterise state formation as a whole) and non-state actors. A focus on elite coalitions and rent-seeking within states risks blinding us from configurations of governing that go beyond the state, as well as the crucial role of travelling ideas and technologies in making certain practices of governing legitimate and possible, whilst others not. I thus argue that new large-scale investments – beyond the more frequent study of extractive industries – provide windows onto *practices* of gatekeeping in new ways; the ways they are used by different branches of government and state administration, corporations, competing groups of port and security professionals, as well as old and new investors. These affect reconfigurations of how 'states' are performed, as much as they give rise to new transnational political geographies.

With a great deal of external resources going into ports, mines, roads, and pipelines, sites of large-scale economic and infrastructure investment can thus be seen as 'frontier zones'¹¹ in which well-known modes of governing are reproduced and reinforced, but in which contestation and new practices also become visible.¹² The article analyses the different practices of gatekeeping that infrastructure hubs – and thus, the proliferation of new *entrepôts* – bring about, and the kind of 'state effect'¹³ they have. It is also, however, an exploration of broader political geographies beyond the state, as infrastructure hubs form part of complex transboundary topologies made up of a multiplicity of actors, standards and technologies, in particular so in times of intensifying South–South relations and increasingly diverse international relations of the continent.¹⁴

The argument will be developed using Tanzanian ports – the port of Dar es Salaam as well as new ports under consideration – as exemplary cases. Gates to the African continent

are once again high up on the international agenda.¹⁵ Prominent among them are the ports as major chokepoints through which African resources are accessible and fed into the global market. In Tanzania alone, the World Bank pledged \$565 million to 'Open[...] the Gates'¹⁶ to refurbish Dar es Salaam port. However, new funding opportunities have also given rise to a proliferation of new *entrepôts* along the Tanzanian coast with several major projects under way (though to varying degrees), such as an expansion of the port of Mtwara in anticipation of offshore gas exploitation by BG, Statoil and Ophir, and Tanga port to the north as hub for the oil to come through the new Uganda pipeline. The most spectacular project, however, is the planned new 800-hectare, US \$10 billion megaport at Bagamoyo (about 60 km North of Dar es Salaam), funded by Chinese and Omani investors. Fieldwork was conducted in spring 2015 and consisted of interviews within the port of Dar es Salaam, as well as with key port stakeholders, including the Tanzanian Port Authority. In addition, reports by the port authority and international funders from the past seven years were consulted, and complemented with an analysis of the reporting made in Tanzanian newspapers.

After conceptualising gatekeeping as a technology of governing, I use this lens to explore gatekeeping and 'gate-making' practised around the Tanzanian ports of Dar es Salaam and Bagamoyo. The article concludes by summarising the key arguments and discussing them in relation to the literature on extraction.

Gatekeeping and frontier zones of 'the global'

As discussed in the introduction to this special issue, Frederick Cooper's notion of a gatekeeper state establishes the production of empirical statehood in Africa in the colonial encounter, coproduced by colonial governments that fostered an outward, extraction-oriented political economy.¹⁷ He traces the emergence of fragmented territoriality organised around selected economic hubs back to the colonial past, and shows how 'gatekeeper states' emerged from this process and have been sustained by postcolonial governments, along with international and transnational actors. Gatekeeper states are characterised by relying on the control of access to revenue derived from movement and processes between the inside of a state and the outside world.¹⁸

These arguments draw on a long tradition of thought. The rentier state literature, for instance, has highlighted the complicit relationship between point-of-source extraction, external firms and regimes, stressing the importance of rents from natural resources along with sovereignty rents from security cooperation, corporate philanthropy and aid.¹⁹ In return, host governments deploy their coercive capacities in order to protect oil and mining installations,²⁰ or – in fact – outsource these services to transnational actors. Soares de Oliveira talks of 'successfully failed states' in the case of the oil-rich states in the Gulf of Guinea: the governments of these states are successful in maintaining political power through extracting resource rents, and MNCs have built successful relationships with these governments to secure extraction.²¹

While it is a useful metaphor, there are two limitations in the analytical purchase of 'the gatekeeper state' that shall be addressed here. The first is that gatekeeping at times risks being used as a catch-all phrase for any strategy African governments use to regulate and limit contestation and access to higher political office. As Beresford argued, it is not synonymous with corruption or the idea of neopatrimonialism either. Instead of a pathology of African states and societies, it relates to a broader spectrum of capitalist practices of

controlling access to revenues and opportunities in little-diversified and resource-dependent economies.²² 'Harvesting' revenue from key gates between the internal and the external world, based on the symbolic capital of the state mediating between the two, is thus a key practice of gatekeeping.²³ Yet, firstly, it is not an exotic feature of African states but a broader phenomenon. Secondly, like neopatrimonialism, the notion of the gatekeeper state remains too broad. Instead of identifying a distinct type of state, gatekeeping practices occur in many societies and lead to very different political and economic (state) trajectories.²⁴ Thirdly, this perspective causes us to narrowly focus on certain practices of gatekeeping, by certain actors, at the expense of others.

A second limitation is the focus on elite coalitions within states, and on government revenues and rent-seeking behaviour. In most studies of the political economy of infrastructure in Tanzania, there is a tendency to prioritise the 'who' question, and thus to echo a protracted research agenda intent on explaining policy outcomes as a result of elite bargains and factional struggles.²⁵ This literature only tangentially touches upon issues of *how* forms of authority fluctuate over time. When it comes to infrastructure, the literature remains even more silent on the 'how' question. Thus, Matteo Rizzo's probe into the delays in the Bus Rapid Transit System project in Dar es Salaam is concerned with 'what different Tanzanian actors stood to lose from its implementation, and the way in which they were able to resist and influence the project'.²⁶ Similarly, gatekeeper state perspectives focus on whether and how state elites keep control over revenues and side payments from large-scale investment. Whilst important, this does not pay sufficient attention to the role of perceptions and ideas in making certain actors and practices of governance, such as gatekeeping, legitimate and possible.²⁷ It also accepts the state as a given and as the most relevant political entity, blinding out questions about configurations of governance beyond the state.

In particular, it is necessary to consider how territory has become a political technology beyond the state.²⁸ Territoriality is a historically specific mode of organising social control in a 'space with a border that allows effective control of public and political life'.²⁹ It is linked to the emergence of sovereignty – the linking of political authority or 'decision space' to an 'identity space' within the bounded territory of states. Although it was institutionalised as the dominant mode of political ordering in the era of the modern nation state (1870s–1960s), nowhere is it fully realised. The very idea of a boundary between an inside and an outside of the state is historically and geographically very specific.³⁰ In many parts of Africa, and the rest of the world, the limited territorial reach of the central state is nothing new, and has always combined with a multiplicity of parallel, overlapping, and sometimes competing, spatial orders and sovereignties.³¹ Infrastructural power is limited and selectively developed and *de facto* statehood is less territorial than 'rhizomatic', as Bayart put it.³²

It is important to bring this observation together with recent thought in economic and political geography. Deborah Cowen recently argued that at nodes of global transport (such as ports) different governmental logics clash: that of a global space of logistics with that of nation state territoriality.³³ Within the large technical system of capitalist logistics, territory is not necessarily controlled by the governments of states but is a technology through which to govern beyond the state. As such, 'global territories' proliferate as transnational zones, gateways and corridors and are a core feature of neoliberal capitalism.³⁴ This recalibration has been analysed as 'geoeconomics' to capture the reconfiguration of relations between space politics and economy,³⁵ a 'recalibration of international space between by globalised market logics and transnational actors'.³⁶

Ports are frontier zones of such recalibrations. Here is where it is most visible how 'emergent global assemblages coexist with vast stretches of older historical formations constitutive of the modern nation state.'³⁷ Instead of focusing on the state's role in controlling gates, and thus on the closing off and enclaving character of gates, it is important to shed light on connections and how they transform the way gates are shaped, and by whom. Indeed, ports are bubbles of governance characterised by a proliferation of transnational standards, technologies and professionals. They are transnationally connected and differentially bounded zones – a mixture of dis-embedding and connecting is evident. Most transnational business activity rely on 'fixed and secure infrastructure',³⁸ yet their being organised through (gatekeeper) states is historically specific. On the one hand, as Sidaway and Ong postulated, transport hubs such as ports can indeed be read as spaces in which sovereignty is graduated.³⁹ On the other hand, the question is rather: what are the emerging social and political spatialities that dispersed networks of production and consumption bring into being? The challenge is to think of this in terms that overcome state-centric and territory-centric analysis.

This recalibration has implications on how to think about gatekeeping practices: who is involved, how it is done, and to what effect. Modes of regulating access to movement and resources change throughout history, and continue to do so today. Thus, the questions raised by Cooper remain important, but it is useful to extend them and look at them from a different angle. Elements of what Cooper termed the gatekeeper state are alive and well today, and gatekeeping still operates through pockets of state-controlled territory, with the help of foreign investors.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, I suggest that it is analytically fruitful to move on from the form (gatekeeper state) to look at technologies of governing in order to study practices of gatekeeping: technologies that governments as well as other actors with claims to political authority use to control and shape key zones of circulation. Such practices may, for instance, include restricting access to political office to control gates, controlling access to sources of income from gates, or controlling physical access to economic hubs, such as by means of security measures (fences, access controls, special legislation). Gatekeeping also includes gaining new or keeping old gates through sustained investment over time. This is not an exhaustive list and part of the contribution of this article is to explore a greater breadth of these practices empirically.

Dar port and state practices of gatekeeping

For at least the past 30 years, the growth and integration of the shipping and logistics industry has increased exponentially, and economic financialisation and deregulation have further eased transoceanic trade. In Tanzania, these transformations have manifested in a shift from the port of Dar, owned and run by the state-owned Tanzania Port Authority, to the private management of parts of the port. In the early 2000s, cargo and container operations were split into two terminals, and the container terminal was handed over to a private operator, Tanzania International Container Terminal Services Ltd (TICTS). TICTS is a joint venture between world-leading port operator Hutchison Port Holdings of Hong Kong and a Tanzanian business group. TICTS started to exclusively handle the containerised cargo mooring in berths 8–11, as well as utilising the largest section of the container yard for temporary storage.

As argued above, this privatisation of part of the port should not be misunderstood as a loss of state control over the gate per se. Rather, 'Gatekeepers have a capacity to grant or deny access to resources and opportunities'.⁴¹ The monopoly to grant licences to private actors for running key infrastructure, such as the licence to TICTS to run the Dar container terminal, or for mineral extraction, is a classic privilege and source of rent governments earn across the world. The landlord model is a widespread model of contemporary port management and considered the most efficient in Africa.⁴²

Furthermore, specific positions in the state administration offer privileged opportunities to control further access to revenues from the gate in the form of grand corruption. Importantly, gatekeeper politics are not synonymous with corruption, but corruption is a symptom of it, as are battles over who controls various rents accrued from the 'gate'.⁴³ In the case of Dar port, eyebrows were raised several times over non-transparent and collusive politics around it. First, the individuals behind the local shareholders of TICTS, a member of the Hong Kong based Hutchison Holdings Ltd., have not been disclosed. Second, the Tanzanian government ignored a negative parliamentary vote in 2010 and extended TICTS's concession by 15 years.⁴⁴ Adding to that, grand corruption and mismanagement have continued to plague senior members of the Tanzania Ports Authority (TPA). Scandals continually succeed one another. In 2012, the Director General, the Dar es Salaam Port Manager, and the Oil Jetty Manager were suspended on allegations of cargo theft; in January 2013, the new head of TPA was dismissed after an accusation of cargo and oil theft. His ordeal only worsened when he was later charged of irregularly awarding a Chinese company a tender to build the new berths in the port of Dar. Then, in February 2015, TPA's Acting Director General Madeni Kipande was dismissed, pending an investigation into alleged mismanagement.⁴⁵ In the words of one interviewee:

I think TRA and the Port Authority were losing a lot of containers earlier [...] the containers disappeared. People think it was theft [...] We don't know whether it was theft, or an inside job [...] It's not only always corruption, but it's also part of the failure to oversee things.⁴⁶

Such mass theft is hardly possible without insider information from within core positions in the port.

The issue of mass container theft made it to the headlines of national newspapers again immediately after the election of President Magufuli in late 2015. Another large incident had happened and 349 containers reportedly went missing from the port. The highest offices – the President, the PM, and the Minister of Transport – launched a concerted, disciplinary campaign against corruption and pilfering at the port. It involved an impromptu visit to the port by PM Majaliwa, and the subsequent sacking of top officials. The PM descended once more on the port on 3 December and ordered Port Manager Mhanga to elaborate on new reports about 2,400 containers reportedly having disappeared from the port without due payment of taxes.⁴⁷ Subsequently, Magufuli sacked the Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Works, the TPA Director General, along with three additional senior and eight middle managers. He also dissolved the TPA board.⁴⁸

As citizens became aware of the sheer scale of the embezzlement, the government, TPA and petty officials such as clearing agents in the port sought to blame each other. President Magufuli had run for office on a campaign of anti-corruption and presented himself as a hands-on, uncompromising fighter of corruption. It is important to consider, however, that reshuffles of administrators in Tanzanian state-owned enterprises and bureaucracies have regularly occurred in Tanzania.⁴⁹ It remains to be seen whether and how the recent shakeups

will change state practices of gatekeeping around Dar port. They may yet prove to be another expression of factional fights between different factions within the ruling CCM party, using an anti-corruption discourse for a reshuffle of who/which rentier faction accesses the same old rents from the gate.⁵⁰

Aside from grand corruption, the port of Dar is also plagued by petty corruption at various levels. It is further evident that the centralisation of petty rents from gates is indeed limited in Tanzania.⁵¹ With the digitalisation of the port, information has become less accessible and container theft in the port has decreased. However, such activity has (for the main part) just been pushed outside the port. In the eyes of some consignees, ICDs brought about collusive business relations between private owners and top TPA officials, who secured protection and greater activity to certain ICDs.⁵² Whilst ICDs have eased port congestion to a large extent, they have only displaced – if not reinvigorated – harassment from public agents, due to the alleged collusion between TPA authorities and ICD owners, instilling a perverse incentive to create further delays and, hence, storage charges.⁵³ Higher ranking officials within the main port prefer to roam around the port or the ICDs in search of opportunities for harassment.⁵⁴ There is also a profusion of controls, with different offices and agencies performing similar controls. Again, this starts making sense once the political economy of corruption is brought into the equation.⁵⁵ Port and customs authorities use the 7-day grace storage period – which if exceeded attracts port charges – to their advantage, pushing back inspections, signatures and the issuance of release orders. Overall, petty corruption is accepted and decentralised. ‘Decentralized rents crapping’, Cooksey and Kelsall argue, is ‘part of what it takes to do business or merely go about one’s daily life in Tanzania.’⁵⁶

Thus, from large-scale corruption by high-level bureaucrats (TPA, TRA) to petty corruption in the lower echelons of state administration and the business sector, the Tanzanian government at best only loosely centralises rent management.⁵⁷ Grand corruption is more centralised – within key figures of the ruling party but not necessarily controlled by the president.⁵⁸ Therefore, unpacking what is meant by ‘the state’ is crucial here, in order to look at different gatekeeping practices and ideas beyond the (gatekeeper) state.

Extending, multiplying and transforming gates: Dar port as transnational project

Gates are not something that only African governments are concerned with. Seaports, like airports and undersea cable landing points, are ‘gateways, nodes that function as a region’s entry or exit point, house a range of technologies, and comply with standards that knit together heterogeneous communities of practice.’⁵⁹ Such gateways are strategic geopolitical locations, where things that circulate can be controlled, censored or intercepted. However, they are also sites for potential disruption. This is the reason for the application of strategies of insulation to protect (and keep) the gate, by various actors. Narrow questions about the nature and survival of state (elites) totally obscure such dynamics.

Indeed, the metaphor of gatekeeping is as much about *gatekeeping* – to prevent others from accessing revenues – as it is about keeping things flowing through these gates, and establishing new gates to continue to do so. Over and above traditional elite politics, a broader re-spacing of Africa is under way. Ports are global ‘zones’ through which extraction and trade are organised and secured by a multiplicity of standards and technologies.⁶⁰ As a

consequence, ports are managed by a heterogeneous set of actors with distinct, graduated claims to authority over particular issue areas and spaces.⁶¹

Thus, different governmental strategies by a multiplicity of actors are at work in the port of Dar es Salaam. The port, as mentioned above, changed from a state-centred arrangement to a public-private landlord-model in the early 2000s, when the container terminal was handed over to a private operator: Tanzania International Container Terminal Services Ltd (TICTS). TICTS is a joint venture between world-leading port operator Hutchison Port Holdings of Hong Kong and a Tanzanian business group. The port is also being refurbished and substantially extended. These extensions are an international project. Donors such as the European Commission, the World Bank and DFID provide the funding required to push the global agenda of trade facilitation forward. The World Bank and DFID – through its subsidiary, TradeMark East Africa – foot the bill for the USD 565 million required to refurbish the port of Dar and its vicinities towards doubling the port's throughput.⁶² This is in addition to earlier assistance provided by the World Bank to the Tanzania Ports Authority to train security officers, install CCTV, and purchase patrol boats and vehicles. International donors also provide the intellectual backbone underpinning such agenda, all within the 'Big Results Now' narrative. This initiative was inspired by the so-called Malaysian Development Model, which has been in implementation since 2013 and has the goal of delivering quantifiable policy outcomes in six priority areas. Predicated upon the trinity of trade, investment and poverty reduction, this 'theory of change' anticipates increased physical access to markets, an enhanced trade environment and improved business competitiveness.⁶³

The internationalisation inherent in these port reform projects is ambivalent as regards the reconfiguration of what Cooper referred to as the gatekeeper state. On the one hand, ideas about how the port should be governed have shifted and market logics have been integrated into efforts of building a 'governance state'.⁶⁴ An illustration of this came from the Tanzanian government minister, when he called on state agencies TPA and TRA to 'stop being so bureaucratic'⁶⁵ to focus on facilitating throughput and the global flow of goods. The Maritime Gateway project to reform the port of Dar es Salaam includes efforts at improving 'good governance' and anti-corruption. On the other hand, the reform agenda keeps the government in the privileged position of being able to negotiate new licence agreements and contracts for refurbishment, and to interpellate the state as the sovereign and legitimate authority to regulate and control what goes through the port. Thereby, in practice, they enact and reinforce the (gatekeeper) state.⁶⁶

The Tanzanian Port Authority saw its role diminish with the privatisation of the container terminal, in the sense that it no longer runs it. However, it retains the operation of the remaining berths, and has regulatory authority over the privatised 'global zone' of the container port. The Tanzania Revenue Authority (TRA), for instance, retained jurisdiction over taxation of trade activities. In particular, it alone authorises the displacement of containers, or bulk cargo, inside and outside the port. Other state agencies are assigned other controls that alter container flows, ranging from Customs, the Weights and Measures Agency, to various ministries and sector-specific agencies. A diminishment of state power is, therefore, not the outcome of these transformations, as prominent critics of privatisation have argued. Rather, ideas and practices of how ports should be run have become rearticulated through transnational 'modes of government' that include companies, transnational experts and other intermediaries.⁶⁷

A further indicator of the port as a frontier zone and transnational project is the Fair Competition Commission (FCC) installed as a new mediator between multinational corporations and the Dar port authority. Attempts on the part of the FCC to enforce anti-counterfeit regulations anchored locally the efforts of multinationals such as Samsung, Phillips and Unilever to protect their high-value trade across transnational routes and market places. Whilst engineers and representatives from these multinational companies need only descend upon Tanzania in person once every three months, they oversee their interests in the Tanzanian market from a distance through the FCC's mediation. '[T]ransnational apparatuses of governmentality [...] overlay [...] and coexist [...] with older, nation-state based modes of governance.'⁶⁸ Although the Tanzanian government remains the main gatekeeper regarding licences and other revenues accrued from granting access to the port, ports are also spaces of graduated sovereignty. Infrastructural developments and state authority may coevolve, but this leads to much more diverse results in terms of power and authority than a reinforcement of the gatekeeper state. Brenda Chalfin's work on the Ghanaian port of Tema finds that the government's strategic partnership with private logistical operators granted the port operator the ability to enact 'modalities of governance that the state could never fully pursue on its own.'⁶⁹

At the same time, however, international standardisation, such as the International Shipping and Port Security Code (ISPS), and transnational technological devices, such as cargo scanners and other electronic equipment, transform how power is exercised and create a form of 'derivative sovereignty'⁷⁰ through highly technocratic political arrangements – neither state nor non-state. One such global technology in Dar is the e-customs programme TANCIS. The Tanzanian Revenue Authority launched the Tanzania Customs Integrated System (TANCIS) in 2014, 'built on hi-tech principles with a view to increasing effectiveness, efficiency, transparency, and reliability in the Customs administration.'⁷¹ TANCIS follows similar systems introduced in Hong Kong (1986), Singapore (1989–1991), Malaysia (1996–2004), Ghana (2001) and Nigeria (2009). Crucially, TANCIS substitutes tax officials and clearing agents in favour of electronic procedures, thus powerfully transforming who controls, and is able to interfere, with flows of cargo. However, the new system is not all-powerful; the programme has not yet fully supplanted previous practice, with some handling still being carried out on paper. An unintended effect is that tax agents can now switch from the virtual to the physical environment at their convenience, thus retaining a margin for manoeuvre in governing port activities.⁷² Nevertheless, the electronic system and the standards it operates under illustrate gates as part of a global zone that is bounded by standards and harmonised technology, not physical boundaries.⁷³ Supply chain governance can decouple exceptional zones and 'secure areas' from domestic politics and integrate them in contemporary logistical landscapes.⁷⁴

Gate-making – imaginaries of development from Dubai to China

The gate economy is growing and new gates to Africa are continually being built based not only on new sources of investment, but also on new imaginaries of development. Imaginaries about infrastructure and modernity have been crucial drivers behind large infrastructure projects in the past, and they continue to be so today.⁷⁵ Imaginaries evolve with time, and change, and are located in specific contexts.

Lobo-Guerrero illustrates such a shift that has taken place between the early twentieth century and contemporary narratives about the port of Hamburg. From being seen as a place of exchange and a 'clearing-house for international commerce' in the past, the port is now understood as a 'future-oriented, market-seeking, successful economic venture'.⁷⁶ Much of the discourse used by the Hamburg port authority resembles that used in reference to Dar port: traffic jams are not only a new matter of concern in Dar, but also in Hamburg, where the port authority calls for 'no jams in front of the gateway to the world'.⁷⁷

Yet infrastructure is back on the agenda, not only for African governments, but also in an increasingly diverse set of international development agendas more broadly. In addition to the World Bank, the Western-led Infrastructure Consortium Africa and NEPAD-led Programme for Infrastructural Development, many African governments and the African Union have concluded deals with the governments of China, Brazil and the Gulf monarchies to further develop ports and other infrastructure. These new investors, with the models and imaginaries of the modern futures they evoke, merit more attention.

The most spectacular new project in Tanzania is the planned 800-hectare megaport at Bagamoyo, about 60 km South of Dar es Salaam, funded – and also inspired by – models of development from the Gulf and China. The idea of a new port in Bagamoyo had been present in the port community since at least 2007; the former government of president Kikwete pushed for its realisation. However, the project did not actually start to take shape until October 2014, when Tanzania signed a memorandum of understanding with China and Oman. Thereafter, reports in the media about the progress of the project were contradictory, until a major breakthrough occurred in October 2015 when, two months before his mandate expired, President Kikwete laid the foundation stone for the 800-hectare port, and an adjacent 1,700-hectare Export Processing Zone in his hometown. The government launched the major initiative promising the ability to handle even the largest Panamax container vessel, and a handling capacity of twenty million containers a year (Dar's capacity is less than one million).⁷⁸ After it was announced as being shelved by the new Magufuli administration in January 2016,⁷⁹ the project is going ahead with funding from China and Oman, and the Deputy Minister of Trade, Industry and Investment announced in October 2017 that it will be operational from 2020 to 2021.⁸⁰

The Bagamoyo megaport was presented by the Kikwete government as making the Tanzanian state a *gateway to modernity*. Although this is very close to the World Bank's language around the Maritime Gateway Project, which focuses on Dar port, Western donors were against it, and argued for exhausting Dar's potential fully before investing in new infrastructures.⁸¹ Yet the modernity envisioned, and funding for it, no longer depend on Western models. Instead, imaginaries of how to be(come) modern take new and more diverse routes. This has been argued more broadly by Sidaway;⁸² and along the East African coast, references to this kind of diversification are notable. Djibouti, apart from having become the host for military bases for the US, France, Japan, and China, has allowed Dubai's DP World to construct a large multi-purpose port at Dolareh. Africa Riskwatch sees this alongside other strategies of establishing new commercial hubs based on South–South investment and vision, such as that by Rwanda (hub to the Great Lakes) and Kenya ('Kenya's 'Vision 2030' plan vows to 'bring Dubai to Kenya' through large infrastructure projects).⁸³

In the case of Bagamoyo, the port and the planned adjacent special economic zone are modelled on two major archetypes of new zones of development: Dubai and Shenzhen. The Tanzanian president stated in 2014: 'If we invest in logistic centres, improve on infrastructure

and create a facilitative environment, we can easily turn Dar es Salaam into another Dubai of its kind.⁸⁴ This idea was then attached to the new Bagamoyo mega-project, and there is no doubt that it taps into a more widespread narrative about Dubai as model for commercial success.⁸⁵ As I have argued elsewhere, it has come to not only embody the idea of an enactment of seamless 'topological compression', but is the inspiration for distinct 'economies of anticipation'⁸⁶ attached to a 'Dubai model'. As shown by Wippel and Chorin, the exact content of the Dubai model remains rather vague. It boils down to anticipating that Bagamoyo may emulate Dubai's exceptional development as global shopping mall and logistics hub (despite Dubai's unique circumstances, which are unlikely to be replicable elsewhere).⁸⁷

Yet Dubai is, of course, not the only imaginary, and source of funding, for new gates. The Chinese ambassador to Tanzania recently proclaimed that the Bagamoyo project would turn Bagamoyo into a new Shenzhen.⁸⁸ As described by Brautigam and Xiao, Shenzhen was part of an early experiment with foreign direct investment and market liberalisation in China, and one of the first four SEZs on the mainland, created in 1979.⁸⁹ It is seen as a particularly successful case, having transformed 'from fishing village to an industrialised metropolis within a generation.'⁹⁰ The China Merchants Group had a key role in Shenzhen's development and China Merchants Holding International is now chiefly involved in implementing and running the new Bagamoyo port.

Both narratives resonate with the argument that infrastructures not only perform technical functions, but also generate visions and evoke desire,⁹¹ an aspect barely captured by the rentier and gatekeeper-state literature. There is a long tradition of using large-scale infrastructures to represent state power to its citizens. Although they are also about gaining new gates and the revenues from them, the anthropology of the state has shown how new roads, dams and ports enact 'the state' and bring symbolic capital to legitimise it.⁹² In the case of Bagamoyo port, even newspapers such as *The Citizen* or *The East African*, more often than not detractors of Tanzanian authorities, have praised the Bagamoyo project within their pages.⁹³ Such appreciation is not always linked to functionality as infrastructure comes to represent 'the possibility of being modern, of having a future, or the foreclosing of that possibility.'⁹⁴

Conclusion

Starting from Frederick Cooper's notion of the gatekeeper state, this article suggested moving beyond the gatekeeper state as a structure, and instead to look at the processes around gates – and at gatekeeping practices – by state elites and other actors. Such an approach not only keeps in view that gates are important sites from which governments derive rents and revenue, but also affords more attention and analytical space to trace broader transformations of power and authority in Africa beyond the state. New large-scale investments in infrastructure – beyond the more frequently studied extractive industries – offer windows onto transnational *practices* of gatekeeping in new ways, and as used by different branches of government and state administration, corporations, competing groups of (port) professionals, and security services. In this sense, ports are veritable frontier zones in which transnational political geographies emerge and transform. In particular, gatekeeping as a practice is a fruitful analytical strategy to capture the imaginaries of development, and practices that 'new' investors, such as China and the Gulf Monarchies, incite. They inform us of how states are performed and transnational zones are governed today.

Focusing on ports and not more frequently studied gates usefully diversifies our understanding of the geographies of power and authority in Africa. In contrast to point source extraction by large-scale oil and mining companies, ports have a more diverse set of actors involved – as part of a global network of logistics and transport – and are more difficult to control centrally. For extractive industries it has been shown that privatisation as ‘indirect discharge’ is an important technology by which seemingly weak states (re)gain control of gates by relying on transnational actors.⁹⁵ Beyond such effects of state reconfiguration and a regaining of strength by incumbent elites, much more is at play in transport hubs. Tanzanian ports are part of a global logistical infrastructure in which complex technical systems powerfully govern access, flows and ruptures. At the same time, more diverse visions of development shape the emergence and governance of new gates, featuring new investment from the Global South, especially in infrastructure.

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Notes on contributor

Jana Hönke is an associate professor and a Rosalind Franklin Fellow in International Relations at the University of Groningen. She is the author of *Transnational Companies and Security Governance* (2013) and co-editor of *Governing (In)Security in the Postcolonial World* (2012) and *The Global Making of Policing* (2016). Her articles have appeared in *Security Dialogue*, *African Affairs*, *International Political Sociology*, *Governance*, *Environment and Planning D and Mobilities* among others. Her new, ERC-funded research is on ‘infrastructure globalities’ and includes research in Tanzania, Mozambique, China, Brazil and transnational professional communities. She is also an associate editor of *Security Dialogue* and serves on the editorial board of *International Political Sociology*.

Notes

1. Boone, ‘Empirical Statehood’; Cooper, *Africa since 1940*.
2. Herbst, *States and Power in Africa*.
3. Reno, ‘How Sovereignty Matters’; Hönke, *Transnational Companies and Security*.
4. Cooper, *Africa since 1940*; Dorman, *Introduction*, this volume.
5. Poole, *Gatekeeper State Eritrea*.
6. Beresford, *Gatekeeper Politics South Africa*.

7. Hibou, "La Décharge"; Hönke, *Mining Companies Indirect Discharge*.
8. Cooper, *Concept of Globalization*; Cooper, *Africa in the World*.
9. Beeresford, *Gatekeeper Politics South Africa*, 4.
10. See Infrastructure Consortium for Africa, <http://www.icafrica.org/en/>; The World Bank, *Dar es Salaam Gateway*.
11. Sassen, *Territory, Authority, Rights*.
12. On infrastructure controversies see Hönke and Cuesta-Fernandez, *Controversies approach to infrastructure*.
13. Mitchell, *Limits of the State*.
14. Barry, *Material Politics*; Hönke and Cuesta-Fernandez, *A Controversy Approach to Infrastructure*.
15. Ford, "African Ports and Harbours"; Hönke and Cuesta-Fernandez, *Topology of Infrastructure*.
16. The World Bank, *Dar es Salaam Gateway*.
17. Cooper, *Africa since 1940*.
18. See also Hillbom, "Botswana"; Poole, *Gatekeeper State Eritrea*.
19. Ross, *Political Economy Resource Curse*; Kühn, *Aid, Opium, Rents*.
20. Beblawi and Luciani, *The Rentier State*.
21. Soares De Oliveira, *Oil and Politics*; see also Reno, 'How Sovereignty Matters'; Fisher, *When it Pays*.
22. Beeresford, *Gatekeeper Politics South Africa*; for the critique of the concept of neopatrimonialism see Engel and Erdmann, *Neopatrimonialism Reconsidered*; Pitcher et al., *Rethinking patrimonialism*.
23. Cooper, *Africa since 1940*.
24. Khan 2000 Rent seeking as process.
25. E.g. Cooksey and Kelsall, *Political Economy of Investment*; Gray, *Grand Corruption in Tanzania*; Kelsall, *Business, Politics, State*.
26. Rizzo, 2015, *Political Economy Urban Megaproject*, 251.
27. See also Gallagher in this special issue.
28. Opitz and Tellmann, *Global Territories*.
29. Maier, "Transformations of Territoriality," 34.
30. Walker, *Inside/Outside*.
31. See also Hansen and Stepputat, *Sovereignty Revisited*; Mbembe, "Edge of the World".
32. Mann, *The Autonomous Power*; Bayart, *L'État en Afrique*.
33. Cowen, *Deadly Life of Logistics*.
34. Opitz and Tellmann, *Global Territories*; also Easterling, *Zones*; Hönke and Cuesta-Fernandez, *Topology of Infrastructure*.
35. Cowen, *Deadly Life of Logistics*, 64.
36. Ibid., referring to Cowen and Smith 2009.
37. Sassen, *Territory, Authority, Rights*, 403.
38. Harvey, "Geopolitics of Capitalism," 330.
39. Sideway, *Enclave Space*; Ong, *Neoliberalism as Exception*.
40. Cf Hibou, "La Décharge"; Hönke, *Mining Companies Indirect Discharge*.
41. Beeresford, *Gatekeeper Politics South Africa*, 4.
42. Adolf and Ducruet, *Changing Port Geographies*; Trujillo et al., *Reforms of African Ports*.
43. Also Beeresford, *Gatekeeper Politics South Africa*.
44. Accessed February 21, 2010. <http://www.ippmedia.com/frontend/index.php?l=13713>.
45. Accessed January 9, 2017. <http://www.bunkerportsnews.com/News.aspx?ElementId=8584d503-d868-476d-92bb-759bd5b8e56b>.
46. Anonymous Clearing Agent, Interview 2015, Dar es Salaam.
47. Accessed January 9, 2017. <http://www.dailynews.co.tz/index.php/home-news/44832-meticulous-study-on-port-containers-scam-underway>.
48. Accessed January 9, 2017. <http://www.dailynews.co.tz/index.php/home-news/44876-magufuli-axes-ps-dissolves-tpa-board-over-port-scandals>.
49. See Gray, *Grand Corruption in Tanzania*.
50. Jacob, *Competing Energy Narratives Tanzania*, 351–2.
51. See Cooksey and Kelsall, *Political Economy of Investment*; Gray, *Grand Corruption in Tanzania*.
52. Anonymous Consignee, Interview 2015, Dar es Salaam.

53. 'Many of these TPA authorities they joined hands with some entrepreneurs and put an ICD where some of these guys are partners', Anonymous Consignee, Interview 2015, Dar es Salaam; 'ICDs [...] make anything which might create an obstacle to clearance of the goods' anonymous Freight Forwarder, Interview 2015, Dar es Salaam.
54. Anonymous Clearing Agent (2015). The One Stop Centre was inaugurated in April 2012, and hosts under the same roof all 11 agencies involved in the clearing of cargo. Source: US Embassy. http://tanzania.usembassy.gov/pr_07262012.html.
55. 'There is so much money here. They don't want to lose that grip. All those people, all the decision-makers or whatever those guys [...] they make it so easily', Anonymous Consignee, Interview 2015, Dar es Salaam.
56. Cooksey and Kelsall, *Political Economy of Investment*, 29.
57. Ibid., 85.
58. Gray, *Grand Corruption in Tanzania*.
59. Starosielski, *The Undersea Network*, 97.
60. Barry, "Technological Zones"; Hönke and Cuesta-Fernandez, *Topology of Infrastructure*.
61. See Ong, *Neoliberalism as Exceptionalism*.
62. The World Bank, *Dar es Salaam Gateway*.
63. According to TradeMark East Africa's website: Accessed May 27, 2016. <https://www.trademarka.com>. See also the Big Results Now website: Accessed March 30, 2016. <http://www.pmoralg.go.tz/quick-menu/brn/>.
64. Harrison, *World Bank and Africa*.
65. Accessed May 10, 2015. <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=6-LEgv2I5-A>.
66. Cf. Mitchell, *Limits of the State*; Schlichte, *Staat in der Weltgesellschaft* on the state as idea and practice.
67. Ferguson and Gupta, "Spatializing States," 989–90.
68. Ibid., 994.
69. Chalfin, *Recasting Maritime Governance*, 586.
70. Ibid.
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72. Anonymous Freight Forwarder, Interview 2015, Dar es Salaam; also Marketing Manager TICTS, Interview 2015, Dar es Salaam.
73. Barry, *Technological Zones*.
74. Cowen, *Deadly Life of Logistics*.
75. Larkin, *Poetics of Infrastructure*.
76. Lobo-Guerrero, *Connectivity Port of Hamburg*, 314.
77. Hamburg Port Authority as cited in ibid., 314.
78. Accessed January 28, 2014. <http://allafrica.com/stories/201401280647.html>, Accessed March 15, 2015. <http://allafrica.com/stories/201401280647.html>, Accessed September 17, 2014. <http://country.eiu.com/article.aspx?articleid=1572286741&Country=Tanzania&topic=Economy&subtopic=Forecast&subsubtopic=Policy+trends&u=1&pid=323098416&oid=323098416&uid=1>.
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81. Hönke and Cuesta-Fernandez, *Topology of Infrastructure*.
82. Sidaway, *Enclave Space*.
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87. Wippel et al., *Under Construction*, part 4; Chorin, *Articulating a 'Dubai Model'*.
88. K. Mbashiru. Bagamoyo Port Set to Start Operations By 2020, *Tanzania Daily News* October 29, 2017.
89. Brautigam and Xiaoyang, *African Shenzhen*, 30.
90. Ibid.
91. Larkin, *Poetics of Infrastructure*.
92. Ibid.; see also Chalfin, *Recasting Maritime Governance*.
93. See Accessed May 11, 2013. <http://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/news/Tanzania-plan-for--11bn-port-threat-to-Mombasa/-/2558/1849536/-/14pu3bd/-/index.html>.
94. Larkin, *Poetics of Infrastructure*, 333.
95. Hibou, "La Decharge"; Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*; Hönke, *Mining Companies Indirect Discharge*.

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