

## **ABSTRACT**

### **VERTICAL POWER-SHARING AND DEMOCRATIZATION IN AFRICA**

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The paper intends to build on two rather distinct strands of research: Within the debate on the merits and shortcomings of decentralised forms of governance in Sub-Saharan African countries there is a growing recognition that decentralisation and federalism may strengthen democracy by bringing government closer to the people and by creating the conditions for a more independent and plural civil society and political party system. There is little empirical evidence for these processes occurring even in the federal systems (such as Nigeria, Ethiopia and South Africa), with central governments keeping decentralised authorities under strict political surveillance and with little financial discretion over how to spend the largely centrally collected resources (Crawford/Hartmann 2008).

A second debate concentrates on power-sharing mechanisms in conflict countries and deals with the conditions for a sustainable management of conflict and a consolidation of democracy. While this literature is often concerned with the role of external actors and internal 'spoilers', more critical voices point to the failure of many power-sharing formulas in effectively ending violent conflict or guaranteeing democracy (Mehler/Tull2007, Jarstad 2008). Within this debate (and within political practice, see Kenya or Ivory Coast) there is so far little emphasis on the role of vertical power-sharing as a more sustainable way of solving conflict and institutionalising democratic rule.

Within both debates there is a common (although sometimes rather implicit) theoretical conviction that institutions matter for conflict management and democratization. The paper will engage with this assumption, first explore the theoretical nexus between different forms of vertical power-sharing (federalism and devolution) and the mixed success of democratization, then develop some hypotheses concerning the likely pre-conditions for vertical power-sharing to be relevant, and finally proceed with empirical analysis based on a small number of cases (probably Ethiopia, South Africa, Kenya, Ivory Coast).