

## **La Démocratie Guinéen: Localising International Discourses and Searching for Citizens**

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Since the mid-1990s, Guinea is experiencing a slow-moving process of political decentralisation and administrative de-concentration under the official title of democratisation. While standardised international concepts of elections and citizenship rights and duties are being disseminated by NGOs, local elders and newly-elected rural and municipal councillors have different understandings, interpretations and ensuing practices that are being linked to the process.

Based on extensive ethnographic fieldwork in Coastal Guinea-Conakry, this paper investigates discursive and practical negotiations between local actors and national development practitioners. They include the re-interpretation of representative democracy, delineation of electoral constituencies and a newly-emerging notion of citizenship. In these processes, the internationally travelling concepts are being appropriated by local actors and translated into the local arena through the use of historically infused concepts and vocabulary, referring to past political regimes that are contained in people and practices of today's local arena. As a consequence, descendants of chiefly families find their claim to formal political title affirmed as they coincidentally become the primary interlocutors for the *democratisation industry's* workshops.

At the same time, these concepts are being given new meaning. Elders and councillors employ recently acquired vocabulary to show their expertise in forum-shopping. Inadvertently, however, they introduce a new debate on contemporary Guinean citizenship: the quest for a politically responsible local agent.