

Why rural Malian women want to be candidates for local office: changes in social and political life and the arrival of a gender quota*

CATHRYN EVANGELINE JOHNSON

*Indiana University Department of Political Science, 210 Woodburn Hall,
Bloomington, IN 47405, USA*

Email: catejohn@indiana.edu

ABSTRACT

Why would rural Malian women express interest in political participation? Mali implemented a gender quota during the 2016 local elections. In a rural village where I conducted immersive research, the majority of women I interviewed following the 2016 poll expressed interest in running for local office in the future. Scholars of women's political participation theorise that quotas bring women to elected office and increase women's political participation. These theoretical perspectives cannot fully explain why women in rural Mali would express enthusiastic interest in political participation. These women participate extensively in savings and credit associations. Drawing on data generated through engagement with women in their daily lives, I explore how economic advancement can shape women's participatory aspirations. Examining longer-term changes in the local political economy of this rural village provides a deeper understanding of why women responded positively to a new institutional opening for political participation.

INTRODUCTION

The first women were elected to the local government council in the rural village I call Sumayadugu, following the implementation of a gender quota during the November 2016 local elections.¹ In early 2017 Kadiatou, a market seller, gardener and farmer spoke of this change: 'Thank God! We the

* The Social Science Research Council and Indiana University's Ostrom Workshop funded this research. I thank the residents of Sumayadugu who graciously took time to participate in this project. Aili Mari Tripp, N'do Cisse, Sarah Monson, and two anonymous reviewers provided helpful feedback.

women, we were in a hole. We have gotten out of this hole' (Kadiatou 2017 Int.). What did it mean to Kadiatou that the women of Sumayadugu were in a hole? The first local elections were organised in Sumayadugu in 1998. In 1999, the local government began to function. Prior to the implementation of the gender quota, no woman in the village had ever served on the local government council. From the first local elections in 1998 until the 2016 polls, women were not among those who served in local government.

At the national level, women held 8.6% of seats on local government councils in Mali prior to the implementation of the gender quota during the 2016 local elections (Kaboré *et al.* 2014). Mali's gender quota law requires political parties to field 30% women candidates and include a woman within the first three places on a party's candidate list. Following the local polls that brought the first women to the council, the majority of women I interviewed in Sumayadugu expressed interest in presenting themselves as candidates for the local government council in the future and in contacting newly elected women members of the local government council in the present. In this article, I seek to understand why these rural Malian women would express such high levels of interest in local government participation.

Mali, a former French colony and landlocked country at the heart of the West African Sahel, is a regional outlier with regard to the low percentage of citizens who participate in elections. These patterns of low voter participation occur despite the fact that there were two transitions of executive power through the ballot box in the early years of democracy in the country. Currently, women hold 8.8% of the seats in the country's unicameral national legislature (Interparliamentary Union 2019). To date, the gender quota remains unimplemented in Mali's National Assembly; the government recently postponed the 2018 legislative elections until 2020.

Much of our accumulated knowledge about women's political participation in sub-Saharan Africa comes from aggregated, cross-national survey research and scholarship on institutional reforms to increase women's political participation. This research often, but not always, focuses on the dynamics of national-level politics. In this study, I draw on data produced through immersive research to turn my attention to the local institutional context and to women's experiences living through linked processes of social and political change. This article proceeds by tracing the accumulation of knowledge about advancements in women's political participation at the global level, in sub-Saharan Africa, and in Mali before presenting the research design and methods used in this local-level study. Then, I analyse data from interviews with 70 residents of Sumayadugu and several months of fieldwork experience to argue that in the post-election period women of Sumayadugu responded positively to new participatory opportunities afforded by the gender quota in part because of the efficacy and economic security they gained through participation in the women-dominated sphere of savings and credit associations. Women's extensive participation in these associations helps us understand the links between economic security and aspirations to participate in politics and illustrates the

broad context of evolving social and political change that characterised village life in Sumayadugu when the gender quota was implemented. In fact, the two village women elected to the local council because of the gender quota are active members of savings and credit associations and serve in leadership roles in their respective associations. I argue that a local perspective on the implementation of a gender quota helps to shed light on broader political and social changes that affect women's daily lives. By examining these changes, we can better understand why the women of Sumayadugu wanted to respond to the new participatory opportunities afforded by the quota.

PREVIOUS SCHOLARSHIP ON WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND MALIAN WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Gender quotas are a popular reform to advance women's political participation. The implementation of gender quotas in varied contexts around the world provides a great deal of knowledge about how quota laws come to exist and how quotas advance women's representation (Tripp & Kang 2008; Bush 2011; Hughes *et al.* 2015). Increases in women's presence in elected office are linked to better provision of public services that respond to women's needs (Kittilson 2005; Schwindt-Bayer 2006); to shaping the actual political participation of women citizens and aspirational political participation of adolescent girls (Wolbrecht & Campbell 2007); and to inspiring change in gender norms in regards to parents' hopes for their daughters and sons (Beaman *et al.* 2009).

Between 1989 and 2014, 29 sub-Saharan African countries adopted gender quotas (Kang & Tripp 2018). As more women become members of national-level representative bodies in sub-Saharan Africa, the gender gap between male and female citizens' political engagement decreases (Barnes & Burchard 2013). Even where quotas do not exist, women's presence in legislatures has advanced women's representation and provided role models for women citizens (Bauer & Burnet 2013). However, quotas are not implemented in a vacuum. We know less about the different local level dynamics that may shape how quotas affect women's political participation in different contexts.

Scholarship demonstrates that at the national and local levels, citizens' perceptions regarding the legitimacy of gender quotas are important. When domestic women's coalitions that bridge ethnic and other salient societal divisions advocate together, measures to increase women's representation such as quota laws are more likely to be passed because they provide governments with a strong signal that quota reforms are desired by domestic constituents (Tripp 2016; Kang & Tripp 2018). Citizens' perceptions can hinder or help the intended outcomes of gender quotas. At the local level in Lesotho, Clayton (2015) finds that in single member districts reserved for women, women constituents' political participation stays the same or decreases once women arrive in local office. She attributes this outcome to legitimacy issues around the implementation of the gender quota based on reserved seats; citizens perceived the quota as being unfair to men and as a policy that was

imposed from the outside without domestic support. Kang (2015) examines the case of Niger to demonstrate the importance of citizen perceptions about the legitimacy of reforms to increase women's political participation. She finds that in majority Muslim countries in West Africa like Niger, it is often more likely that gender quota legislation that has broad domestic support will be passed than reforms to a country's civil law code that are often advocated for by the international community.

The Malian legislature passed gender quota legislation in 2015 with support from a variety of national-level Malian women's associations whose main presence is in the national capital, Bamako. The vote for the quota law happened through a secret ballot, a highly unusual manner of voting in the Malian parliament. Deputies were uneasy because previous efforts at legal reform for women were marked by contention (Dicko 2015). In 2009, Mali's High Islamic Council organised extensive, unprecedented protests in the capital Bamako to question the legitimacy of a progressive reform of the country's civil law code.² In a rare example of direct public input on legislation before the National Assembly, President Touré sent the legislation back to parliament for revision after he signed it into law. In early 2012, the High Islamic Council endorsed the final revision that included its main demand: the state's recognition of the validity of religious marriages (Wing 2012). The progressive attempt to reform the code illustrates that the Malian government seemed to have seriously misjudged the extent of the opposition from such a large portion of ordinary Malian Muslims (Soares 2009).

Studies of legislative reforms at the national level provide insights into struggles to advance positive change for women through legal channels. An emerging body of research from local-level studies in Mali is beginning to provide some insights into women's participation in public life. Gottlieb (2016) documented decreases in women's participation in community life following men and women's participation in the same one-day civic education course; Gottlieb attributes these decreases to pervasive patriarchal norms that were most acutely experienced in rural villages that were included in the research design. However, evidence from the local level also demonstrates that in rural Mali there may be a link between women's empowerment, conceptualised as economic freedom and the possibility for a woman to leave her village to travel elsewhere, and women's political knowledge (Bleck & Michelitch 2018). These studies point to the fact that patriarchal gender relations and women's economic status are important factors to consider in an analysis of the implementation of a gender quota at the local level in rural Mali.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

In selecting a research site for this study, I identified a village in the Malian region of Koutiala, a centre of cotton and cereal grain production in southern Mali. In selecting a research site, I identified a village that was the *chef lieu*, or administrative capital, of the surrounding commune. The commune is the

focal point of the decentralised state in Mali, which is divided into 703 communes. The *mairie*, or local government headquarters, is located in the *chef lieu* of the commune. Sumayadugu is the *chef lieu* of the commune and has a population of approximately 6,000 residents.

This paper employs data generated through interviews and ethnographic and participant observation that is part of a larger, comparative project on women's local political participation in Mali and Burkina Faso. I conducted research in Sumayadugu, Mali in August, September and October 2016 and in January, February and March 2017. In-depth, relational interviews are my primary data source. Through a relational approach to interviewing, the researcher views the act of interviewing as a learning process that allows for 'the researcher to gain insight into participants' worlds through interaction and dialogue' (Fujii 2018: 1). In Sumayadugu I interviewed a representative sample of 70 women and men of varied ages and occupations from each village neighbourhood using a semi-structured set of questions.³ However, the interviews were conversational in nature, and I asked follow-up questions and explored a variety of additional topics, depending on how interview participants interpreted the questions I posed. This approach was informed in part by Schaffer (2014), who encourages attention to locally situated meanings of broad processes of political change over time. Interview questions focused on themes that included work, farming, participation in associations and local government, and perceptions of local government capacity. Ethnographic and participant observation in the various spaces of women's daily lives and at the *mairie* informed my understanding of social and political life in Sumayadugu and helped me to interpret the data produced through the interviews.

LOCAL ELECTIONS AND CHANGES IN WOMEN'S PARTICIPATORY ASPIRATIONS

Of the 32 women I interviewed in the post-election period, 27 women expressed interest in being a candidate or supporting the candidacy of their daughter or granddaughter.⁴ Although these expressions of interest would not be possible without the implementation of the quota, women's expressions of interest in local government participation are also rooted in ongoing political and social changes in Sumayadugu that have implications for women's participation in village life. These changes include women's participation in meetings of the village chief's council and the creation of an association for mothers of school-age children. In 2008, village mothers began to meet monthly to discuss how to support their children's studies to ensure that their children do not fall behind.

The domination of men on the local government council prior to the implementation of the quota is linked to the prominence of traditional authority structures. In Sumayadugu, the village chief, the son of a *Chef de Canton* named by the French colonial regime, is the central authority figure. His council meets regularly and has a system of communication to solicit feedback

and disseminate information to the village network of *chefs de famille*, the eldest man in each multigenerational household in the village. Before the creation of local government in Mali, village affairs were governed exclusively by the chief's council. Women were excluded from the council's activities. Research participants reported that in the past few years, some women had begun to participate in meetings of the chief's council. However, women and many men, especially younger men, were excluded from most of the activities of this council. The dominance of the communications network that relies heavily on the senior male *chefs de famille*, means that pertinent information may not be shared with all family members, particularly women. The local government council also uses the village chief's network to communicate information to the wider village. In this way, it is not entirely accurate to claim that women were not interested in politics or the activities of local government before the implementation of the quota. It would have been incredibly difficult for most women in Sumayadugu to develop an interest in politics due to the almost complete *de facto* exclusion most women experienced. The continuing dominance of the chief's communications network also accounts for the low numbers of both women and men who refer to their own non-electoral political participation, such as claims making and attendance at local government meetings.

At the beginning of this project, it was not clear if the local elections, that were due in 2012, would be organised. A series of postponements occurred following the March 2012 coup that deposed President Touré and ongoing security concerns in other regions of the country affected by domestic and international insurgency. Although women in Sumayadugu had never participated on the local government council before the implementation of the gender quota, both women and men in Sumayadugu report that they vote. Voter turnout for the 2016 local elections was 85%. Voter participation is more robust in Sumayadugu and the surrounding villages in the commune than in Mali as a whole. This difference is linked to the local government. The legal framework of decentralisation specifies that local revenues should remain in the locality where they were generated (a very small percentage is sent to the central government). Residents of Sumayadugu and the surrounding villages pay these local taxes at high rates. Revenue mobilisation ranges from 85 to 100%. Citizens attribute this high degree of tax payment to the fact that over the years, the local government made good use of local resources (Idrissa 2016 Int.). This facilitates citizens' confidence in the local government. In 2016, the majority of men elected to the local government council from Sumayadugu had previously been council members who were instrumental in establishing the good reputation of local government in the commune.

Once preparations for the 2016 local polls were clearly underway, research participants shared their perspectives. Amadou, a primary school teacher and long-time member of the local government council was broadly supportive of the motivations of the quota law, but he did express some concerns. The social structure of family life in the village is the basis for these concerns:

Parties are now obligated to implicate women. We hope that this will work, but women are not very educated. Women are preoccupied by household tasks ... Our democracy is not mature. Housework can prevent women from having time for politics. Here in [Sumayadugu] most people live in *grande famille*. Women in this setting take turns doing housework. If one woman wants to be active in politics, that can pose problems in the household [with other women]. (Amadou 2016 Int.)

Other men also expressed doubts similar to those of Amadou concerning women's availability and education levels (Drissa 2016 Int.). Notably, I did not identify any male research participants who expressed that the quota was an illegitimate imposition from the government in Bamako or from external donors. Some male research participants expressed hope that the quota would bring progress. Siddiki, a farmer and long-time member of the local government council expressed that 'before, women were not interested in politics. Now, we are going to be seeing women councillors and mayors. The mentality is changing. It is a good thing, a little development that wants to come. This change of mentality will bring development' (Siddiki 2017 Int.). The existence of men who were cautiously supportive of the quota legislation does not mean that other men in Sumayadugu held the belief that women were incapable of serving on the council or felt threatened by the emergence of this new leadership for women. However, this type of opinion can be viewed as a reflection of broad changes in social relations between women and men in Sumayadugu.

Ultimately, the November 2016 local elections brought six women members to the 23-member local government council from the 12 villages that are within the jurisdiction of the commune. This relatively high number speaks to the nature of party politics in Mali. Sumayadugu is illustrative of broader trends in Malian politics in this respect. Mali's political party landscape is characterised by competition between numerous parties. There are more than 300 parties registered in the country. Historically in Mali, there are not strong connections between political parties at the national level and citizens at the local level. In Sumayadugu, research participants report that national party representatives arrive in the village before national elections to campaign, but after elections they disappear.

Eleven parties presented lists during the 2016 local elections in the commune where Sumayadugu is located. Nine parties are represented in the current local government council. The competitive nature of party politics in the commune and in Mali as a whole means that in many cases it is unlikely that a large number of candidates on any one party's list will ultimately be elected to office. Because parties are now obligated to include a woman in the first three candidates on party lists and include 30% women in their total list, party politics is now even more competitive. In this context, interpersonal conflicts between party leaders and feelings of mistrust between members of opposing political parties are the primary source of social division I identified in Sumayadugu. The mayor, government civil servants and ordinary citizens identified these conflicts as barriers to development.

In the months that followed the local polls, several men expressed support for the quota. However, the village imam expressed that he did not have anything at all to say about the arrival of women on the council in particular and about the entirety of local government in general because ‘the imam is for everyone’ (Imam 2017 Int.).⁵ On the other hand, Hamid, a farmer and leader of a small political party that presented a list for the local elections but did not gain any seats, was very positive about the arrival of women on the council. For Hamid, ‘without women, nothing works. We say priority to women, but in reality, women are left aside in most of men’s activities. This time there is a bit of change. If we say we give priority to women and women are not implicated, it’s false!’ (Hamid 2017 Int.). Hamid sees the development as an opportunity to make local government function better. Ibrahim, the nurse at the local health centre shared a similar sentiment, but from a different perspective. For Ibrahim, ‘women today are scared and they act accordingly. This means that women use money correctly. Rules are followed ... men are not afraid and may use money incorrectly.’ He notes that in families where the *chef de famille* is deceased, we do not see bad things. While when the *chef de famille* is alive, we see bad things. For Ibrahim, women give their children advice to be good and save money (Ibrahim 2017 Int.). These perspectives from men illustrate that while some men may oppose or do not want to take a public position on the arrival of women on the local government council, the women of Sumayadugu do have some male allies.

Following the local elections, women in Sumayadugu were acutely aware of the arrival of women on the council and expressed interest in becoming local government council candidates in the future and contacting women members of the local government council in the present. While it was not surprising that women were pleased with the changes that had taken place, the extent of women’s expressions of interest in being candidates for the local government council in the future was striking. Notably, no woman expressed that she could not become a candidate because she did not have time or because she did not speak French, common reasons why we might expect women to be uninterested in being members of the local government council. These expressions of interest in local political participation reflect women’s efficacy. Many women framed the new possibility for their candidacy aspirations in terms of equal access to information. As we know, the prevailing male-dominated information-sharing network in Sumayadugu excludes women from gaining direct access to information. Jelika, a gardener and market seller said, ‘I really want to be a candidate one day because now women can have all of the information men have. There was not equal access to information before, but there will be now’ (Jelika 2017 Int.). Several subsequent interview participants also cited the theme of equality between women and men. Mawa, a market seller, gardener and farmer, would be happy to be a candidate for the local government council and ‘be in the *mairie* because women and men are equal’ (Mawa 2017 Int.).

Several women expressed not only a desire to be candidates but a concrete idea of what they would like to accomplish while in office. Assetou, a volunteer health worker and gardener, expressed that she hoped one day ‘to have a place on the council so that I can give information and advice to other women’ (Assetou 2017 Int.). Salimatou, a fried pastry seller, would use her mandate on the council to fight against domestic violence and poor treatment of women and she would seek to allow civil servants and their wives to participate in the community gardening programmes that are currently open to village women (Salimatou 2017 Int.). Bibata, a gardener and market seller was happy because there will be more information that will be shared with women now. In the future, she would like to be a candidate. Bibata wanted ‘women to take courage so that they don’t always remain behind’ (Bibata 2017 Int.). Women in Sumayadugu who expressed interest in being a candidate articulated an agenda that is linked to helping other women, indicating the dominance of women’s worlds and channels of communication, which are separate from those of men. However, it is also important to note that at least one woman also expressed that being a member of a future commune council would present an opportunity for personal advancement through opportunities to travel or opportunities to cultivate her own personal advancement (Amina 2017 Int.).

All 32 women I interviewed in the post-election period expressed support and excitement that women were among the members of the new local government council. Several women made links between how women’s presence on the local government council would facilitate two-way communication between elected female representatives and women citizens in the village. Overall, there is a shared sentiment that now that women are on the local government council, more information and advice will be available for women. This information and advice will be communicated to women by women. Ramatou, a gardener and vegetable seller, stressed that women’s ideas will be considered now and the newly elected women can tell other women what goes on inside council discussions. For Ramatou, ‘before women weren’t considered. Now they can decide’ (Ramatou 2017 Int.). For Alimatou, a primary school teacher, ‘women will also do politics. Women will be able to tell women councillors what they want and women councillors can consider women’s needs’ (Alimatou 2017 Int.).

THEORISING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POLITICAL CHANGE AND WOMEN’S ASPIRATIONS TO PARTICIPATE IN POLITICS

In this study, I recognise that accumulated knowledge from the literature on institutional reforms to advance women’s political participation cannot fully explain why women in Sumayadugu expressed such high levels of interest in local government participation. Immersive research in Sumayadugu produced data that situates the implementation of the gender quota within a larger context of social and political change. These changes in the local political economy and in social relations between women and men occurred in the

context of decentralisation and set the stage for the implementation of the gender quota.

In the 1970s, decentralisation emerged as a policy reform to expand democracy and deliver responsive public services amid perceptions that the central state had failed to deliver efficient and effective governance. The majority of countries in sub-Saharan Africa, more than any other region, have undertaken decentralisation reforms. Institutions of local democracy are often new and weak in developing country contexts, and local decentralised governments are often prone to elite capture that results in the diversion of resources and corruption in the awarding of service contracts (Bardhan 2002). In the West African context, we have emerging evidence that elites can both hinder and help local service provision. Gottlieb (2015) finds evidence of this phenomenon in Mali: when members of local government councils are elected from every party that presents a candidate list in the election, with no opposition voices outside of the council, elected council members collude to provide benefits to themselves, thus de-emphasising citizen priorities. Alternatively, Wilfahrt (2018) finds that in rural Senegal longstanding elite alliances across a decentralised unit promote collaboration and lead to better provision of local government services.

An evaluation of decentralisation in 10 sub-Saharan African countries of differing regime types revealed an interesting common paradox: while decentralisation reforms have increased the strength of the central authority, the motivation to decentralise originates from the executive branch of government, not from a specific political programme to advance democracy and development (Dickovick & Riedl 2014). In this way, the African experience fits with other evaluations of decentralisation that attribute its initiation to the central government, oftentimes in the context of pressure from the international donor community (Manor 1999; Andrews 2013). Scholars conclude that the realities of contemporary African countries do not provide an enabling environment for the theoretical propositions that link decentralisation, development and government responsiveness (Dickovick & Riedl 2014).

Unlike many countries in sub-Saharan Africa, Mali's leaders designated decentralisation as a policy priority during the country's democratic transition in the early 1990s. Decentralisation was enshrined in the post-transition constitution as Malian leaders recognised connections between democratisation, decentralisation, poverty reduction, and peace and security. The first local elections were organised across the country in 1999. Despite his good relationship with the international community, during his second term in office Malian president Amadou Toumani Touré's domestic pursuit of consensus politics undermined Mali's democratic consolidation. Group think emerged and came to dominate state decision making (Koné 2012), as Touré co-opted potential challengers with jobs within the government or funding for programme implementation (Wing 2008). Some Mali observers hold that under Touré's administration, the central government did not implement policies to retain the allegiance of citizens (Schulz 2007). In this context, Ousman Sy, a minister

of local government and an architect of Malian decentralisation expressed that ‘the [decentralisation] process has broken down and has run out of political inspiration’ (Sy 2010). Other scholars characterise the state of decentralisation in Mali as having lost its vision and lacking inspiration (Wing & Kassibo 2014).

After spending time immersed in the daily lives of residents of Sumayadugu and talking to them about changes that had taken place in the village in recent memory, a different view of decentralisation emerged. This local reality did not exist instead of the challenges that produced the general, negative evaluations of decentralisation outlined above. Instead, it exists alongside these challenges. The decentralisation process drew attention to the local level in new ways. Adele, a central government civil servant, arrived in Sumayadugu to provide technical support to the newly elected local government in 1999. She explains that in the years that followed the creation of local government, the international community began to provide financial support for the implementation of decentralisation. These international partners became active in local development initiatives. As part of this process, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and United Nations agencies such as the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) began to seek local groups with whom they could collaborate to implement development projects. Official registration of local associations became a prerequisite to receive funding from these international partners. Over time, these opportunities changed local norms for associational participation, as citizens understood that if assistance was available from an external partner, it would be given to a group, not to individuals. Political leaders and average citizens expressed knowledge of this point in the interview context. These changes in associational norms did not occur immediately after the creation of local government as political and social changes often happen slowly over time. Although not all women’s associations pursued registration or received external funding, the increase in women’s associational activities that happened in Sumayadugu beginning in the early 2000s was a concrete outcome of decentralisation.

Changes in social and associational life

Social structure in Sumayadugu defines the context in which women deploy agency and establishes women’s need to earn income. In Sumayadugu social life is dominated by *grande familles*, large multigenerational households where the eldest son, the *chef de famille*, is the head of the family who lives with his wives, children, grandchildren, and the families of his younger brothers. The *chef de famille* controls the family budget. The dominance of polygamy and a preference for large families means that the family budget may not extend to cover the costs of all family members across multiple generations, especially if the harvest is poor in a given year. Moreover, the increasing availability of chemical inputs for farming means that men have fewer resources to share with their families in the post-harvest period because inputs are purchased on credit at the beginning of the growing season. However, men are expected to take care of

their wives and children; they provide cereal grains for family consumption. Men do not provide their wives with money to purchase other food. This practice originated in the separate, clearly defined roles for women and men in family life in Senufo culture. The practice continues in the context of increasing demands on family budgets. Women are thus responsible for purchasing vegetables, spices and seasonings, and meat or fish. Family cooking responsibilities are shared among the women who live in each household. Because women are required to purchase food to cook, they must earn an income. Women also often pay for their own clothing, health care, and sometimes, the health care and schooling costs of their children.

At the outset of this project, it was anticipated that women in Sumayadugu would be most active in associations for agricultural production. Although women in Sumayadugu participate in these associations, the most prominent form of association in Sumayadugu was the savings and credit association. Of the 40 women between ages 18 and 70 that I interviewed in Sumayadugu, 30 are members of such associations. These associations exist in various forms around the world, but are particularly popular in sub-Saharan Africa. Gugerty (2007) notes that the structure of these associations is adaptable, and for that reason, we see a variety of structures and different organisational principles used in these associations in different contexts. The groups became dominant in Sumayadugu following an external NGO-funded initiative in 2008 that provided technical support to women to set up the groups with clearly documented rules and procedures.

In Sumayadugu, savings and credit associations are composed of 20–40 women who meet weekly to make a fixed savings contribution to a common cash box. Typically, one week a month, women can take credit from the cashbox to finance their income-earning activities or to pay for unexpected or unusual household expenses. Borrowers pay a fixed amount of interest once a month on all outstanding loans, and repayment must happen within three months. Once a year, the members of the group divide the contents of their cash box equally amongst themselves. Women in some village families do not participate in these groups. Some women have participated in the past but have left the group due to illness or other forms of financial hardship. Some associations have registered with the government; others have not. If a group has obtained its registration, it cannot take on any new members.

Participation in these groups led to improvements in women's livelihood security through the development of efficacy. Political scientists theorise that efficacy is important for political participation (Campbell *et al.* 1960; Balch 1974). Following Bleck (2015), who draws from literature from American politics to study citizens' voting participation in Mali, I conceptualise efficacy as internal and external. Internal efficacy refers to an individual's sense of feeling as if she or he can engage effectively in politics (or, ostensibly, in other areas of social life). External efficacy refers to an individual's sense of feeling that her actions will affect political outcomes (or, ostensibly, other outcomes in social life). We see evidence of both kinds of efficacy in how women

aspire to be candidates and in how they talk about their experiences in associations.

I define agency as 'the socio-culturally mediated capacity to act' (Ahearn 2001: 112). Expressions of interest in being a candidate for the local government council made by the women of Sumayadugu reflect how the quota enabled women's agency to express this view. However, the larger context of socio-political change brought about by women's participation in savings and credit associations and men's respect for women's ability to contribute to family wellbeing shaped the context in which women's candidacy aspirations were expressed. In studying women's agency, Ortner (1996) argues for the theorisation of autonomous, self-constructed persons based on the understanding that not all persons are free to exercise agency at all times. Abu-Lughod (2013) urges scholars to be attentive to the social conditions and power relations that produce the realm of choices available for individual women to act upon. The experiences of women in Sumayadugu are situated in a context of new dynamics in social and political life that led to changes in women's freedom to exercise agency.

My argument is twofold. First, I argue that following the implementation of the quota, women in Sumayadugu express interest in local government participation in part because they have developed high levels of internal efficacy through their successful income-earning activities in savings and credit groups. Increases in women's internal efficacy helped to reinforce, within village social life, the image of women as capable of responding to their personal needs and the needs of their children. This shaped the views of women about themselves but also the views of some men vis-à-vis women's role in contributing to family welfare. Male research participants note that savings and credit groups help women to cover their own expenses and help their families. Moreover, some village men are increasingly interested in these associations. They ask their wives who are members of savings and credit groups to take credit for them. Some men have created their own savings and credit groups modelled after the groups of their wives. Participation in savings and credit associations allowed the women of Sumayadugu to develop reliable sources of personal income. Within these associations, a context defined by mutual trust and understanding among women, women were able to pursue individual goals of advancement in business initiatives and were able to generate income throughout the year. These increases in economic security allow women to fulfil their personal needs and better care for the needs of their children.

Theoretically, we know that the creation of institutions to create gender justice, such as quotas, does not automatically mean that women have the capability to act on their newly acquired rights and freedoms. We see how women's economic advancement in Sumayadugu is related to women's expressions of interest in being a candidate for local office. Scholars of development and gender justice present theoretical frameworks regarding these connections. Drawing on and expanding the Capability Approach (Sen 1999), Nussbaum (2003) argues that it is important to define particular capabilities when

seeking to understand how to address sex inequality in the context of discussions of social justice. Under the rubric of control over one's environment, Nussbaum (2003: 41–2) defines political control as 'being able to participate effectively in political choices that govern one's life'; it is important to note that this capability works in concert with having material control over one's environment as well as being able to secure physical health and integrity, among other capabilities.

The quota was an important institutional reform that opened participation in the local government council to women. However, the efficacy generated through associational participation created the conditions of possibility for women to express interest in this new form of political participation. Kabeer (1999: 437) defines empowerment in close relation to the end of disempowerment: the processes whereby those who have been denied the capacity to make choices acquire such a capacity. In Sumayadugu, we can see that through the efficacy generated in the associational context and the new conditions of possibility for political participation afforded by the quota, women were empowered to choose whether they are interested in being candidates for local government. In other work, Kabeer (2012) proposes that citizenship can provide an important link between empowerment and gender justice by connecting changes in women's ability to make decisions about political participation to institutional changes to promote such political participation. This is particularly important in contexts where there might be a mismatch between new freedoms and rights and women's ability to exercise those rights. In Sumayadugu, we can see how this connection can be made by linking women's economic advancement and a new opportunity for political participation through women's more active citizenship.

The second part of my argument relates to decentralisation. The consolidation of democracy in Mali is not without significant challenges, particularly as the country struggles to promote national unity in the midst of conflict and insurgency in the several regions of the country (Craven-Matthews & Englebert 2018). However, evidence from Sumayadugu illustrates that advances in women's personal economic security and political participation are linked to democratisation through the country's decentralisation process that drew attention to the local level in new ways and encouraged women to organise in associations. I argue that an increase in women's associational activities was a concrete outcome of decentralisation that emerged in Sumayadugu in the years following the creation of local government. Moreover, it is through decentralisation that residents of Sumayadugu, in their daily lives, were able to experience some of the most important components of democratisation in the country – vibrant freedom of association, the election of local leaders who oversee service provision, and the expansion of education and health-care services. This does not mean that Malian democratisation or decentralisation are without challenges. It does mean that by looking closely at how citizens experienced decentralisation a different perspective emerges.

Life in Sumayadugu was different during authoritarian rule. A ‘do what you are told’ mentality prevailed during the 23-year period that authoritarian president Moussa Traoré ruled the country. Sumayadugu’s 90-year-old chief described Traoré’s power as ‘*bin kɛnɛ jeni fanga*’, scorched earth power (Chef 2017 Int.). I asked my research assistant if there were NGO projects during authoritarian rule. She noted that during this time, you could not do what you wanted. You had to do as you were told. In her experience, Sumayadugu has advanced since then. Life is better now than it was before the creation of local government.

In the authoritarian context, a ‘live for today’ approach was also predominant in daily life. At this time, savings rates were low and the profits from group farm work were ‘eaten’ through the organisation of feast celebrations after harvest (Moussa 2016 Int.; Ibrahim 2017 Int.). Although these celebrations are still an important part of village social life, groups of women and young people who do paid farm labour have begun to take other initiatives to invest some of the profits that formerly went to financing celebrations. Some groups of women now invest in cooking utensils that are shared among group members to use for family marriages, baptisms and funerals (Salimata 2017 Int.). In this way, we can see evidence of other changes in associational life beyond the context of savings and credit groups. These changes became possible when women had more secure livelihood options and the ability to save money, concrete outcomes of the rise in women’s participation in savings and credit groups that occurred following the creation of local government.

Masaratou, a market seller who would later become one of the first women from Sumayadugu on the local government council, acknowledged that savings and credit groups had existed in Sumayadugu for generations. However, she reported that before village women received training from an external NGO about how to organise a savings and credit group governed by clear, documented rules and expectations, women fought over misunderstandings about money. Now, these groups function well. In terms of the importance of these groups for village women Masaratou stated, ‘It’s important. These groups allow us to save money and to buy things. Before, money was wasted. Women did not know how to save money’ (Masaratou 2016 Int.). Haja, a market seller, gardener and farmer, captured this situation well saying that, ‘If you don’t have any money, you cannot save any money.’ She elaborated further on the practice of women dividing the contents of their shared savings once a year: ‘Even if it’s not a lot, when the *caisse* (cash box) is divided, you can buy a *pagne* (a printed cloth that is used to sew a dress or a skirt and top). Savings and credit groups have changed life here. In one of these groups you can get credit and work.’ Haja confirmed that work for women was ‘very possible even’ for the women of Sumayadugu who are in savings and credit groups (Haja 2017 Int.). Kadiatou, a small business woman and gardener who sells at the market and at home, summed up the sentiments expressed by many research participants: ‘If a woman does not have money, she can go to her group and get credit. That’s a really big thing! Life is better

now with these groups. The money that is saved allows women to do many things. I have purchased sheep to raise, sell, and eat. In the past, I bought millet. These groups have saved us!' (Kadiatou 2017 Int.). With regular income, women can more easily attend to their personal needs and the needs of their families.

Gains from membership in savings and credit associations go beyond income and the fulfilment of basic needs to deeper feelings of security. Kadi, a gardener, soap seller and farmer, explained that life is better now that she has been in a savings and credit group for two years. Before, she reported that she 'didn't understand life'. She framed it as a distinction between darkness and light, and explained that she is now in a positive cycle of taking credit, doing a little business, making profit, saving money and taking credit (Kadi 2017 Int.). Savings and credit groups also afford women a certain amount of privacy and predictability to access credit to do work. Salimatou, a fried pastry seller, explained that before savings and credit groups became prominent, she would have to ask her neighbour when she wanted to borrow money. She reported that it was not always certain that the neighbour would have money he or she wanted to lend. Moreover, the neighbour might inform other people in the community that you came to him or her asking for credit. Now, credit is available for a standard three-month period in savings and credit groups (Salimatou 2017 Int.). Women in Sumayadugu report that they are more secure in their livelihoods today than women of their mothers' generation. The oldest woman I interviewed in Sumayadugu, Mariam, who is in her 70s, has daughters who are in savings and credit groups. For Mariam, women's situation 'is now good. It's better than before because it is now possible for women to earn money' (Mariam 2017 Int.).

It is important to note that all of the women quoted above who expressed these ideas about how participation in savings and credit associations had improved their livelihood security by allowing them to exercise agency to earn and save money also expressed interest in becoming a candidate for local office or supporting the candidacy of their daughters. In a rural area at the intersection of central and northern Mali, Bleck & Michelitch (2018) found a positive association between women who engaged in small-scale enterprise (activities similar to those of the women of Sumayadugu who participate in savings and credit associations) and household agency. Notably, the authors did not find a connection between political engagement and engaging in commerce to earn income. In Sumayadugu, women's participatory aspirations were possible following the implementation of the gender quota in part because of the expansion of women's participation in associational life.

ASSESSING ALTERNATE EXPLANATIONS

The quota as the sole cause of women's interest in local political participation

Gender quotas are powerful institutional reforms that have greatly expanded women's representation in elected office around the world and changed how

non-elected women participate in politics. Demonstration effects can be a powerful force in encouraging women to participate in local politics when they see that those women who have gained office because of the quota are like them. It is important to note that the two women from Sumayadugu who were elected to the council because of the quota were, in fact, leaders in their respective savings and credit associations. However, we would not understand the full complexity and transformative nature of processes of social and political change in Sumayadugu if we attributed women's expressions of interest in becoming candidates for local office to the demonstration effect alone. The quota was implemented in a context shaped by changes in the norms that govern associational participation and subsequent changes in how women viewed themselves and how some men viewed women.

Once the quota was implemented and women gained a presence on the council, women of Sumayadugu began to openly express interest in participating in local government in new ways. The quota served to unlock new participatory opportunities for women that were not possible in the context of the prevailing social structures that governed women's (non)participation in the local government council before the 2016 local elections. At least for the time being, the quota has broken the longstanding cycle of exclusion and abstention in women's participation in local government leadership. Now it is possible for women to apply the efficacy they gained through associational participation in the domain of local government.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, I ask why a population of rural Malian women would express high levels of interest in local government participation. I examine how, at the local level, decentralisation created space for women's extensive organisation in associations that shaped their efficacy and agency and, ultimately, their aspirations to become involved in local government. Creating institutions for citizen participation and legislation to promote women's participation in those institutions is not always a sure way to advance participatory goals. In the case of Sumayadugu, the associational space provided an intermediary context to connect institutional change and nascent participatory outcomes.

These precise conditions that I have outlined from Sumayadugu are not necessarily present throughout contemporary Mali. I do not aim to generalise the precise context of Sumayadugu to the entire country. Instead, I demonstrate that by closely examining the lived experiences of rural Malians in a particular agrarian social setting, we can better understand how political and social changes have, or have not, created opportunities to increase political participation and change the norms that govern relations between women and men. The changes in access to information that the women of Sumayadugu reference in the interview context point to an opportunity to challenge the longstanding separation of information and communication channels for women and men. Other scholars have documented the existence of these separate

communication networks in other areas of Mali (Bleck & Michelitch 2017); this draws attention to the fact that women's limited access to information is not just a problem in rural Koutiala, but also a problem throughout Mali, and likely in other areas of the rural Sahel. Evidence from Sumayadugu demonstrates the importance of links between women's economic security and women's interest in political participation and highlights how women's efficacy and agency from one social sphere can be brought to bear in the context of political participation. The experiences of the women of Sumayadugu also illustrate how efficacy and agency can be developed outside of a formal system of education in a setting where most women do not have access to many years of education.

The potential of the gender quota to increase Malian women's political participation is currently an important opportunity. However, there is no guarantee that the women of Sumayadugu will ultimately be able to put their participatory aspirations into practice. Women could encounter pushback as they begin to gain access to information that was formerly only available to men, even though early evidence of this was not present when I conducted research in the village. When I was present in Sumayadugu, the newly elected council, which included women members elected through the quota, had not yet begun its work. Following the implementation of the gender quota in Mali's local governments, newly elected women and women who aspire to local government participation in the future need support. At present, however, the attention of the Malian state is occupied elsewhere due to security concerns in several regions of the country. In Mali, the focus of the international donor community has largely turned to programmes to combat violent extremism (CVE).

Although local revenue mobilisation in Sumayadugu is largely successful, resources remain limited. Residents of Sumayadugu expressed concerns that central government support was not available to advance development in the village because the government's attention was captured by security concerns elsewhere the country. At this time, more than ever before, creating more participatory, responsive local government is an important step in creating stability and security for all Malians. Evidence from Sumayadugu points to the potential for further democratic progress in Mali coming, not from the political class in Bamako, but from women and men at the local level.

NOTES

1. Sumayadugu, a descriptive pseudonym, means 'humid or fresh village' in Bamanankan.
2. The Code, drafted in the years immediately following Mali's 1960 independence, governs marriage, divorce, parental responsibilities and inheritance. It discriminated against women in several areas, but its authors aimed to modernise Mali by focusing the Code's purview away from kin groups and extended family and toward the modern, nuclear family (Schulz 2003: 140).
3. I use a first name pseudonym for each interview participant quoted in this paper.
4. If a woman was older than 60, I asked her if she would support the candidacy of her daughter or granddaughter. None of the eight women I interviewed before the election raised the issue of women's absence on the commune council. During these interviews, it was not yet clear that the local elections would take place.

5. The imam's desire to remain apolitical reveals tensions with multiparty politics examined by Bleck (2015). In this context, the religious realm is viewed as untainted and separate from politics.

REFERENCES

- Abu-Lughod, L. 2013. *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Ahearn, L. 2001. 'Language and agency', *Annual Review of Anthropology* 30: 109–37.
- Andrews, M. 2013. *The Limits of Institutional Reform in Development: changing rules for realistic solutions.* New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Balch, G. 1974. 'Multiple indicators in survey research: the concept 'sense of political efficacy'', *Political Methodology* 1, 2: 1–43.
- Bardhan, P. 2002. 'Decentralization of governance and development', *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 16, 4: 185–205.
- Barnes, T. & S. Burchard. 2013. "Engendering" politics: the impact of descriptive representation on women's political engagement in Sub Saharan Africa', *Comparative Political Studies* 46, 7: 767–90.
- Bauer, G. & J. Burnet. 2013. 'Gender quotas, democracy and women's representation in Africa: some insights from democratic Botswana and autocratic Rwanda', *Women's Studies International Forum* 41: 103–12.
- Beaman, L., R. Chattopadhyay, E. Dufo, R. Pande & P. Topalova. 2009. 'Powerful women: does exposure reduce bias?', *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 124, 4: 1497–540.
- Bleck, J. 2015. *Education and Empowered Citizenship in Mali.* Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Bleck, J. & K. Michelitch. 2017. 'Capturing the airwaves, capturing the nation? A field experiment on state-run media effects in the wake of a coup', *Journal of Politics* 79, 3: 873–89.
- Bleck, J. & K. Michelitch. 2018. 'Is women's empowerment associated with political knowledge and opinions? Evidence from rural Mali', *World Development* 106: 299–323.
- Bush, S. 2011. 'International politics and the spread of quotas for women in legislatures', *International Organization* 65, 1: 103–37.
- Campbell, A., P. Converse, W. Miller & D. Stokes. 1960. *The American Voter.* New York, NY: Wiley.
- Clayton, A. 2015. 'Female leadership, electoral gender quotas and women's political engagement: evidence from a randomized policy experiment', *Comparative Political Studies* 48, 3: 333–69.
- Craven-Matthews, C. & P. Englebert. 2018. 'A Potemkin state in the Sahel? The empirical and the fictional in Malian state reconstruction', *African Security* 11, 1: 1–31.
- Dicko, N. 2015. 'Mali: Loi instituant le quota en faveur des femmes: L'ombre de la communauté musulmane a plané sur le vote'. <<https://maliactu.net/mali-loi-instituant-le-quota-en-faveur-des-femmes-lombre-de-la-communauté-musulmane-a-plane-sur-le-vote/>>, accessed 16.1.19.
- Dickovick, J. & R. Beatty Riedel. 2014. 'African decentralization in comparative perspective', in J. Dickovick and J. Wunsch, eds. *Decentralization in Africa: the paradox of state strength.* Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 249–76.
- Fujii, L. 2018. *Interviewing in Social Science Research: a relational approach.* New York, NY: Routledge.
- Gottlieb, J. 2015. The logic of party collusion in a democracy: evidence from Mali'. *World Politics* 67, 1: 1–36.
- Gottlieb, J. 2016. 'Why might information exacerbate the gender gap in civic participation? Evidence from Mali', *World Development* 86: 95–110.
- Gugerty, M. 2007. 'You can't save alone: commitment in rotating savings and credit associations in Kenya', *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 55, 2: 251–82.
- Hughes, M., M. Krook & P. Paxton. 2015. 'Transnational women's activism and the global diffusion of gender quotas', *International Studies Quarterly* 59, 2: 357–72.
- Interparliamentary Union. 2019. Women in National Parliaments, <<http://archive.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>>, accessed 16.1.19.
- Kabeer, N. 1999. 'Resources, agency, achievement: reflections on the measurement of women's empowerment', *Development and Change* 30, 3: 435–64.
- Kabeer, N. 2012. 'Empowerment, citizenship and gender justice: a contribution to locally grounded theories of change in women's lives'. *Ethics and Social Welfare* 6, 3: 216–32.
- Kaboré, A., E. Sibone, M. Abari & B. Issa. 2014. *Governance at the Grassroots: an analysis of local government structures in the Sahel regions of Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali.* Agence Corade: Catholic Relief Services. <<http://www.crs.org/our-work-overseas/research-publications/governance-grassroots>>, accessed 31.10.2015.
- Kang, A. 2015. *Bargaining for Women's Rights: activism in an aspiring Muslim democracy.* Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

- Kang, A. & A. Tripp. 2018. 'Coalitions matter: citizenship, women, and quota adoption in Africa', *Perspectives on Politics* 16, 1: 73–91.
- Kitilson, M. 2005. 'In support of gender quotas: setting new standards, bringing visible gains', *Politics and Gender* 1, 4: 638–45.
- Koné, Y. 2012. 'Lessons from Mali's Arab Spring: Why Democracy Must Work for the Poor', Christian Aid Occasional Paper Number 8, September 2012, <<http://www.christianaid.org.uk/images/lessons-from-mali.pdf>>, accessed 25.11.2012.
- Manor, J. 1999. *The Political Economy of Democratic Decentralization*. Washington, DC: The World Bank.
- Nussbaum, M. 2003. 'Capabilities as Fundamental Entitlements: Sen and social justice', *Feminist Economics* 9, 2–3: 33–59.
- Ortner, S. 1996. *Making Gender: the politics and erotics of culture*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Sen, A. 1999. *Development as Freedom*. New York, NY: Anchor Books.
- Schaffer, F. 2014. 'Thin descriptions: the limits of survey research on the meaning of democracy', *Polity* 46, 3: 303–30.
- Schulz, D. 2003. 'Political factions, ideological fictions: the controversy over family law reform in democratic Mali', *Islamic Law and Society* 10, 1: 132–64.
- Schulz, D. 2007. 'Evoking moral community, fragmenting Muslim discourse: sermon audio-recordings and the reconfiguration of public debate in Mali', *Journal for Islamic Studies* 27: 39–72.
- Schwandt-Bayer, L. 2006. 'Still supermamas? Gender and the policy priorities of Latin American legislators', *American Journal of Political Science* 50, 3: 570–85.
- Soares, B. 2009. 'The attempt to reform family law in Mali', *Die Welt des Islams* 49: 398–428.
- Sy, O. 2010. 'L'état de la décentralisation au Mali et l'implication des collectivités décentralisées dans le dialogue sur les politiques de développement', Governance in Africa archive.<http://base.afrique-gouvernance.net/docs/coop_collect_locales.pdf>, accessed 31.3.2016.
- Tripp, A. 2016. 'Women's mobilisation for legislative political representation in Africa', *Review of African Political Economy* 43, 149: 382–99.
- Tripp, A. & A. Kang. 2008. 'The global impact of quotas: on the fast track to increased female legislative representation', *Comparative Political Studies* 41, 3: 338–61.
- Wilfahrt, M. 2018. 'The politics of local government performance: elite cohesion and cross-village constraints in decentralized Senegal', *World Development* 103: 149–61.
- Wing, S. 2008. *Constructing Democracy in Transitioning Societies of Africa: constitutionalism and deliberation in Mali*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Wing, S. 2012. 'Women's rights and family law reform in francophone Africa', in E.M. Lust and S.N. Ndegwa, eds. *Governing Africa's Changing Societies: dynamics of reform*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 145–76.
- Wing, S. & B. Kassibo. 2014. 'Mali: incentives and challenges for decentralization', in J. Dickovick and J. Wunsch, eds. *Decentralization in Africa: the paradox of state strength*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 113–36.
- Wolbrecht, C. & D. Campbell. 2007. 'Leading by example: female members of parliament as political role models', *American Journal of Political Science* 52, 4: 921–39.

Interviews

- Kadiatou, gardener, market seller, farmer, Sumayadugu, 17.2.2017.
- Idrissa, literacy instructor, farmer, Sumayadugu, 4.10.2016.
- Amadou, primary school teacher, farmer, Sumayadugu, 28.9.2016.
- Drissa, farmer, Sumayadugu, 4.10.2016.
- Siddiki, farmer, Sumayadugu, 27.1.2017.
- The Imam of Sumayadugu, 11.3.2017.
- Hamid, farmer, Sumayadugu, 28.2.2017.
- Ibrahim, nurse, Sumayadugu, 4.2.2017.
- Jelika, gardener, market seller, Sumayadugu, 19.2.2017.
- Mawa, market seller, gardener, farmer, Sumayadugu, 26.2.2017.
- Assetou, health worker, gardener, Sumayadugu, 28.2.2017.
- Salimatou, fried pastry seller, Sumayadugu, 6.3.2017.
- Bibata, gardener, market seller, Sumayadugu, 12.3.2017.
- Amina, health worker, Sumayadugu, 4.3.2017.
- Ramatou, gardener, vegetable seller, Sumayadugu, 5.2.2017.
- Alimatou, primary school teacher, Sumayadugu, 8.3.2017.

- Chef, village chief, Sumayadugu, 11.3. 2017.
Moussa, NGO worker, Sumayadugu, 3.10. 2016.
Salimata, market seller, Sumayadugu, 25.2. 2017.
Adèle, Central government civil service employee, Sumayadugu, 15.9. 2016.
Masaratou, market seller, Sumayadugu, 26.9. 2016.
Haja, market seller, gardener, farmer, Sumayadugu, 6.3. 2017.
Kadi, gardener, soap seller, farmer, Sumayadugu, 21.2. 2017.
Mariam, retired, Sumayadugu, 26.2. 2017.