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ABSTRACT

In recent years there has been a massive influx of aid to civil society HIV/AIDS work in Africa. Drawing on fieldwork in Rwanda this article explores, through a governmentality perspective, the rationalities and technologies of government that accompany the new funding schemes. The paper feeds into contemporary debates on the relevance of governmentality studies in Africa and on the complicated relationship between state, civil society and international donors in the particular context of Rwanda. Despite the country’s known record of authoritarian politics the paper argues that Rwandan civil society organizations are in fact largely subject to advanced liberal rule, rendering them responsible and active in their own government. This global governmentality, in turn, unfolds through a post-political machinery that effectively blurs boundaries between international donor, state, and civil society institutions. Ultimately, this means that researchers interested in resistance must be prepared to extend their visual field considerably.

KEYWORDS:

governmentality, development cooperation, Rwanda, HIV/AIDS, civil society, resistance
Introduction

Over the past decade huge sums of money have been mobilized to fight HIV/AIDS in Africa. A significant share of these resources has been channelled through civil society organisations (CSOs). Hence, to all outward appearance, international donors and African Governments are recognizing CSOs as important partners in the global HIV/AIDS response. Recent developments in Rwanda reflect this overall trend. The country has received substantial and increasing levels of HIV/AIDS funding over the last years and this has prompted a mushrooming of CSOs engaged in HIV/AIDS work. Notably, the membership of the national umbrella organization has quadrupled since the turn of the millennium and CSOs are officially recognized as ‘major implementers’ of the National Strategic Plan for HIV/AIDS (NSP) (RoR, 2009).

Yet, in a world where few things come for free, these developments bring certain questions to the fore. What modes of government convoy the new economic support and how do these technologies influence the everyday practices of CSOs? How must these ‘partners’ conduct themselves in order to be eligible for funding and what implications does this have for ‘civil society’? Spurred by such questions this article attempts to feed into two recent debates. The first concerns the relevance of the Foucauldian concept of ‘governmentality’ as a tool for analysing transnational power relations on the African continent. Several well-known scholars have employed the concept to explore Western interventions in Africa (e.g. Abrahamsen, 2004; Bayart, 1993; Comaroff and Comaroff, 1999; Ferguson, 1994). However, such ‘postmodern’ approaches have also been criticized for being Euro-centric and unfit to capture African realities (e.g. Chabal 1996; Williams, 1997). Although this academic controversy obviously dates back some time it was recently reignited through a number of thought-provoking articles in the confines of international relations (IR) theory. While not entirely unsympathetic of governmentality studies in IR, provided that the broader structural
dimensions of the global order are taken into account, Joseph and Selby argue that African societies constitute something of a margin beyond which the concept has limited applicability (Joseph 2009, 2010; Selby, 2007). This alleged futility of ‘governmentality’ in Africa reflects the idea that the necessary social conditions for ‘advanced’ liberal government are non-existent on the continent. Other representatives of the discipline have responded by arguing: (a) that such a division of the world into liberal and illiberal regions constitute a grave simplification; and (b) that it is more productive to conceive of ‘governmentality’ as an analytical approach rather than solely seeing it as a neoliberal form of power (Death, 2013; Gabay and Death, 2012). Hence, instead of presupposing that ‘governmentality’ can only be deployed in contexts characterized by absence of sovereignty and discipline, Death and Gabay emphasize that a governmentality framework offers opportunities to explore the complex ways in which authoritarian and liberal power coexist and overlap in societies and political relations across the globe. They contend that ‘governmentality’ can be used productively in Africa to study how power operates through rationalized and calculated production of self-governing subjects. Moreover, that such analyses are particularly fit to explore power relations that transcend perceived binaries such as authoritarianism/liberalism, coercion/freedom, state/society and international/domestic (ibid.). This article provides further support for these arguments. Drawing on research in Rwanda the paper argues that a governmentality analysis of aid to African CSOs can take us quite far and that the simple opposition between liberal and illiberal societies is in fact rather unstable.

The second debate is confined to Rwanda. It revolves around the complicated relationship between the Government of Rwanda (GoR) and civil society in the country and how this relationship has been (mis)perceived by the international community. While there is a general consensus among leading Africanists that post-genocide Rwanda represents an authoritarian political system (e.g. Straus and Waldorf, 2011) certain disagreements prevail.
Some scholars argue that the totalitarian state has taken complete control over civil society, turning it into a mere branch of the ruling party, and that international donors, journalists and ignorant researchers have failed to recognize this by allowing themselves to be manipulated by the GoR’s spin and rhetoric of progress (Ingelaere, 2010; Purdeková, 2011; Reyntjens, 2011). Others maintain that there is still some, although admittedly limited, space for civil society to negotiate and inform policy in the country (Beswick, 2010; Gready 2010).

Moreover, that strategic interests, rather than sophisticated spin, have spurred a voluntary ‘blindness’ among international donors (Beswick 2010; Hayman 2008). While recognizing the GoR’s authoritarian practices this paper attempts to extend the scope of this debate by offering a complementary view. By illuminating how international standard practice is being cultivated among Rwandan CSOs through rationalized, calculated and, notably, joint donor-GoR interventions, the paper argues that Rwandan CSOs are in fact largely subject to ‘advanced’ liberal government not too different from that found in other parts of the globe. Furthermore, the article challenges the idea that naïve, ‘liberal’, international donors have simply been manipulated by a cunning, ‘authoritarian’, African Government. Rather, it can be argued that liberal and authoritarian government walk hand in hand in the jointly orchestrated donor-GoR attempts to establish an effective, result-oriented, development apparatus with strong *post-political* features (Mouffe, 2005), i.e. a machinery that forecloses politicization.

Using the example of HIV/AIDS aid to civil society in Rwanda this paper attempts to contribute to these debates. The aim of the article is to explore the rationalities and technologies that govern civil society HIV/AIDS work in Rwanda and to show how CSOs engage productively with this government in terms of subjectivity, agency and practice. Moreover, drawing on Foucauldian thought, the possibility, presence and place of resistance *within* these sophisticated governmental arrangements will be briefly discussed. All findings are based on fieldwork in Rwanda in 2011 and 2012. The data includes 32 interviews with
representatives of international donors, GoR authorities, INGOs and CSOs. Moreover, a one-day research workshop was carried out with 16 Rwandan CSO representatives. The data further includes policy documents, reports and other written material.

The article proceeds as follows. The next section provides an overview of the policy framework and the financial conduits that inform and fuel civil society HIV/AIDS work in Rwanda. Thereafter follows a section on ‘governmentality’ and the two different aspects – rationalities and technologies – that make up this art of government. The third and fourth sections explore such rationalities of government and illustrate how they have been made operable through mundane administrative technologies. The fifth section discusses resistance. The final section concludes.

**Policy framework and funding channels**

Rwanda’s overall response to HIV/AIDS is defined in the NSP. This is the ‘reference document for all sectors, institutions and partners’ and it outlines ‘the contribution required of each’ in fighting the disease (RoR, 2009, p. 17). The NSP is the outcome of a collaborative process involving a range of GoR authorities, international donors, INGOs and CSOs, all under the auspices of the National AIDS Control Commission (CNLS). It entails a situational analysis; a strategic framework; and a national plan for monitoring and evaluation. The strategic framework is comprehensive but comprises three main areas of activity: prevention, treatment, and impact mitigation. Interventions in all three areas are to be guided by evidence of the most effective strategies. CSOs are recognized as ‘major contributors’ and this credit is attributed to presumed qualities such as local legitimacy, community outreach, and cost-efficiency. The role of CSOs in implementing the NSP has been further defined at four Partnership Forums on HIV/AIDS (RoR, 2010). Thus, Rwandan CSOs operate in a
sophisticated policy framework where different development partners are to coordinate their activities into a concerted, result-oriented, and evidence-based effort to combat HIV/AIDS.

Although CSOs can apply for funds from a wide spectrum of donors there are two players who, in terms of financial muscle, outrank all others: the Global Fund (GF) and the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). Both operate in accordance with the NSP but their funding mechanisms are different, implying that there are two major channels of funding available for CSOs. The GF channels all its money through the Ministry of Health (MoH) and the newly established Single Project Implementation Unit (SPIU). This means that the MoH, i.e. the Rwandan Government, is the single primary recipient of GF money. At country level the orientation of GF projects is determined by the Country Coordination Mechanism (CCM). This multi-stakeholder committee, including donor, government, private sector and civil society representatives, develops and submits national proposals to the GF headquarter. After grant approval the CCM oversees the implementation process in the country. This includes announcement of funds that Rwandan CSOs can apply for through project proposals. The CCM assesses incoming proposals and decides which to grant. The SPIU manage and distribute the money from the MoH to the winning sub-recipients and it ensures that all projects are monitored, evaluated and reported back to the CCM (SPIU, 2011).

The second major financial conduit that CSOs can tap into is provided by PEPFAR. PEPFAR money is not channelled through the Rwandan Government but via INGOs who reallocates funds to sub-recipient CSOs. However, these intermediaries cooperate closely with, and report to, the GoR, all in accordance with the principles of the NSP (RoR, 2009, p. 96). The distribution process is similar to that of the GF in so far that the intermediaries apply for grants from PEPFAR and, after grant approval, make project funds available to sub-recipients through public calls. Funded CSOs report to the intermediary who, in turn, reports to the
back-donor. Hence, whether a CSO applies for GF or PEPFAR money, adherence to the principles of the NSP is imperative.

After this brief overview of the policy context the paper now proceeds to make some theoretical clarifications.

**Governmentality**

The Foucauldian concept of ‘governmentality’ has exercised significant influence on scholarly debate (e.g. Dean, 1999; Larner and Walters, 2004; Miller and Rose, 2008). Of note is that the neologism has been used in different ways. On the one hand it has come to denote a historically specific mode of government that emerged in the eighteenth century, later evolved, and today manifests itself in the form of ‘advanced’ liberal rule aiming to produce responsible self-governing subjects by mobilizing ‘free’ will (Miller and Rose, 2008). Although this represents a significant change in the workings of power it is important to recognize, as Foucault pointed out, that political rule in the era of governmentality still entails elements of sovereignty and discipline (Foucault, 2007, p. 107–108). Hence, as shown by Dean, it should come as no surprise that liberal rule in Western democracies has a ‘facilitative’ authoritarian side (Dean, 2002). Sharing such will to destabilize perceived binaries, this paper starts at the other end of the political spectrum, i.e. it turns to a known-to-be authoritarian political context in order to explore the incidence of ‘advanced’ liberal government.

On the other hand ‘governmentality’ has also been used to label a research approach that analyses techniques for the ‘conduct of conduct’ (Dean, 1999; Death 2013; Miller and Rose 2008). As an analytical approach, governmentality has been elaborated and refined by Miller and Rose for several decades and this article draws extensively on their work (Miller
and Rose, 2008). Building on insights from Foucault – e.g. that government has no centre but is exercised through a diverse set of actors and institutions; that power is not only repressive but also productive of subjectivity, agency and reason; and, that power relations are not simply characterized by domination but largely work through practices of freedom – Miller and Rose have deepened our understanding of how to analyse ‘advanced’ liberal government. This government operates through a range of mundane administrative devices that produce ‘free’ subjects while simultaneously limiting the scope of what can be deemed reasonable action. Hence a form of ‘regulated freedom’ is produced, which encourages individuals and organizations to continuously evaluate and improve themselves in accordance with certain norms and standards (ibid, p. 9). The starting point of government, Miller and Rose argue, is always problematizing. In this process an authority defines, by reference to contemporary conduct, a ‘problem’ that requires, and allows for, for some kind of government intervention. Hence, the concerned authority has to construct a problem, make it visible, and devise a way of instituting a new and ‘better’ form of conduct. According to Miller and Rose there are two aspects of governmentality: rationalities and technologies. Although not reducible to each other there is an intrinsic linkage between the two. Rationalities signify ‘ways of rendering reality thinkable’ in a way that makes it ‘amenable to calculation and programming’ (ibid, p. 16). The concept, notably used in the plural, indicates that knowledge plays a fundamental role in all forms of government. Knowledge enables an authority to on the one hand constitute and represent a phenomenon in a certain fashion, and on the other make it amenable to deliberate planning. Hence, rationalities render the object of government thinkable in such a way that it becomes possible to diagnose a problem and propose an intervention. Technologies, or ‘tools for the conducting of conduct’, are what makes such interventions possible (ibid.). They are the concrete and mundane devices ‘through which authorities of various sorts have sought to shape, normalize and instrumentalize the conduct, thought,
decisions and aspirations of others in order to achieve the objectives they consider desirable’ (ibid, p. 32). Hence, Miller and Rose direct our attention to administrative instruments that are so mundane that it is easy to forget that they constitute instruments of power.

The next two sections will explore how the concepts of rationalities and technologies resonate in the context of aid to civil society HIV/AIDS work in Rwanda.

**Governing CSOs: Rationalities**

The NSP and the Partnership Forums recognize CSOs as important partners while simultaneously implying that they are suffering from considerable weaknesses, e.g. in terms of capacity, skills, effectiveness and management (RoR, 2009, 2010). Hence, as a frequently repeated truism in these documents suggests, civil society must be ‘strengthened’. Now, a central argument of this article is that it would be a mistake to dismiss the will to ‘strengthen’ CSOs as crude rhetoric covering up an authoritarian agenda. Rather, in the context of joint donor-GoR interventions, more relevant concerns are: What kind of ‘strength’ is implied? What kind of rationalities define this will to improve? This section brings attention to four, mutually reinforcing, rationalities of government.

The Rwandan HIV/AIDS strategy is pervaded by a strong logic of *alignment*. This post-political rationality suggests that an effective response to the epidemic requires the formation of an all-encompassing ‘we’ and that there is no room for differences of opinion. Hence, suppression of ‘the political’ is paramount and all stakeholders are assigned to closely coordinate their interventions. The NSP declares that all partners must ‘transform their approaches so as to ensure that the national response is both relevant and effective’ and that this ‘will require a change of mindset’ (RoR 2009, p. 17–18). Similarly, the ‘expected outcome’ of the last Partnership Forum was that all partners should ‘have the same vision of
the response to HIV and AIDS’ (RoR, 2010, p. 11). In the opening session the Executive Secretary of the CNLS ‘cautioned partners’ that the NSP is ‘an indispensable working tool which must be used in every planning process’ and encouraged everyone to ‘carry out self-evaluation by reflecting on how they will contribute to the achievement of NSP indicators’ (ibid, 12). Of note here is that a high-ranking GoR official cautions CSOs on how to conduct themselves, and that this message is delivered in the presence, and with the official consent, of all major HIV/AIDS donors. Stakeholders that otherwise celebrate the independent voice and watchdog function of civil society. In fact, many donors appreciate the GoR’s stern approach. As stated by an INGO director:

I would say that the Government is progressive in the way it's dealing with the AIDS epidemic. They have successes. They have brought the prevalence rate from more than 10 percent now down to 3 percent. […] So they are really thinking about efficiencies, how to use their resources most effectively and that's good. That we would say is progressive thinking (Interview, INGO representative, Kigali 19 October 2011).

Apparently, an apolitical notion of ‘efficiency’ determines what is to be considered progressive government. Furthermore, the careful alignment of GoR and INGO interventions raises questions about the role and self-understanding of so-called ‘Non-Governmental’ actors. As stated by a high-ranking INGO representative:

As an international organization our lay ministry is the Ministry of Health. We work closely with the Ministry of Health and all our interventions are actually to support the ministry to achieve their mandate and to implement their work plans (Interview, INGO representative, Kigali, 14 March 2012).

The significance of this attitude should hardly be underestimated. As far as CSOs are concerned, alignment is also the norm and in this process elements of faith, ‘free’ will, and
fear are amalgamated. As one CSO representative put it: ‘The NSP is like our Bible’
(Interview, CSO representative, Kigali, 21 October 2011). Like the Bible the NSP can of
course be interpreted in different ways, but it still restricts and stabilizes conduct. She
continued with reference to the NSP:

You really have to know what are the priorities, what are the recommendations. So you don’t have to
reinvent what you want to do (ibid. My emphasis).

These quotes illustrate how government is executed through the faith and ‘free’ will of
subjects. In fact, a vast majority of all CSO representatives in this study claimed to appreciate
close cooperation with the GoR and to believe in the virtues of the NSP. Still, alignment
sometimes also entails an element of fear. One CSO representative told the story of how a
particular donor offered a big sum of money, which was very tempting to accept, but which
required deviation from national policy:

We said that we can’t work in a country as if the Government is not there. We were afraid to oppose the
Government and we decided to say to that donor that what you want we are not able to do. We are
following the Government. The donor got angry and withdrew his money (Interview, CSO representative,
Kigali, 27 March 2012).

I shall return to this incident in section five. In the meantime it can be concluded that
alignment, notably a term derived from mechanical engineering, is what is expected from
Rwandan CSOs and they by and large comply.

Civil society HIV/AIDS work is further governed through scientization. This refers to a
science-like logic suggesting that measurement and evaluation, particularly in terms of
quantitative numbers, can provide formulas for value-neutral and effective conduct. Several
scholars have brought attention to the medical overtones in global governance of HIV/AIDS (e.g. Elbe 2010; Seckinelgin, 2008). While framing problems in medical terms can form part of scientization the main concern here is how this logic discursively transforms political issues to matters of scientific evidence. Hence, scientization is not restricted to medical interventions but cut across the entire register of HIV/AIDS government including, for example, socio-economic impact mitigation. Elementary evidence of scientization can be discerned simply by looking at the slogans of two major INGOs operating in Rwanda: ‘The science of improving lives’ and ‘Healthier lives, measurable results’. Reference to science obviously produces authority and the NSP repeatedly refers to the virtues of evidence-based decision-making. Hence, CSOs are encouraged to work in accordance with, and seek legitimacy with reference to, scientific ideals. An INGO representative explained further:

We believe in measurement. If you can’t measure it, it means that it hasn’t worked. But if you can measure it, you can prove whether it has worked or not, know how to improve, and see where to invest more of your resources. […] Actually, monitoring our interventions is part of the accountability. We must make sure that we are accountable in what we are doing because we are depending on donor money (Interview, INGO representative, Kigali, 14 March 2012).

He further stressed that this ability to measure the impact of interventions is passed on to CSOs through capacity building: ‘One of our mandates is to make sure that people have a mind of evidence first’ (ibid.). That donors and the GoR are actively promoting a science-like mindset was confirmed repeatedly. Most CSOs recognized the importance of measurement while at the same time admitting that it is demanding:

It is very, very hard. You have to clarify the starting point. The baseline. So how is the situation now? Afterwards you have to show within a given time what you have achieved and after that you have to
measure the impact. So we are trying to bring in a kind of quantification. How much? How many?

(Interview, CSO representative, Kigali, 26 October 2011)

Evidently CSOs are struggling to reinvent themselves as ‘scientific’ and of note is how well this trust in evidence-based conduct resonates with the post-political logic of alignment, i.e. political issues are reinterpreted as value-neutral matters of efficiency.

A third aspect of the government of HIV/AIDS CSOs in Rwanda is marketization. This rationality reflects the conviction that market competition is the most efficient way of mobilizing and allocating resources. Consequently, as elsewhere in Africa (e.g. Seckinelgin, 2008, Thörn, 2011), HIV/AIDS aid in Rwanda is increasingly organized through competitive tendering. Most CSO representatives emphasized that the competition is severe and that this has significant consequences. One informant stated bluntly:

We are prepared to meet and beat a competing client. […] We are very much prepared. We have consulted ourselves into a well standing organization that is able to win tenders or offers that are there

(Interview, CSO representative, Kigali, 7 March 2012).

Evidently this informant has come to conceive of himself and his organization as competitive market subjects. Several CSO representatives also claimed that marketization favours experienced and rich CSOs at the expense of inexperienced and poor organizations. As stated by one informant with reference to the latter category:

They don’t have the same ability to compete. […] They struggle to get funding and while they are struggling others are being equipped and capacitated (Interview, CSO representative, Kigali, afternoon 6 March 2012).
The quote further illustrates the importance of establishing a position in the market, i.e. to accumulate experience and capital, before it becomes saturated. Yet, there is more to marketization than simply competition over tenders and grants. CSOs are actively encouraged to diversify their incomes and develop an entrepreneurial mindset. Hence, they are increasingly rendered responsible for sustaining themselves and many try hard to adapt.

I want to start a hotel or a small centre for training. There are many trainings running and this will provide some money for the organization. It will be more sustainable. [...] We have to find the money ourselves. Either through memberships or we have to think of something else that can produce money (Interview, CSO representative, Kigali, 28 October 2011).

The will to promote economic self-sufficiency among CSOs can also be understood in the greater context of the global economic crisis. An international consultant working for the GoR explained:

It's clear that there is going to be a decrease in funding. The Global Fund is having more and more problems to gather funds. PEPFAR is on a reducing slope also. So I think after 2012 we are clearly going to have less funds for HIV response and therefore there are going to be big strategic questions to be answered. [...] So this whole process that we're going through right now, the strengthening of CSOs, hopefully making them more autonomous, more efficient in terms of their interventions and their management. We can hope that by the end of this period they will be able to mobilize funds through other means and to work with less support from Government and from international donors (Interview, international consultant, Kigali, 19 October 2011).

Evidently economic resilience is going to be critical in a near future and hence the will to foster entrepreneurial conduct. It is also noteworthy that marketization blends well with the
two previous rationalities of government in so far that the market is believed to ‘neutrally’ allocate resources to the most effective and rational forms of conduct.

Civil society HIV/AIDS work in Rwanda is further governed through 
*professionalization*. This rationality suggests that an effective civil society response to HIV/AIDS requires that CSOs are transformed into professional organizations. While other scholars have brought attention to how professional CSOs, largely detached from the communities they are supposed to represent, attract resources and gain influence in policy circles (e.g. Mercer 2003, Seckinelgin 2008) the concern here is with professionalization as governing logic in its own right. The ‘professional’ organizations that the donor-GoR assemblage is so eager to produce should not be understood in the Weberian sense. Rather, what government desires are organizations inhabited by skilled people with the capacity to communicate in organizational networks and self-regulate in accordance with prevailing norms and standards. Abilities to write successful proposals, monitor and evaluate, and interpret official policies are all associated with such professional capacity. In the context of aid to CSOs professionalization is a prerequisite for ‘government through freedom’, i.e. in order to ‘work’ advanced liberal government requires professional CSOs. One INGO representative articulated the ambition to build professional capacity amongst CSOs in the following way:

I don't want to give the impression that we're like a bank just spending money. We're very much a development organization and with the funding comes considerable technical support in things like monitoring and evaluation. [...] We work comprehensively with our partners and we would say the financial contribution is much less important than the capacity building and technical support that goes with it (Interview, INGO representative, Kigali, 19 October 2011).
For CSOs the logic of professionalization makes it increasingly important to recruit staff with the ‘right’ skills. One informant took the example of his own recruitment:

I was called by one of the members here because he knew I was a consultant. We used to study together and he knew that most of my proposals were passing successfully. I used to do it for many organizations. Then they called me and I came here. They had like only one project running. So I wrote down a few proposals and submitted them to donors. Three of them have been successful (Interview, CSO representative, Kigali, 26 October 2011).

Apparently CSOs are under pressure to reinvent themselves as professional organizations and in this process recruitment of skilled people is imperative.

Thus, ultimately, ‘strengthening’ of Rwandan CSOs implies the production of professional organizations that are able to compete for market shares, work in accordance with a science-like logic, and align smoothly with official policy.

**Governing CSOs: Technologies**

How, then, are these rationalities of government made operable? This section highlights four mundane administrative instruments for ‘the conduct of conduct’.

*Calls for proposals* targeting Rwandan CSOs can be seen as such a technology of government. A trivial example of their capacity to propel activity and influence subjectivity is the last decade’s fourfold increase in memberships of the national umbrella for HIV/AIDS CSOs. Apparently, when an increasing amount of HIV/AIDS aid is made available via public calls, more and more CSOs start to conceive of themselves as HIV/AIDS organizations. Now, when I asked a CSO representative to describe how donors influence his organization’s everyday work he explained that this influence is to a large extent executed *ex ante*:
I may not say that they influence us totally since they provide us with funds based on our proposal. But remember that we get a format from them first. So we write our own proposal but we write it according to the format (ibid.).

Calls for proposals are supplemented with a set of requirements and the informant’s point is that grant approval require that these criteria are carefully taken into consideration and made visible in the proposal. Hence, calls for proposals govern CSOs by mobilizing ‘free’ will while simultaneously offering guidelines that restricts the scope of ‘reasonable’ action. This implies that CSOs have to be flexible enough to adapt their organization’s vision and way of working to different requirements. Yet, persuasion is a fine art and several CSO workers stressed that it is important, but not enough, to follow formal instructions. Writing proposals involves a performative logic and it is critical for CSOs to present themselves in a way that make them attractive to donors. Alongside formal requirements the following qualities were considered vital to represent: organizational capacity; previous experience; ability to bring something ‘new’; unique and distinguishing characteristics; clear and realistic targets; skills in monitoring and evaluation; and, alignment with the NSP. Hence calls for proposals contribute to the production of self-governing and flexible CSOs that can adapt themselves to different funding criteria and exploit whatever opportunities turn up. As indicated above the procurement system also acts on the subjectivities of CSO workers. They increasingly see themselves as competing market subjects and the construction of this self-image naturally affect how they perceive fellow CSOs. One informant pointed to the effectiveness of this government by arguing that the system of competition over grants has made it very difficult for CSOs to unite and resist:
So how are you to resist? You can’t resist while competing (Interview, CSO representative, Kigali, 7 March 2012).

I shall return to this matter in section five.

After grant approval a *Memorandum of Understanding* (MoU) is signed between the donor (i.e. the SPIU in the case of GF and an intermediary INGO in the case of PEPFAR) and the sub-recipient CSO. The MoU constitutes another mundane technology of government productive of responsible conduct. The MoU is established through negotiation between the donor and the sub-recipient and after signing the agreement the first batch of funds is distributed. Some CSO representatives described this negotiation as a respectful dialogue and argued that they could exercise considerable influence on the content of the MoU. Others complained that the terms of the agreement were largely dictated by the donors and that donors, unlike themselves, could violate the MoU, e.g. by delaying payments. This suggests that sovereign, disciplinary and liberal forms of power are blended in the quest for ‘mutual’ agreement. A plausible interpretation is that CSOs are allowed to influence the MoU provided that their suggestions are coherent with prevailing rationalities of government. However, of equal importance is that the MoU, once established, in very concrete terms engages CSOs in self-government. The MoU entails a large set of paragraphs that regulate matters such as privity; scope of work; deliverables; time-frames; reporting requirements; inspections; liabilities; obligations of sub-grantees; terms for handling disputes, etc. Several CSO representatives claimed to regularly consult the MoU in order to navigate different professional and administrative matters. This shows that distant donors are able to exercise influence on everyday activities of CSOs through an administrative device that engages them in self-government. Such engagement in one’s own government is a cornerstone of advanced liberal rule. Another interesting aspect of the MoU is its depoliticizing effect. The MoU suppresses the possibility of articulating conflicts and works so as to produce consensus,
adherence and efficiency. One informant stated that the MoU ‘erases conflicts with the

donors’ and that the contract ‘help us achieving and implementing what we agreed upon’
(Interview, CSO representative, Kigali, morning 6 March 2012). This description of the MoU
as a helpful tool illustrates the productive power of this technology.

Shortly after grant approval CSOs are provided with the first in a series of consecutive
training courses. This training, executed by donors or consultants, makes up a third
technology of government. By covering themes such as financial and project management;
organizational development; entrepreneurship; monitoring and evaluation; and reporting
procedures, it enables donors to operationalize the rationalities of government referred to
above, i.e. catalyse sound economic behaviour, effective administrative routines; evidence-
based practice; and professional conduct. Most CSO representatives testified to the merits of
this training. Common remarks were that it provided them with useful tools and enhanced
their capacity. Hence, although attendance is a precondition for further disbursements of
funds, these imposed training courses were generally perceived as something positive. They
were believed to offer valuable opportunities for learning the kind of skills deemed necessary
to sustain the organization and obtain new funds in the future. This, again, shows how
coercion and freedom blend into a polymorphic form of power. A power that shapes
aspirations and desires; disciplines and obliges; empowers and capacitates; and engages
subjects in self-government by mobilizing their ‘free’ will to learn. This learning, when
acquired, is what enables ‘government at a distance’. Now, CSOs are exposed to a range of
training courses and quite naturally the informants raised some critical remarks. However,
what is interesting about this critique is that it was never directed against training per se.
Complaints were raised against certain courses for being maladapted to the organization’s
work, for being poorly executed by the donor, or for simply not capacitating or empowering
the organization enough. But the basic idea that donors should build capacity among CSOs
through training seemed to be accepted and embraced by most informants. This willingness to learn and improve oneself in accordance with international norms and standards clearly suggest that advanced liberal power is at work.

The first disbursement of funds to CSOs constitutes the starting point of a long process of reporting. These *reports* can be seen as a fourth technology of government. Different donors have different reporting systems but what unites them is a strong preference for frequent, regular, and thematic reporting. Normally donors require annual, quarterly and monthly reports, but weekly flashes are becoming increasingly common. Reporting further includes different genres such as narrative report, budget report, implementation progress report, financial report, project performance framework report, and funded CSOs must learn to master them all. In order to facilitate the process donors provide CSOs with a set of tools, including forms, logframes and templates, that enable them to account for their objectives, targets, activities, results, level of realization, constraints, etc. When I asked a CSO representative how they measured abstract targets, taking the example of coordination of human resources, I got the following reply:

> We think of salaries. We think of meetings. Some meetings that took place where all the people involved were present (Interview, CSO representative, Kigali, 1 November 2011).

Accounting for ones activities is obviously largely a matter of counting. Yet, despite standardized formulas and a bias towards numbers it is important realize that writing a report is a communicative and creative process in which CSOs have to represent reality, themselves, and their interventions in different genres. Hence, in simple and concrete terms, reporting requirements are productive of agency, subjectivity and practice, and in the process of producing reports professional, science-like, and economically minded conduct is mobilized. Reporting is evidently also a matter of accountability, i.e. a tool for responsibilization that
compels CSOs to show that they are able to govern themselves wisely. Ensuring that they make proper use of the funds they receive is paramount and this must be reflected in the report in terms of positive performance curves and a budget that is in order. If CSOs do not report or if reports are not up to standards, i.e. they fail to represent themselves as responsible subjects, disciplinary measures await.

If you don’t do it you risk the funding. They don’t compromise on that (Interview, CSO representative, Kigali, 7 March 2012).

Finally, and this illustrates the point about government operating through a common framework, reporting is not restricted to the donor financing a particular project, i.e. SPIU in the case of GF and an INGO in the case of PEPFAR. Quite the contrary, reflecting the logics of alignment and coordination in the NSP, CSOs are bound to report to a range of stakeholders, including relevant GoR authorities at national and local level. Normally, local authorities are even required to sign the CSO’s report before it is submitted to the donor. Now, as stated earlier it is commonplace among international donors to celebrate the function of civil society as a ‘watchdog’ of state authorities. Yet, the stream of reports from CSOs to various GoR institutions, suggests, if anything, a reversed relationship. However, and of greater importance here, current reporting systems and the extensive self-monitoring that comes with it primarily engages CSOs in ‘watchdogging’ of themselves. Such self-government is a central component of advanced liberal rule.

This section has provided examples of four mundane tools for the ‘conduct of conduct’ that make the rationalities of government previously outlined operable. These technologies mobilize particular forms of subjectivity, agency and practice among Rwandan CSOs and render them responsible and active in their own government.
Sand in the machinery?

Governmentality literature is often criticized for paying insufficient attention to resistance. The image that has so far been conveyed in this paper is also likely to raise questions. Therefore this section will briefly discuss the possibility, presence, and place of resistance. In Foucauldian scholarship power and resistance is viewed as mutually co-constitutive, i.e. resistance is never exterior to power but exercised, often in subtle ways, within governmental regimes (Coleman and Tucker, 2011; Death, 2011). This calls for more nuanced evaluations of resistance ‘than a stark binary between co-optation and confrontation’ (Death, 2011, p. 426). To address the issue of possibility one can start by consulting other governmentality inspired research in Africa. Recent studies of neoliberal government in the contexts of poverty alleviation, water management and indigenous rights have shown how power is executed through the agency of subjects and that this enables resistance. Yet, since this power shapes people’s subjectivities, i.e. the logics of government become part of how they see themselves and their everyday lives, the possibilities for civil society to fully transform these political contexts remain limited (Gabay 2011, Hellberg, forthcoming 2014, Odysseos, 2011). This ability to produce subjectivity, through ‘freedom’, is what makes advanced liberal rule difficult to resist. This problematic obviously applies to Rwandan CSOs who have largely come to internalize the prevailing rationalities of government. Still, since government depends on the agency of those being governed, resistance remains an enduring possibility.

Indeed, there are also some examples of subtle dissent to be found in the field data. One way that CSOs resist is by engaging in creative reinterpretations of agreements. A CSO representative gave the example of projects targeting commercial sex workers and men who have sex with men, two prioritized target groups in the NSP. The CSO accepted funding for carrying out such projects. Yet, due to dissenting views on how to deal with these sensitive
issues, the organization reinterpreted and stretched the meaning of these categories considerably. Ultimately this led to interventions that deviated from the original agreement (Interview, CSO representative, Kigali, 28 October 2011). This example illustrates how resisting practices are situated within governmental arrangements and it also points to the dangers of resorting to the simple dichotomy of co-optation/confrontation. Further, as shown above, several informants criticized donors for dictating the conditions of MoUs and for imposing burdensome reporting requirements. This indicates that all subjects are not equally happy to be governed in these specific ways. Whether such critique qualifies as resistance, and whether it makes any difference if otherwise accompanied by far-reaching compliance, is of course debatable. Still, it points to the ambivalences of subjects that, at once, challenge and sustain a power structure that they themselves are part of.

There are obviously traces of resistance among Rwandan CSOs and in the context of CSO governance it might seem reasonable for anyone interested in dissent to start ‘from below’. Yet, it is not self-evident that this is the best place to start looking, or that such vertical representation of the world makes any sense. If government operates through a common framework it seems relevant to search for any kind of conduct that challenges this machinery, i.e. a decentered conception of power requires a decentered notion of resistance. Three examples are worth highlighting. First one might recall the donor who offered big money to a CSO to pursue a programme that opposed official policy. In the face of the post-political apparatus set up to govern HIV/AIDS in Rwanda there is little doubt that this particular donor was more insubordinate than the CSO that did not dare defy national policy. Initiatives by frustrated development bureaucrats represent another example. A donor official in Kigali emphasized that there are those among his colleagues that actively advocate for alternatives to the technocracy that characterizes current aid to civil society. A third option is to visit the beneficiaries, in various locations, that Rwandan CSOs intervene upon (cf.
Thompson, 2011). The main point is that if researchers accept the assumption that resistance has no centre they must be equally prepared to widen their visual field when looking for it.

Conclusions

This article has explored the government of civil society HIV/AIDS work in Rwanda. Situating the findings in the contexts of recent academic debates, three conclusions can be drawn.

First, it is clear that government of Rwandan CSOs largely works through rationalities and technologies that are productive of active and responsible subjects. These governmental arrangements, jointly orchestrated by international donors and the GoR, engage CSO workers in self-government by mobilizing ‘free’ will. Hence, the notion of Africa as a region insusceptible to advanced liberal power and the idea that ‘governmentality’ is a Euro-centred construct with no purchase on the continent can be dismissed. Rather, the debate should close in on how researchers can refine their tools for studying the agency of being governed in Africa and elsewhere, i.e. the question of governmentality studies in Africa is a matter of methodology rather than relevance (cf. Hansson, Hellberg and Stern, forthcoming 2014).

Second, some challenging viewpoints have been added to the debate about state, international donors and civil society in Rwanda. While Rwanda represents a known authoritarian political system this paper has demonstrated that coercive government practices interlace with much more subtle and familiar forms of advanced liberal rule. This global governmentality operates through a common framework that effectively blurs boundaries between state, international donor and civil society institutions. By means of joint, rationalized and calculated interventions, forceful efforts have been made to create an
effective, result-oriented, post-political development apparatus. In a sense it can be seen as an upgraded version of Ferguson’s anti-politics machine (Ferguson, 1994), the difference being that depoliticization is no longer an unintended side-effect of bureaucratic ‘development’ interventions but rather a programmatic intention. Rwandan CSOs engaged in HIV/AIDS work are inevitably integrated into this machinery, rendering Foucault’s old observation about civil society as relevant as ever: ‘it is the correlate of a political technology of government’ (Foucault 2008, p. 296).

Third, as far as resistance is concerned, advanced liberal government represents an intricate problematic. Since this government shapes the subjectivities of CSO workers resistance becomes tricky. Still, all machines have some friction and the field data entails a few examples of subtle dissent. Nevertheless, a more intriguing conjecture is that researchers should avoid preconceptions about the locus of dissent. Critical globalization scholars have argued that research on global resistance is far to often structured around simple analytical distinctions and notions of verticality and that there is a need for more sensitive approaches that can illuminate how multi-form practices of dissent are situated within processes of ordering (Coleman & Tucker, 2011). The findings of this paper reiterate the importance of such perspectives. Intuitively one might be inclined to look for resistance among CSOs, but in the face of a post-political apparatus characterized by broad governmental arrangements it appears equally relevant to look for sand in other parts of this machinery.

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