

ASSOCIATIONS AND PRESSURE FOR DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE: THE CASE OF CAMEROON

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Structure of Presentation

- **Research Puzzle and Question**
- **Objectives**
- **Methodology**
- **Research Findings**
- **Conclusions of the study**
- **Status of Thesis**

The Puzzle

- **According to theory**, a vigorous associational life is beneficial for the creation and enhancement of democracy (Putnam, Paxton, Warren etc)

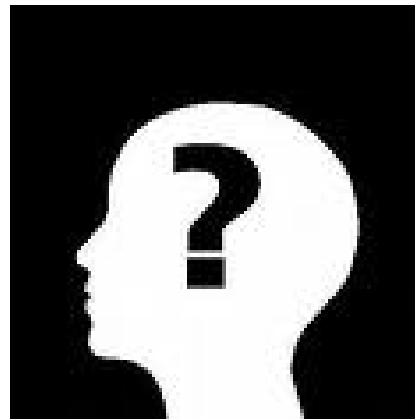
Associations → Social capital → Pursue shared goals

The theory has influenced international policy significantly (Fazwan and Farouk, 2004)

Donors are "investing" in associations with the hope that they would play this democracy and development promotion role

The Puzzle

- In African countries, such as Cameroon, the number of associations (NGOs, VDO, CBOs etc) are high. In the NW region at least 125 new associations are registered yearly
- Despite this, the progress towards democracy in Cameroon and in other African countries is either slow or has come to a stand still.



WHY?

Towards the Research Question

- The Association-Democracy relationship is still unclear.
- “there is a very large amount of thinking and research to be done if we are really to take seriously the democracy-civil society [or association] connection” (Warren, 2004)
- How prevailing **context** affects the capacity of associations to promote democracy has been largely neglected in most research (Fung, 2003: 517)

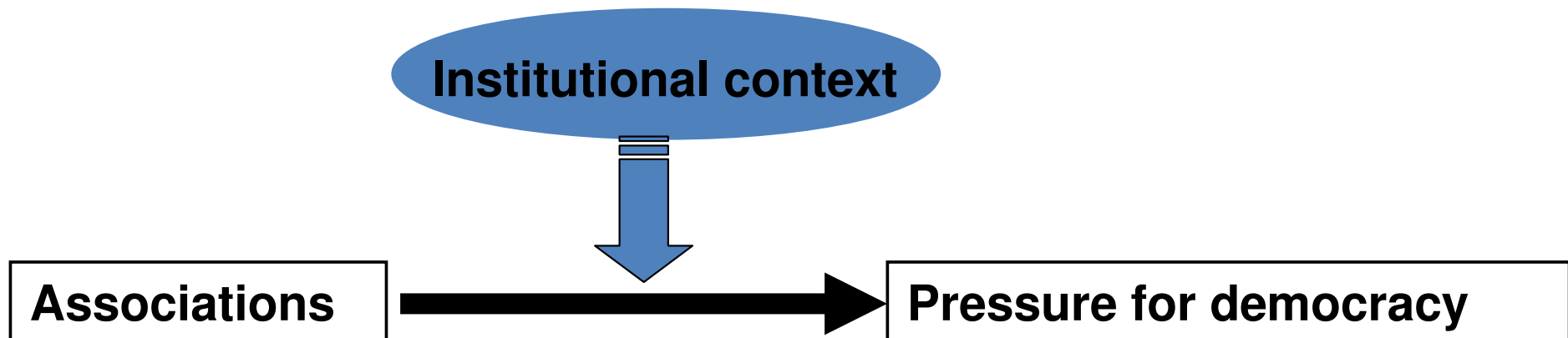
The Research Question

How does the *institutional context* affect *pressure for democracy* in associations?

Cameroon: a negative case study: 'The power of negative thinking' (Emigh, 1997)

Theoretical Focus

- 1.) The thesis that associations enhance democratic consolidation through pressure (Putnam, Paxton, Warren)
- 2.) The institutionalist argument that the 'associations-to-pressure for democracy' causal link is institutions dependent (Hall 1999, Rothstein & Stolle 2003)



Theoretical Focus

According to literature on Institutionalism, institutional context refers to the:

- (1) regulatory structures,**
- (2) norms and**
- (3) cultural**

elements within a given setting (Scott, 2001; DiMaggio and Powel, 1983)

The Research Question

How does the *institutional context* affect *pressure for democracy* in associations?

Research Objectives

- 1. Identify the parameters that are important for associations to exercise effective pressure for democratic change.**
- 2. Quantitatively measure associations' pressure for democracy in the NW region of Cameroon using the identified parameters**
- 3. Explain how contextual factors affect the bottom-up pressure parameters in the case study.**

Methodology

1. **Reviewed of literature on factors important for civil society to promote democracy** (Literature on associations, power, civil society, social movements)
2. **Administered questionnaires to 100 development-oriented associations in the case study region. Questionnaire were designed to measure each pressure parameters on scale from 0 to 10**
3. **Conducted 28 semi-structured interviews with members of associations, and government officials**

Research Findings

Objective 1: Identify the parameters that are important for associations to exercise effective bottom-up pressure for democratic change

Associations effectively mount pressure for democratic change when they have five (5) attributes, namely, POWER. That is, they carry out:

Policy and advocacy activities

Organize and form networks

Work closely with the community (social integration)

Establish links with opposition parties; and when

Resources capacities are available to them.

Research Findings

Objective 1: Identify the parameters that are important for associations to exercise effective bottom-up pressure for democratic change

Policy and advocacy activities

Organize and form networks

Work closely with the community (social integration)

Established links with opposition parties; and

Resources capacities

O and W relate to social capital

P and E relate to political capital

Research Findings

Objective 2: Measure bottom-up pressure in the NW region of Cameroon, quantitatively, using the identified parameters

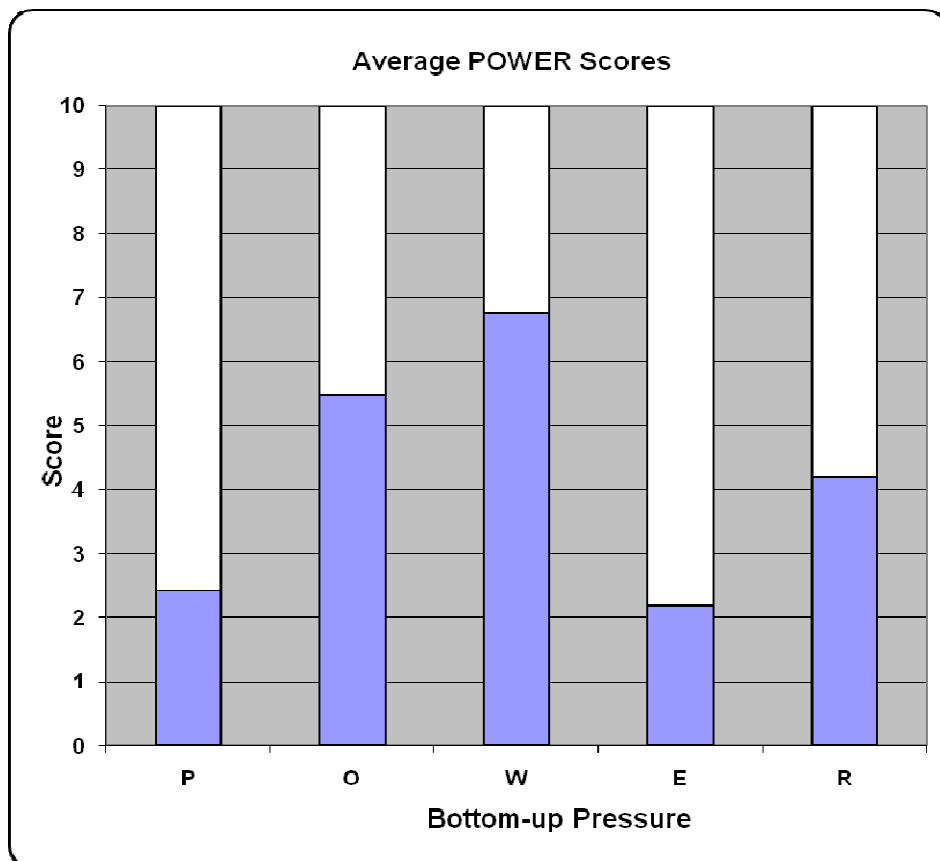
Questionnaire used for assessment

PARAMETER	QUESTIONS inspired from
Policy and advocacy	Indicators of political activity used in the standardized Roper Survey (Putnam, 2000)
Organization and Networking	Integrated questionnaire for the measurement of Social Capital (Grootaert et al, 2004)
Work with the community	
Established links with opposition	Consultations with leaders of associations
Resource capacity	The important resources for social movement organisations (Cress and Snow, 1996)

Questionnaire was well grounded in established scientific practice

Research Findings

Objective 2: Measure bottom-up pressure in the NW region of Cameroon quantitatively using the identified parameters

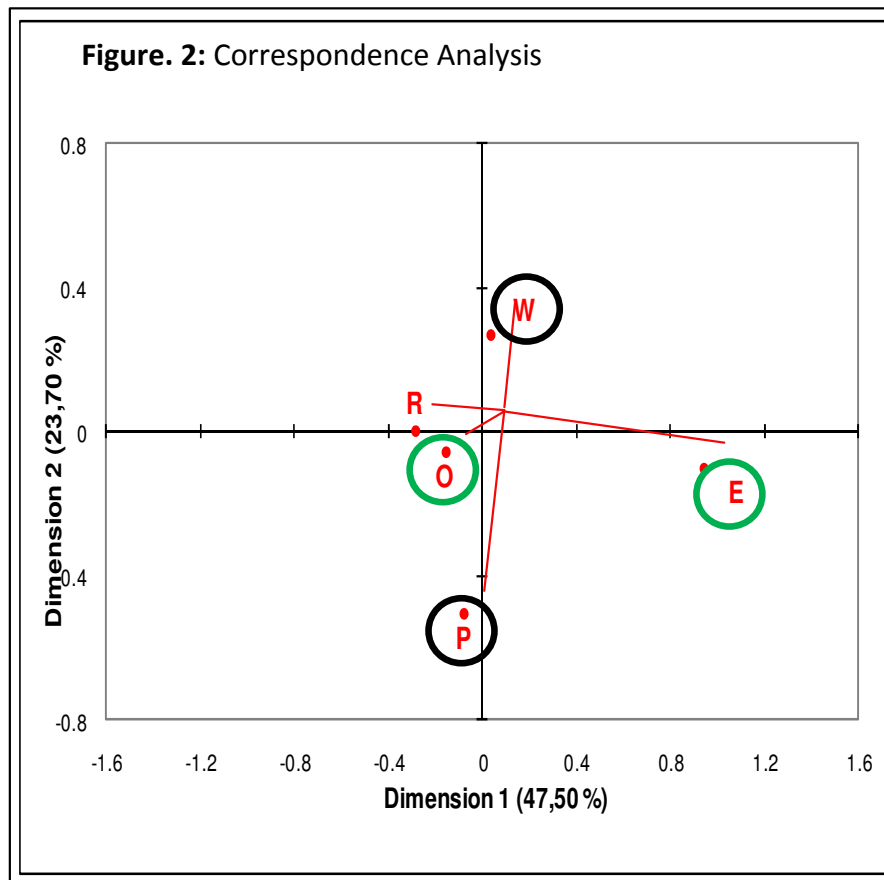


- In the case study, **Social capital** parameters (O and W) are **high**,
- But **Political capital** parameters (P and E) are **low**
- Resource capacity (R) of associations is also low.

Social capital and political capital are not coupled

Research Findings

Objective 2: Measure bottom-up pressure in the NW region of Cameroon quantitatively using the identified parameters



Correspondence analysis shows the relationship between the 5 parameters in the case study

W and **P** are **opposite** each other

O and **E** are **opposite** each other

Again: **Social capital and political capital are *not* coupled in the case study.**

Research Findings

From the measurement of bottom-up pressure (objective 2), the case shows that:

- **Associations may generate high social capital, but this does not automatically produce political capital that promotes democracy.**
- **Argument: “For social capital to have any impact on democracy it has to be transformed into political capital“ (Fazwan and Farouk, 2004: 2)**

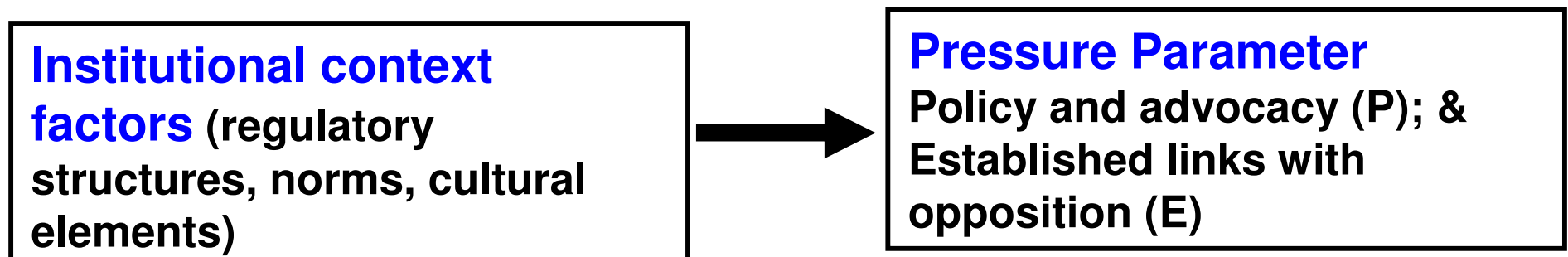
Proposition:

In the association-democracy relationship, the critical role of institutions is influencing the extent to which social capital transforms into political capital

Research Findings

Objective 3: Explain how institutional context factors **affect** the pressure parameters in the case study (especially P. and E.)

To explain effect, means to draw causal inference,



The Dominant opinion on causation

One cannot make causal inference with a single case study where there is no variation of the dependent variable

Example:

“Nothing whatsoever can be learned about the causes of the dependent variable without taking into consideration other instances when the dependent variable takes on other values”
(King et al, 1994: 129)

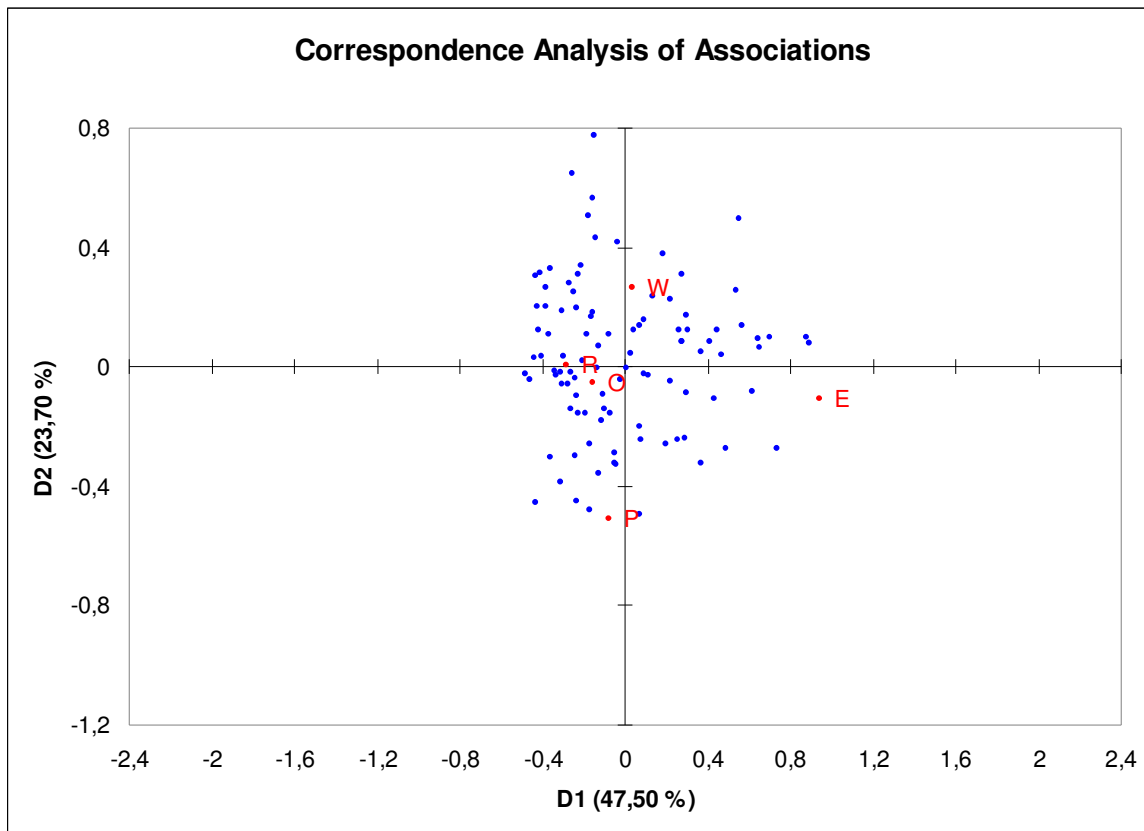
”Empirical evidence of causal relationships is covariational in nature” (Gerring, 2005: 187-8)

An alternate philosophy of causation:

- Covariation is not the only philosophy or school of thought in causation
- In single case (“no-variance”) studies with many within-case units, **causal homogeneity** provides a strong basis for analysis and explanation (Munck, 2004: 110)
- Causation is assumed when research subjects under the same cause-parameter, **exhibit ‘similar’ values of the effect-parameter** (Collier et al, 2004: 29).

Research Findings

Objective 3: Explain how institutional context factors **affect** each of the parameters in the case study (especially P. and E.)



- Correspondence analysis shows that there is high clustering or homogeneity among associations
- An institutional environment will influence organization in it to become homogenous (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983)

Given high homogeneity among within-case units, it is therefore legitimate to rely on qualitative data in the single case for drawing causal inference

Research Findings

Objective 3: Explain how institutional context factors **affect** the ability of associations to be political (especially P. and E.)

1.) Regulatory institutions:

- Government harassment of members of politically-active associations
- State regulations which demand that associations have no party affiliations
- The law gives the state the right to forbid demonstrations etc
- Funding is skewed towards non-political activities that have tangible output
- Corruption and clientelism are so entrenched that the the non-player tends to be the loser. This discourages non-playing; ie advocacy for change
- Associations lack capacity and knowledge on advocacy
- Scramble for resources among associations kills collaboration for advocacy

Research Findings

Objective 3: Explain how institutional context factors **affect** each of the parameters in the case study (especially P. and E.)

2) Normative institutions:

- An enduring enemy mentality between state and opposition discourages linking with the opposition ---- [Either with us or against us]
- Opposition parties are also perceived as not credible; shadows of regime
- A "Professionalization of politics" norm exists: policy issues should be left to politicians

3) Cultural elements:

- A persistent culture of respect for elite and chiefs within village associations makes it easy for them to discourage anti-regime agendas
- Very low culture of volunteering
- A culture of competition rather than collaboration exists among associations.

Conclusion

- 1.) For associations to effectively exercise pressure for democracy, five attributes, namely, P.O.W.E.R are important
- 2.) Social capital which associating readily promotes does not always come along with political capital.
- 3.) Institutional factors ranging from regulatory structures, norms and cultural elements influence the development of political capital from social capital.

Conclusion

- While it is correct that associations promote social capital, the expectation that this will promote democratic change should take into consideration how institutional factors dampen political capital.

For associations to enhance democracy, support to them should specifically target advocacy activities, as well as initiatives that challenge norms, laws and cultural codes which dampen their engagement with the political.