

Possibility of “the Green State” in Africa : Reflections over the Gaps between Ideals and Realities In Uganda**

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アフリカにおける「緑の国家」実現の可能性 —— ウガンダの理想と現実との乖離からの考察 ——

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The world today faces a series of critical problems, including global environmental crisis, relative shift of economic power from the industrialized north to emerging developing countries, and compounding equity questions both within and between nations. It is thus no surprise that some sorts of alternative – both as a desired vision and as a workable governing mechanism – are eagerly sought and the notion of sustainable development is often considered as such an alternative. This article reflects both ideals and realities of a relatively new concept of “the green state,” as proposed by Robyn Eckersley (2004). Her notion provides one of the radical visions of sustainability. While there are apparently both praise of as well as criticism against this conceptualization of a new statehood, it can serve as one of the yardsticks against which realities are checked. This article uses recent observation from Uganda, Africa, as a typical example of problematic statehood of “the hybrid regime” that became obvious particularly since the 1990s. We then explore what the gaps between ideals and realities signify in order to deepen our understanding of much desired sustainable future.

今日の世界は幾つもの課題に直面している。地球規模での環境保護、経済的繁栄の先進諸国から新興諸国への相対的移転、そして国家間また国内での平等の問題などは、いずれも重要であり、相互に関連しあっている。それ故に、何らかのありうべき代替案が模索されて当然であろう。持続可能な開発という考え方は、そのような現状に代わる理念と実践のあり方を提示してきた。この論文では、ロビン・エッカーズレイが比較的近年提唱した「緑の国家」という概念を、持続可能な開発の1つのあり方として援用しつつ、著者の近年のウガンダにおける調査結果を生かして、その実証的検証を試みるものである。エッカーズレイの主張は急進的ゆえに、賛否両論を巻き起こしているが、1つの概念として実証研究における基準を提供しうる。これをアフリカにおいて1990年代以降頻繁にみられるようになった「折衷国家」と比較するとき、将来において望まれる持続可能な社会のあり方への洞察が深まるのである。

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1 Introduction

As we proceed to the second decade of the twenty first century, our world confronts with a wide range of critical issues. Various environmental issues, ranging from global warming to depletion of all kinds of natural resources, are considered to threaten the ecological system on which our civilization is based. Global economic governance is becoming more and more complex, precisely when policy coordination is urgently necessary in order to stabilize increasingly interdependent national economies in the world. While some rich people enjoy prosperous life by consuming huge amount of energy and materials, others suffer from pervasive deprivation of daily necessities. This stark contrast poses us a fundamental question of what humanity is all about. These challenges are obviously interrelated. Environmental concerns, economic prosperity, and equity questions are mutually reinforcing, and any efforts to resolve one issue needs to pay due attention to all of these serious problems.

Historically, these current challenges are some of the consequences of our human “progress” that begun essentially with the Industrial Revolution in the eighteenth century. With the success of this Revolution first in England, most of the countries have sought to attain prosperity through achieving modern industrial society. Many European countries followed the path of England in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Even many of the post-colonial states in Africa followed the same model after the independence in the 1960s. Simply put, in order to attain prosperity, a series of interconnected systems have been nurtured : modern bureaucracy and centralized state apparatus, private corporations and modern capitalism, and subordinated autonomy of civic life by ever expanding modern bureaucracy and powerful corporations.¹⁾ Modern civilization has brought unmitigated advance to many human beings. The welfare level has improved for the majority of humanity as illustrated by considerable changes in such indicators of income and life expectancy (Banerjee et al 2006). This attainment, however, was not without problems. Our planet has become more polluted, and human activities put more stress on mother Earth ever before.²⁾ The world today is, therefore, in no shortage of unsustainable symptoms. It is no exaggeration to say that human beings today are facing a historical crossroads either to destroy our planet on which our lives depend or continue our lifestyle as if no serious change is necessary.

In responding to this imminent crisis, a much desired situation is often described as sustainable society. It is a situation whereby the triple “Es” are satisfied : ecology, economy, and equity. The notion of sustainable society follows a famous publication of Our Common Future, written by the renowned Bruntland commission, formally the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED 1987). Their report stated that “Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (p.43).

The notion of suitability is to balance not only economic growth and environmental conservation, but also addresses another critical question of equity. While the Bruntland report was more concerned with inter-generational equity, the subsequent discussion came to be more focused on intra-generational one : the north-south disparity. Different positions taken by the rich industrialized north and the poor developing world of the south became obvious in the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development

(popularly known as the Earth Summit) held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The opposing views were repeatedly expressed in a subsequent series of negotiations on environmental issues.

One of the reasons for the dissatisfaction by the developing countries derives from the way in which many critical decisions have been made. Usually, as they claim, decisions are made to favor the rich and the powerful at the cost of poor and the despaired. This assertion has profound implications, and goes beyond international dimension. Even in the industrialized north, the socially weak have not been meaningfully involved in decision-making processes (Mohai et al 2009). Therefore, to realize sustainable society in a true sense, processes of decision making need to be democratic. The socially marginalized and the neglected need to be included in such processes. Social exclusion has to be turned into social inclusion. Sustainable society, attempting to satisfy triple Es, has to address not only how to attain material prosperity but also how to aggregate different opinions democratically.

This article follows the formulation of Robyn Eckersley (2004) in which she argued for a new type of statehood called “the green state.” This kind of state is a radical vision of sustainability, precisely because it departs from more conventional approaches of introducing energy efficient “eco” products as well as management practices while maintaining both political and economic systems of current liberal democracy and modern capitalism. Particularly because of this radical nature, her arguments are controversial.³⁾ Nonetheless, her attention to statehood to attain sustainability is largely in line with other efforts to build sustainable society in many different parts of the world today both in industrialized north and developing south.⁴⁾ This broad alignment reflects that the notion of “green state” provides one of the critical links between two key concepts : sustainability and governance (Meadowcroft 2011). The theory of “green state” provides some principles on which collective decision making and political institutions need to be based. Therefore, it merits serious attention to test her notion empirically. Even if some attempts are made to engage on such empirical investigation so far (Zannakis 2009), this article is probably the first attempt to apply the notion of “green state” to non-industrialized world by using my recent research in Africa. If we are indeed serious to realize sustainability, it is unquestionable to examine possibilities to realize “the green state” in the developing world, especially in Africa. Because it is this continent where challenges of poverty and natural resource management are still daunting, and we cannot wait until the industrial countries first convert themselves into “the green state.” Yet, precisely because Africa faces a trilemma of sustainability, it is by no means easy to put the vision of “green state” into practice. The trilemma, therefore, poses a profoundly precious opportunity for us to see the possibility of “green state” on this planet.

2 Mainstream vs. Radial Notions of Sustainable Development

There are varieties of environmentalism. Although different ideas originate from different situations, there might be two broad categories of environmentalism ; first, several philosophical thoughts have been provided with the intention to change relations between human beings and nature. For instance, in this category, deep ecology (Næss 1973), the rights of nature (Nash 1989), and various thoughts on environmental justice (Dowie 1995 ; Sterba 2006) can be found. Another important category is about to alter industrial society, and here both mainstream views such as ecological modernization (Mol et al 2009) and

radical ecological ideas are relevant. Among the radical thoughts, there are again varieties ranging from eco-socialism, eco-anarchism, eco-feminism, as well as the notion of “the green state.”⁵⁾

For our purpose, attention is paid to the second group of thoughts about industrialism and modernization. It would be useful to contrast ecological modernization as representing the mainstream sustainable development with the notion of “green state” as one interesting example of radical thoughts.

Simply put, the mainstream sustainable development rests on current liberal democracy as political system and market capitalism as economic mechanism. The mainstream sustainable development maintains the overall framework of capitalist industrialism and modernization rather than challenging them fundamentally. By encouraging participation of citizens, proponents argue, that the current political system can harness the potential to spread better use of appropriate technology. They claim that extending the institutions of free market and setting right prices for environmental goods and services, there would be no limits to growth. They continue that by bringing more energy efficient products, new technologies and improved management practices, the current problem of unsustainability can be resolved (Mol et al 2009). Thus, for example, the use of solar panel and electric vehicles symbolize hope for our future.

In contrast, radicals refute such a reformist proposition. They argue that capitalism and industrialization cannot achieve sustainable development in true sense, including the attainment of justice and equity. They consider that the current political and economic systems are fundamentally flawed, and thus the mainstream sustainable development cannot deliver necessary changes. While there are a variety of radical thoughts, the radicals are united in emphasizing that political system needs to be altered, since the current democracy does not properly represent those who are negatively affected by malpractices of environmentally-related decisions. The current liberal democracy needs to be replaced by deliberative governance. Economically, “greening” corporations alone is insufficient. Because current capitalism tends to subordinate humanity in the name of efficiency and profiteering, more effective regulations of markets and reviving human bonds in economic transactions are necessary. Thus, radicals conclude that sustainability cannot be achieved solemnly by technological breakthrough and improved management practices. In short, they maintain that we can no longer achieve genuine prosperity by modern industrial society. The contrast of these two views is summarized in the table.

Table 1 The Contrast Between Mainstream and Radical Views

Mainstream Sustainable Development	Radical Notions
Represented by ecological modernization	Represented by “the green state”
Liberal democracy and market capitalism will be maintained rather than fundamentally challenged.	Liberal democracy and market capitalism are fundamentally flawed and thus need to be altered.
Modern industrial society can be reformed by technological innovation and improved planning and management practices.	Liberal democracy needs to be replaced by ecological democracy which emphasizes deliberation.
It is essentially technocratic.	Market capitalism needs to be brought under more democratic control and humanity needs to be revived from the current subordination to expanding bureaucracy and big corporations.

Compiled by the Author.

2–1 Eckersley and Her Green State Argument

The notion of “the green state” follows these main arguments. It particularly focuses on the notion of deliberative democracy. This is because, according to Eckersley, reconstructing public sphere is indispensable in order to build “the green state.” What is required is “green public sphere” in which all those affected by decisions about environmental risk, ideally including humans of the current generations and those of the future (as well as those both within and outside territory where the state governs) and non-humans (because plants and animals were, are and will be affected significantly by decisions made by humans), should be represented in the process of deliberations. This understanding constitutes the heart of ecological democracy (Meadowcroft 2006 : 109–110).⁶⁾ Eckersley declares that :

By ‘green state’ I do not simply mean a liberal democratic state that is managed by a green party government with a set of programmatic environmental goals, although one might anticipate that such a state is most likely to evolve from liberal or social democratic states. Rather, I mean a democratic state whose regulatory ideals and democratic procedures are informed by *ecological* democracy rather than *liberal* democracy. Such a state may be understood as *postliberal* state insofar as it emerges from an immanent (ecological) critique, rather than an outright rejection, of liberal democracy (emphasis in original) (2004 : 2).⁷⁾

2–2 The Green State and Deliberative Democracy

One of the important background reasons for constituting this deficiency is that modernization has been based on human rationality and belief in science and knowledge. Yet, as we have noticed several times through all kinds of environmental hazards since the second half of the twentieth century, our knowledge is far from perfect. Whether or not we humans understand sufficiently how our mother Earth operates, our planet will continue to exist. Thus, a fundamental notion on which we construct our society is the principle of *uncertainty*. The most satisfactory way to make decision about environmental risk needs to reflect all views of all stakeholders both current and future humans as well as by non-human nature. This can only be done through deliberation in which all those affected (both time – current and future generations – and space – territory under state control and beyond –) are allowed to voice their concerns. This process is apparently time consuming, but through such exchange of (opposing) views, participants can learn from others, and more informed decision can be made. For this purpose, effective communication and transparent dialogue needs to be encouraged. It would most likely to be supported by polity that allows information dissemination and decentralization. Eckersley calls this polity as “ecologically responsible statehood” (2004 : 2), and it is fundamentally different from the current mode of democracy. She summarizes her assertion as follows (p.133) :

The most decisive break . . . can be found in the regulative ideals of ecological democracy, which seek to represent an expanded moral community ; not just citizens of the polity but also all those significantly affected by decisions, such as non-citizens, future generations and non-human species. In

this respect, the green democratic state is relatively more ‘post-liberal’ than the social welfare state, which also emerged out of a critique of the traditional liberal state.

3 Green State and Its Empirical Test

Having gained broad understanding of the new and perhaps idealized statehood, it is now to investigate the possibility of realizing it in real settings. Eckersley herself claims that such realization should be first attempted in the rich north, since it is these countries that have historically been consuming energy tremendously and thereby creating significant causes of environmental degradation (Eckersley, 2006 : 136). This reasoning is well understood. However, sustainable development is much needed both in the north and in the south. It can be argued that because developing countries have been suffering from poverty, it is there that more appropriate development is urgently needed. Time is running out if we wait until the rich industrialized countries will first attain sustainability and then will transfer its lessons to the south subsequently (Vogler, 2006). Indeed, some of the small island countries will be submerged in ocean in the meantime. Furthermore, it is Sub-Saharan Africa where the “bottom billion” still struggles for daily survival after other Asian developing countries attained certain level of development (Collier 2007).

This article applies the notion of “the green state” to contemporary Uganda. This application is considered extremely valuable for several reasons. First, Uganda has gone through a series of important transition, and its experiences provide fertile ground in which empirical examination can be conducted (Omach 2007). With independence in 1962, Uganda shortly became politically unstable. In the 1970s Uganda was a symbol of political decay, human rights abuses, and economic collapse often found in Africa. After the current government of National Resistance Movement (NRM) came in power in 1986, it strived for a wide range of reforms. Many of these reforms turned out to be successful, and Uganda in the 1990s, under the presidency of Yoweri K. Museveni, was indeed praised as a shining reformer to usher hopeful Africa. Yet, in the decade of 2000s, as Museveni’s NRM stay on power prolonged, a wide range of malpractices started to become apparent, that is typical of a hybrid regime – the regime demonstrating both authoritarian and democracy characteristics.⁸⁾

Second, Uganda has been one of the most pioneering countries on the continent in its attempt for decentralization, an important institutional background on which much desired deliberation can be provided. Its implementation started in 1993, and with a new constitution adopted in 1995, decentralization was clearly stipulated as an official policy (few country officially proclaim decentralization in constitution). 1997 Local Governments Act laid out the details of central-local relations. Local Council (LC) system, a hierarchy of legislature and administrative apparatus from grassroots to district government, was put in place. LC was given a high degree of autonomy including electing political leaders, adopting respective development plans, managing their local administration. Yet, this (over)success came to be seen as something undesirable by the central government as it started to demonstrate increasing tendency of personalization of power (Mwenda 2010) and neopatrimonialism (Tripp 2010). Thus decentralized LC came to be “recentralized” recently in effect (Kakumba 2010 ; Muhumuza 2008 ; Manyak and Katono 2010 ; Tabaire et al 2010). This reversal again provides useful lessons for our examination.

3-1 Hybrid Regime in Uganda

In February 2011, the presidential elections were conducted and Museveni was announced the official winner. The incumbent president is entered into his fourth term. One of the important reasons for his re-election is believed to be, among the most of the Ugandans, that he would be the only promising candidate to secure peace in the country which has suffered from a prolonged civil strife and ethnic conflicts. But his long-stay on power is not without problems.

Historically, the NRM has played an important and indispensable role in restoring law and order as well as putting shattered economy back in a reasonably sustained growth path. The poverty declined from 56 percent in the early 1990s to 31 percent in the middle of the 2000s, while the Ugandan economy increased seven fold since the NRM took power (Tripp 2010 : 2). These accomplishments deserve much credit. However, it is also clear that national and international situation (including aid relations between donor countries and Uganda) changed in the last two decades or so, and past success does not guarantee future triumph, if the NRM government adopts a “business as usual” approach without careful considerations.⁹⁾

On political front, the NRM has been embarking on reforms aimed for democracy as well. At first, NRM adopted its “Ten Point Programme” expressing its determination of not to repeat the miserable past once again. For this purpose, they insisted on so called movement polity ; this is often characterized as “non-party democracy.”¹⁰⁾ For all elections, candidates would stand as individuals and no political parties were allowed for campaigning. This adoption was justified because parties in the past invited sectarian violence, and Ugandan societies were torn apart along ethnic divisions. Many Ugandans accepted this argument as a way to restore their tarnished country back into normalcy. But in the referendum in 2005, Ugandans opted for the introduction of multiparty system, and the elections in the following year were conducted on multiparty dispensation (Mushemeza 2007 ; Saito 2010).

This shift, at first glance, appears to be a continued improvement toward full democracy. Yet, a more careful analysis reveals a somewhat different interpretation. What is particularly noteworthy is the increasing tendency of neopatrimonialism. Several observers agree that Uganda now is increasingly governed by a person at the top leadership (Tangri and Mwenda 2010). In addition, particularly because the NRM took power by the means of gun as well as increasing malpractices associated with the personalization of political power and state wealth, the incumbent faces a serious dilemma.¹¹⁾ It needs to stay on power as long as it would like to dispel any threats to personal insecurity. Once they leave the office, they may face imprisonment, exile, or at worse death (ibid).

This dilemma is a tip of the larger iceberg. The dilemma is deeply related to the paradox of hybrid regime often found in Africa, especially since the 1990s. Hybrid regime demonstrates both traits of authoritarian and democratic polities. Yet, many African states, including Uganda, are semi-authoritarian rather than semi-democratic : it is more authoritarian in nature than democratic. Procedural democracy (e.g. separation of powers and regular elections for executive and legislative bodies) and governance arrangements (e.g. legal framework to combat corruption) are put in place. But, in reality, substance of democracy is not delivered : little significant competition is realized in elections, and scope of meaningful

participation is reduced. In short, semi-authoritarian hybrid regime rules illiberally under the rhetoric of liberal democracy (Ottaway 2003). Precisely because of this kind of combination, there are a series of contradictions. While the NRM initially attempted to be a broad-based government encompassing diverse political interests and ethnic groups, it subsequently became more exclusive in reality. Once introduced political freedom for allowing civil society organizations and human rights groups to operate, they were crushed afterwards once they were seen as a challenge to the status quo. These contradictions tend to destabilize political landscape, which in turn encourages the political leader(s) to consider their personal stake in state (Tripp 2010).

3–2 Changing Situations over Decentralization

When the national politics demonstrate a series of paradoxes associated with the hybrid regime, local governance agenda is confused, to say the least. Under the semi-authoritarian regime, use of patronage is deeply rooted in the nature of politics. Decentralization is a part and parcel of this patronage politics.

This interconnection is most evidently seen in the proliferation of the number of district governments in Uganda. The number of district has changed drastically over the years. There were only 39 districts before decentralization commenced in the early 1990s. Then, the number remained as 45 from March 1997 till November 2000. It increased to 80 in 2006, then to 97 in 2009, and now (as of July 2010) 112.¹²⁾ This expansion is beyond the comprehension of economic rationale, because new district creation in effect signifies that a public funds are diverted to meet with administrative costs that could otherwise been used for service delivery and development (Tumushabe 2009).¹³⁾ Instead, a convincing reason lies with logic of neo-patrimonial rule (Green 2008 ; Diamond 2010 : xiv ; Hyden 2006). The creation of new district did not take place in random. It was mainly in the east and the north of the country where the ruling party had considerable difficulties in gaining majority votes in elections. It is thus apparent that district creation was used as a means of co-opting political opponents. The LC system was therefore turned into “patronage-based political machine to maintain the ruling party in power” (Tripp 2010 : 4 ; Mwenda 2010 : 241).¹⁴⁾

Once patronage becomes a central feature of the hybrid regime, then it is no surprise that all sorts of corruption and mismanagement of public funds become visible (Transparency International Kenya 2010). Political leaders often make decisions outside of the normal procedures, and extra-budgetary funds are used to meet such decision.¹⁵⁾ Increasing incidents of so-called elite capture (local elite intervenes into local government decision-making processes) is taking place at various levels of local governments at the cost of the ordinary, the poor and the marginalized (Kakumba 2010).¹⁶⁾ For example, health is notorious that a high proportion of health workers steal drugs from government hospitals and either use them in their private clinic or sale them in markets, although it is widely known that many of the health staff have been suffering from significant salary arrears. Indeed, reflecting this alarming situation, the government recently published “First Annual Report on Corruption Trends in Uganda” (EPRC 2010). This report defines corruption as abuse of office for private gain. It frankly states that “corruption in Uganda is not a small problem. There is evidence of grand corruption involving high level officials. Petty corruption is widespread and is reported to be worsening by many local public opinion polls. Such corruption is also supporting and

feeding a culture of waste and inefficiency that is causing high levels of financial loss” (p.13). What is significant is that Uganda has already adopted reasonably well articulated legal framework and administrative bodies for anti-corruption measures. However, they are not implemented. This gap between the rhetoric and reality is yet again a symptom of semi-authoritarian regime.

The mushrooming number of district has probably indirectly affected the performance of the local governments at the grassroots level. At one time, most likely in the late 1990s and the early 2000s, even if the amount was small, the lower level LCs did receive certain funds, and the LC system, where leadership was effective, was able to organize a participatory forum whereby residents discussed the usage of such funds and the effects were seen in such small but tangible improvement of culverts, classroom facilities, and other communal facilities (Saito 2003 and 2008). Central government grants, however, subsequently came to stay primarily at the district level, and the lower-level local governments stopped receiving their share of local revenues in the last five years or so.¹⁷⁾ Roughly, US\$ 300 to 1000 per annum was anticipated to reach each LC 2 (ward), but mostly it did not.¹⁸⁾ Thus, participatory planning, once being enthusiastically received in initial years, has become a repeated paper exercise year after year without much engagement by local residents. As a result, popular support for participating in local planning and budgeting has declined particularly. It was commonly expressed that “participation fatigue” has certainly set in at lower levels of the LC system, as frankly admitted by the report issued by the Ministry of Local Government (Uganda MoLG 2010 : 21, 51–52).¹⁹⁾ The efficacy of the LC system has regrettably been now deteriorated (Kakumba 2010 ; Manyak and Katono 2010 ; Tabaire et al 2010).

While decentralization is by no means the only factor affecting the overall service delivery, the findings of my fieldwork suggests that quality of service improvement peaked around 2005/2006 and gradually became deteriorated subsequently. This overall trend is felt at the grassroots.²⁰⁾ Broadly similar trend can be found in other studies as well, particularly in National Service Delivery Surveys conducted by the government and in Afrobarometer public opinion surveys. While the comparison of the survey results needs to be cautious, it is clear that the frequency of LC meetings became less often between 2004 and 2008, and the public participation in the LC meetings and involvement in decision making processes came to be reduced during this period. Public perception about whether the LC committees representing the grassroots interests well or not shifted significantly ; while in 2004 more than half of the respondent (53 percent) expressed that the committees represented their interests well, it was only 41 percent in 2008. Those who stated that the committees did not represent their interests well at all increased from 10 percent in 2004 to 18 percent in 2008 (Uganda, UBOS 2005 and 2009).

Similar tendency is also confirmed by Afrobarometer surveys. Even if interpreting public opinion results conducted in the years of 2005, 2009 and 2010 needs much care, the overall tendency of public confidence on local governments are undeniably diminishing. Public approval rating of local government councilors illustrates this disappointing trend. When similar questions were asked in these three different times, 6 percent disapproved strongly and 21 percent somewhat disapproved in 2005, in 2009 respective figures were 11 percent and 25 percent. The most recent result from the polls in December 2010 revealed that for LC III chairperson, 8 percent strongly disapproved while 25 percent disapproved. For LC IV chair-

person, the corresponding figure was 10 and 26 percent.²¹⁾

As a result of these interrelated changes, perhaps one of the most serious problems in the contemporary Uganda is the broken relationship between the government and its citizens. As the ruling party and the top leadership increasingly adopts populist tendency in which they provide services free of charge and have loosen administrative regulations for the sake of securing votes, people have lost interest in public policy. Development meetings called by local governments such as management committees for school, health clinics, bore halls, and National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS) became dormant. There is a deep misunderstanding on each side. For people, because they receive limited explanation of government policies and administration procedures, they often suspect that the leaders (both political and administrative) must have “eating our money” (Bayart 2009). For officials, the requests of people appear very incoherent and unrealistic. They consider the ordinary citizens are ill-educated and backward in their attitude and thinking. Accordingly, the consequence is disappointing, as one key administrative officer in Kamuli mentioned, “people are withdrawing from participating, and politicians are thinking only of themselves. This is a bad combination.”²²⁾

This (mal)development affects the way in which Ugandans perceive their society. Several senior people, for instance, often expressed that people have become more selfish than before. For them, the more worrisome is behaviors of the youth since they appeared to seek easy money.²³⁾

4 Normative Theory and Ugandan Realities

The preceding description does not appear encouraging in our examination about possibility of realizing the “green state” the developing world. If we use the normative theory of “the green state” as a yardstick against which the harsh realities in Africa are tested, this “score card” indeed appears bleak. This assessment largely stems from the characteristic of neopatrimonial state (Diamond and Plattner 2010). According to distinguished Africanist Goran Hyden (2006), neo-patrimonialism is an “ultimate form of clientelism in politics” (p.79). With access to state power and wealth, leaders personally control public affairs. With such exploitation, a kind of perverted legitimacy is created between leaders (who distribute benefits according to their own logic) and followers (who seek to satisfy their particular demands) (Ibid, p.96). What is probably most problematic, from the view point of the green state, is a kind of asymmetric rationality. “It makes sense” within those who are connected by patronage networks to behave the way in which they do indeed behave. Leaders distribute material and other benefits for followers, who in turn display royalty toward certain patrons. But, this transaction is least cost-effective as a society as a whole. Thus, rationality within networked individuals collides with desirability as a nation state. The ideals of the green state and realities of the neopatrimonial state can be summarized in Table 2.

This unpromising assessment is unsurprising, to say the least, given the assumption that modernization is indispensable to achieve a much desired green state. In other words, a key question that really needs to be asked is whether the green state can only be possible through the avenue of modernization? This apparently is a very difficult question, and goes much beyond the scope of this paper.²⁴⁾ Having acknowledged the limitation, however, some of the initial consideration can be provided.

I would argue that although possibilities are remote and faint, there are some possibilities for realizing essential spirits of the green state in Uganda in particular and in Africa in general. But it may not exactly follow modern nation state comparable to those in the north. African societies have not been sufficiently transformed into what is commonly observed as modernity in the north. However, this may not be a deficiency which only works negatively in order to establish “ecologically responsible society.” Even if such possibilities are far from certain, there can be certain indigenous paths leading toward a viable governing mechanism responding to aspirations of Africans.

4–1 Public vs. Private Spheres

As Peter Ekeh, a notable Nigerian scholar, (1975) once elaborated brilliantly, in pre-modern societies such as in Africa there are two contrasting dialectic spheres: the primordial public and the civil public. He continues that the “primordial public is moral and operates on the same moral imperatives as the private realm. . . . The civic public in Africa is amoral and lacks the generalized moral imperatives operative in the private realm and in the primordial public” (p.92).²⁵⁾ Therefore, “the distinction between the public and private realms as used over the centuries has acquired a peculiar Western connotation” (p.92). While he contrasted these two realms as rivals, what is probably more important is that there would be no clear separation between “public” and “private” spheres as understood in the industrialized world. Clans, kinship-based groups, chieftainships, church groups, and others could be understood having aspects of both public and private realms. Fuzzy boundary between public and private spheres is a consequence of a transition of African societies from traditional society based on status to modern society based on contracts.²⁶⁾

The blurred relations between public and private realms work both positively and negatively. As Ekeh emphasized, it tends to create possibilities of nepotism and opportunism, and indeed in some instances diverting public funds for private consumption might be justified by those who benefit from such diversion (1975 : 110). This kind of behavior is especially justified when the state is still weak and unable to deliver required services for its citizens (Wamala 2008). By stretching this logic, in order to seek self-protection and self-fulfillment, neopatrimonialism is derived. Widespread corruption is, then indeed, a serious consequence arising from this structural background in which African societies are in transition from

Table 2 The Contrast between the Green and Neopatrimonial States

Green State	Neopatrimonial state
Public sphere enables participants to deliberate common issues.	Patron-client relations dominate social interactions.
Deliberation through collective interactions is effectively managed.	Discussions is to gain individual merits, with detrimental social costs. “Rent” are typically distributed in material benefits.
Participants have both individual and shared (national) identity.	Individuals have not yet developed collective (national) identity.
Outcomes are not zero sum.	Outcomes are zero sum in nature.
Deliberation is learning process.	Interactions do not facilitate much social learning.

Compiled by the Author.

tribal societies to modern states. In fact, under these circumstances, those who abuse power are not fully aware of the very fact that they are engaged in misconducts.²⁷⁾ On the other hand, precisely because modern public institutions are still underdevelopment, Africans resort to other private means by which they attempt to survive and secure certain benefits for themselves. Certain types of associationalism are still very active in Africa, and there are numerous groupings both in urban and rural areas. It is precisely those informal community-based self-help groups that helped absorb enormous hardships when the structural adjustment programmes (SAP) were implemented in the 1980s and 1990s. It is these rich connections among people that help compensated the adversary effects of underdeveloped formal modern institutions.²⁸⁾

Appreciating the value of traditional communities and informal institutions is not confined to the incidents of coping mechanisms in case of economic austerity measures such as SAP. Once considered as hindrance in the process of modernization, the role of communities in the process of economic growth came to be more positively understood (Aoki and Hayami 2001). Likewise, in the search for more effective resource management and wildlife conservation, fencing certain lands as national parks and protected areas has shifted to community-based conservation practices (Hulme and Murphree 2001). Thus, following these examples of revaluating traditional communities, potential of Africans to engage on self-help activities, without awaiting the support by the state institutions, might become a valuable foundation on which future green state can be built (cf. World Bank 2010).

4-2 Possibility on Building on Premordial Public

This path, however, is obviously far from easy, nor guaranteed. As ill-effects of neopatrimonialism have repeatedly demonstrated, one of the significant problems in fostering community groups is that they tend to be exclusionary. What is happening now in Uganda in particular and in Africa in general is that people demonstrate perverted rationality ; people care more about their well-being with narrow scope and pay less attention to consequences of their actions and decisions that might be taking place in wider setting outside of closed networks. One group of patron-clients is totally against other groups, and often there are conflicts between such groups. This zero-sum relation can be overcome by long-term conscious efforts to create common identity among different groupings, including the ethnic ones, by improved understanding of different lifestyles and values between, *inter alia*, rural and urban residents, farmers and pastoralists, men and women, the haves and the have-nots.

By so doing, different people will be able to care about hardships and possibilities of others with whom they constitute a modern statehood. Without a broadened understanding of society, it would probably nearly impossible to create public sphere in which competing claims are appreciated as a desirable process to agree upon what kinds of benefits and losses are distributed to which individuals and groups in the society.

On the other hand, my point is not to romanticize informal mechanism and traditional communities. It is widely known that clans and traditional communities, before the arrival of colonizers, were indigenous but such pre-colonial political system, were far from democratic. Chiefs were often brutal and it was common that interests of male elderly tended to dominate decision making at the cost of the youth and

women. Appreciating self-help efforts often found in communities and realizing the potential of such social cohesion is not equal with reversing history and going back to the pre-colonial past. However, when the possible passage for democratization is more or less blocked by the actions of the power holders, then, this kind of slow but conscious attempt “from below” could be one of the few avenues left for realizing much needed reform.

In order to explore such possibility in the middle of difficult circumstances, what this argument suggests is that internal governance of communities needs much more openness, transparency and accountability (cf. World Bank 2010).²⁹⁾ Without this kind of democratization, any hope placed on social resilience of communities and informal institutions in the developing world will remain illusionary. The same sort of understanding applies to probably nearly all sorts of modern institutional reforms introduced in Uganda and in Africa. A shift from non-party politics into multiparty dispensation took place without significant improvement of internal decision making within political parties (Diamond and Plattner 2010). Decentralization in rhetoric in essence turned out to be recent recentralization promoting more of upward accountability (local government leaders and officials responding to queries from the central government and donors) at the cost of downward accountability (local councilors responding to the grassroots population) (Saito 2008 and 2010). Various civil society organizations were established by African elites for the sake of utilizing aid resources provided by the donors in the north, and some are not answerable to segments of population that they are supposed to serve (Robinson and Friedman 2007). Serious efforts are urgently needed to foster this kind of real change in each organizations and community setting, going beyond the facade of modern sign of “reforms” (Wamala 2008).

With such slow but steady improvement, it may be possible to foster a kind of political legitimacy of the state in Africa in the long run. Unless each decision either in church, NGO, clan, neighborhood associations etc, is supported by legitimacy, it cannot be anticipated that the state as a whole would be credited by legitimacy. It is this notion of legitimacy that the proponents of deliberative democracy emphasize and what is crucially needed in “the green public sphere” in Eckersley’s formulation of ecological responsible statehood.

5 Conclusions

The state in Africa is far from the idealized vision of the green state. They tend to be “strong” in a sense because they often oppress opponents brutally. But this brutality is a sign of their functional weakness because they can only rule with the means of force. If they can enjoy legitimacy, they do not need to resort to physical application of violence in governing. Indeed, how to control “the coercive nature of contemporary state” (Gould, 2006 : 121) is still a very key issue if we aim to achieve the new type of ecologically responsible state.

The theory of green state as advocated by Robin Eckersley reinforces some of the key issues being discussed in democratization in the developing countries, especially in Africa. The notion of “green state” highlights the importance to go beyond introducing procedural liberal democracy without concomitant substantial changes. The empirical criticisms voiced by Africans and Africanists echo essential points stressed

by Eckersley especially in the importance of “the green public sphere.” Therefore, the importance of the green state theory is reconfirmed as it sits critically at the trajectory of sustainability and governance.

Eckersley’s notion of the green state is very provocative, and it serves us one of the important normative theory against which realities are tested. Some may argue that the state is more a hindrance than a solution in order to achieve sustainability. As argued by Eckersley, the role of the state still is very relevant today, even if its role has been affected by many different changes in the contemporary world. As “good governance” is not possible without good government, making state as a sound steward for ecological responsibility, economic prosperity and social equity among variety of humans and non-humans still remains an important agenda for us today.

The experience in Uganda informs us that attempts for a range of reforms once introduced, for instance, effective grassroots local councils, stopped advancing due to the increasing personalization of the semi-authoritarian regime. Thus, as Uganda transformed itself from a once shining star of reformer into an “ordinary” un-developing Africa, the current situation is not particularly promising.

As the modern nation state in Africa is still unfolding, the goal is not near to us. But if we explore another path to utilize traditional and informal associations and community based collective efforts, and if social legitimacy can be conferred upon, then what the ecologically responsible state desperately needs can be build even without the form of modern statehood as seen in the industrialized world.

Yet, the road ahead is far from easy. The efforts need to be pursued at multiple fronts at the same time. Internal governance structure need more open dialogue. Participatory decision making at almost all sorts of organizations and communities, ranging from political parties, civil society organizations to neighborhood associations should reflect social legitimacy. It would probably the case that only with such multiple incremental changes, a much more broad-based public sphere might be constructed upon which the green state critically depends.

Notes

- 1) This characterization obviously does not deny that some countries adopted socialist/communist vision. Yet, it is important to remind us that even these countries also considered that modern industrial society was a desirable vision. It was only the means that differed between capitalist and socialist countries.
- 2) According to ecological footprint, we have already passed the carrying capacity of our planet in the 1980s (WWF 2010).
- 3) The journal of Politics and Ethics Review (2006) organized the special issue discussing her arguments.
- 4) Sweden as a nation and a variety of local governments including famous Freiburg, Germany (van Staden and Musco 2010), Portland, USA (Ozawa 2004) are pioneering examples of advancing sustainability in practice. See for instance, Kidokoro et al 2008.
- 5) For more of this, see Adams 2009 ; Dobson 2007.
- 6) The notion of “green public sphere” is based on Jürgen Habermas, but Eckersley (2004) asserts that it is more than his notion (see chapter 6).
- 7) She continues that such a state “requires new democratic procedures, new decision rules, new forms of political representation and participation, and a more fluid set of relationships and understandings among states and peoples” (p.3).
- 8) Different scholars adopt different terminologies. For instance, Levitsky and Way (2010) use the expression of “competitive authoritarianism.” For more about this diversity of language, see Chapter 1 of Diamond and Plattner

- (2010) as well as Chapter 1 of Tripp (2010).
- 9) This caution is clearly demonstrated by the recent publication of Kuteesa et al (2010) and the evaluation of Poverty Eradication Action Plan by Oxford Policy Management (2008).
 - 10) Ciganikova (2008) calls the polity introduced by the NRM under President Museveni “Movementocracy.”
 - 11) It is useful to remind us the distinction between state building process and regime consolidation. In African politics, these two are often fused, and regime consolidation often takes the form of consolidation of personal power (Omach 2007 : 236).
 - 12) Local newspaper, New Vision, 28 August 2010.
 - 13) Of course, the creation of new districts put financial burden on both the government and donors. The World Bank estimates that a new district costs about Uganda shilling 1.8 billion (about US\$ 1 million) per year (Uganda shilling 1.2 billion for salaries and 0.6 billion for operating cost) (World Bank 2008 : 15 ; see also similar calculation by OPM 2007 : 49).
 - 14) Manyak and Katoto say that “Many people interviewed claim that President Museveni is abandoning decentralization as the price for staying in power. . . . The president is killing his own child!” (2010 : 4–5).
 - 15) Personal interview, NGO activist, 17 November 2010.
 - 16) Muhumuza (2008 : 66) stated “Local governments have remained the preserve of local notables who have the education, financial resources and influence to contest for power.”
 - 17) The background for this is complex. One of the main reasons for local governments to depend entirely on central government transfers now is the abolition of graduated tax, a kind of poll tax, that was a source for taxation by local governments. The abolition was announced during the election campaign of 2005, which reflects political populism. The effects were devastating (Jean et al 2010 ; Saito 2010). For rural taxation in developing countries in general and in Uganda in particular, see Bahiigwa et al 2004 ; Ayoki et al 2008 ; Therkildsen 2006.
 - 18) Personal interview, a LGDP official, 15 August 2008.
 - 19) During the fieldwork of August 2008, all elected representatives and local government administrators in districts of Kamuli, Tororo, and Mukono confirmed this “participation fatigue” (Saito 2010).
 - 20) Personal interviews, chairperson LC I, Mukono District, 20 August 2010, and a resident, Mukono 20 August 2010.
 - 21) These figures are available from reports in Afribarometer ([http : //www.afrobarometer.org/](http://www.afrobarometer.org/)). A note of caution is that because grassroots people are more informed about activities of LC III rather than LC IV, the disapproval ratio tends to increase for the higher level offices.
 - 22) Personal interview, Kamuli District, 18 August 2008.
 - 23) Personal interviews, Mukono, 20 August 2010, and Kampala, 24 August 2010.
 - 24) For modernization and human development, see Inglehart and Welzel 2005.
 - 25) Wamala (2008) provides interesting commentary on this point.
 - 26) This fuzzy boundary is even more complicated by complex relations between formality and informality in African politics. Both aspects are observed, for instances, in legislative bodies and executive branches, but informal politics is usually quite significant. As both formal and informal mechanisms support many lives on the continent, so do the entangled spheres of public and private realms.
 - 27) A town clerk commented with frustration : “There is ignorance of the laws, mostly among the councilors. They think the council should be able to do whatever it wants. Councilors don’t see this as corruption. It is more a lack of appreciation and understanding of the law. This problem then leads into corruption. We need to educate them. However, we tried capacity building seminars, but it didn’t help. It is more a reflection of where they come from ; poverty, bad families, trying to use politics to find economic security. They may come to serve, but they see all this money” (Manyak and Katono 2010 : 11–12).
 - 28) For Ekeh, voluntary associations “do not belong to the private realm in the same sense as political sociologists conceive of voluntary associations in the West. They are an integral part of the primordial public” (1975 : 110). Perhaps ironically, because they are a part of this public, Africans worked hard for survival.
 - 29) My assertion here is somewhat similar to Tumushabe and Muyomba-Tamale et al (2010) as they argue for the demand side of local governance rather than supply side ; it would be more effective for help building capacities of citizen groups and civil society in general to “demand” adequate accountability from local leaders rather than

consolidating the LC institutions (as “supply” side efforts). They particularly pay attention to more effective local political leadership, improved legislative functions, and more frequent contacts of councillors with constituencies.

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