

Acknowledgments

This book began as a dissertation at Cornell University, where I was supervised by Nicolas van de Walle. Nic deserves the first and deepest acknowledgment for his guidance during the project's development as well as the generous support he continues to offer long after my departure from Ithaca. I benefited enormously from the other members of my dissertation committee, Kenneth Roberts and Christopher Way, both of whom encouraged me to think beyond Senegal to the broader implications of my ideas. I also thank Richard Bensel and Tom Pepinsky for providing particularly detailed commentary at various points in this project's development. Kevin Morrison also provided valuable feedback at early stages. Like many, my peers were as influential as my professors and my graduate education was greatly enriched by my fellow graduate students. I thank, in particular, Jaimie Bleck, Erin Hern, Lauren Honig, and Danielle Thomsen.

During my repeated visits to Senegal, I received generous help from the staff at the West African Research Center and the Senegalese National Archives. Excellent research assistance was provided by Amina Ba, Mohammed Camara, Balla Diatta, Koly Fall, Moussa Fall, Mairame Ly, and Idrissa Ndiade. El Hadji Almareme Faye deserves special recognition for repeatedly decamping from Dakar with me to the countryside. Hundreds of local elected officials, village chiefs, rural development agents, and government officials graciously took the time to talk with me about local politics. I will never be able to express my gratitude to them for partaking in the Senegalese specialties of political debate and *ataaya* with my research assistants and myself. I can only hope that this book does justice to their stories and experiences and, in some way, helps to address the many hurdles they face in their daily lives.

I found welcome space to develop this project into a book manuscript during the three years I spent at Northwestern University. Jim Mahoney, Will Reno, and Rachel Riedl offered notable support during this period as did the broader

African studies community. I thank participants in the Buffet Center's Comparative Historical Social Sciences workshop and attendees at the Program of African Studies' noon lunch talks for their constructive feedback as well as for providing a stimulating intellectual community during my time in Evanston.

When I joined the political science department at the University of California, Berkeley in 2018, I thought this book was nearly done, but the insights and feedback of my new colleagues led me to push deeper and further in my thinking in ways that have been especially productive. Particular recognition is owed here to Leo Arriola, Thad Dunning, Andrew Little, and Alison Post, though the department as a whole has my gratitude for the warm welcome I have received. I benefited enormously from a book workshop during my first year at Berkeley, where Pierre Englebert, Dominika Koter, and Ann Swidler provided detailed and generous comments. Paul Thissen, Justine Davis, Allison Grossman, and Melanie Phillips have also kindly read numerous parts of this project. I extend my appreciation as well to the other regular attendees of the African Studies Workshop in addition to participants in the 2020 UC-Africa Workshop, which offered one last opportunity to present this material as I wrapped up edits.

Various parts of this project have benefited from constructive feedback from, at some point or another, Ryan Briggs, Elliott Green, Robin Harding, Adam Harris, Mala Htun, Daniel de Kadt, Devra Moehler, Amy Poteete, Phil Roessler, Ryan Sheely, Prerna Singh, Richard Snyder, Jennifer Widner, and Joseph Woldense as well as participants in the 2018 Governance and Local Development (GLD) conference in Gothenburg, Sweden. The entire process of embarking on my career has been eased by the supportive mentorship of Lauren Morris Maclean and, deserving mention once again, Leo Arriola and Rachel Riedl. I would also like to thank Natalie Letsa, Kathleen Klaus, Jeff Paller, and Whitney Taylor for their friendship; it has been a true pleasure to bump into you all again and again around the world.

The field research for this book was made possible by the Houston J. Flourney and Boren Fellowships as well as grants from the Center for the Study of Inequality, Institute for African Development, and the Cornell University Graduate School. The Afrobarometer, Centre de Suivi Ecologique, the Senegalese Ministries of Education and Health as well as the PEPAM program all generously shared data with me. At Cambridge University Press, I thank the close reading of two anonymous reviewers as well as the guiding hand of Sara Doskow. Portions of this project have been published in *World Politics* as Martha Wilfahrt. 2018. "Precolonial Legacies and the Contemporary Politics of Public Goods Provision in Decentralized West Africa." *World Politics* 70 (2):239–274 and in *World Development* as Martha Wilfahrt. 2018. "The Politics of Local Government Performance: Elite Cohesion and Cross-Village Constraints in Decentralized Senegal." *World Development* 103:149–161.

My family has been indispensable in my entire academic journey. My parents, Lori and Jeff, have offered nothing but encouragement, imparting in me from a young age the firm (if not borderline stubborn) belief that I can do whatever I set my mind to. I likewise thank my brother, Peter, and sister-in-law, Mandy Maring, as well as my in-laws in Zaandam, who have welcomed me (and my halting Dutch skills) with unparalleled warmth. Ankica Runac and Anabel Njoes have endured endless stories about the minutiae of academia with great cheer; their friendship means the world to me. Though he is not here to read this, my older brother, Andrew, left an incredible mark on my life and I miss him daily.

Like many, I will conclude by thanking my partner, Robert Braun. As with many academic couples, this project has been so discussed and debated – on Skype during long periods apart, during Saturday afternoon hikes, at cafes, and over dinner – that his influence on this book is impossible to categorize or count. But while I might prefer to remember the moments that sparked new ideas or solved sticky problems, this should not obscure the many moments of frustration that go into a project of this length. It is for the light you offer in those moments, Robert, for which I am most grateful of all.

