

**Twenty years of democratisation in East Africa, 1990–2010**  
***The gradual upheavals of political institutions and political cultures***

International research seminar  
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Although two decades is a relatively short period in political terms, it seems to be the right time to carry out an in-depth study on the dynamics that have changed — sometimes greatly — the political arena in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. This has happened while varying internal and external pressure led to the abandonment of the single party system. The end of 2005 saw the third multiparty elections in Tanzania; Kenya experienced a more than turbulent general election in 2007 (the fourth multiparty contest); as for Uganda, the ambiguous concept of “no-party democracy” did not prevent the so-called democratic elections in 2006.

The democratisation process did not occur in the same way in the three countries, where each one opted for frameworks that can now be deciphered. Among the main research themes are the following:

- Increase and instrumentalization of political parties
- Control of constitutional reform
- Renewing and/or immobilizing political networks
- Economic connivance
- Development of corruption
- Control of union demands
- Electoral fraud
- Ethnicisation of politics
- Mechanisms of political violence

On a more positive note, other themes are:

- Explosion of social movements
- Strong visibility of minorities (youth, women)
- Liberalization of political discourse
- Development of an independent press
- Creation of civil societies

This research project aims at carrying out a classical analysis of institutions (power games on the creation, dissolution, or forgetting of political parties ; power games on constitutional reforms ; etc) and to study how these power games are received by the informed public while simultaneously attempting to understand how political cultures have evolved. The process that is termed “democratisation” has led to an upheaval of political habits created not only within the political elite but also among the population at large. This public had changed and has less patience with the casual attitude of the power holders towards symbols of democracy. The time is right for a sociology of reception of political decisions to be held. This is supposed to critically identify social groups or specific sectors in which this receptivity occurs.

In this framework, one can only reason through communicating various competencies as well as mobilizing a diverse disciplinary expertise. Whereas political scientists and sociologists are the key actors, geographers, ethnologists and historians will also add their voices.

This first seminar will be held from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2008. Proposals (title + a 15-line summary) should be sent before 15 July 2008 to [jlafargue@ifra-nairobi.net](mailto:jlafargue@ifra-nairobi.net)