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# Mobilization, Participatory Planning Institutions, and Elite Capture: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Rural Kenya

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**Summary.** — This paper examines the linkage between mobilization and elite capture in participatory institutions using a randomized experiment in Kenya. In the treatment group, an environmental organization mobilized individuals to attend a participatory local government planning meeting. Mobilization had a large and significant effect on citizen participation. Despite this effect, mobilization did not lead to increased adoption of either the organization's preferred projects or the projects requested by citizens. Instead, the intervention changes the type of discrepancies observed in final allocations, indicating that elite control over planning institutions can adapt to increased mobilization and participation.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Since the 1990s, many countries have implemented reforms that decentralize authority to local governments (Bardhan, 2002; Crook, 2003). Many decentralization reforms have included the creation of participatory planning institutions in local governments. These institutions directly involve citizens in various aspects of municipal governance, including identifying policy problems, selecting projects, and in some cases creating budgets and delivering public services (De Sousa Santos, 1998; Fung, 2006; Heller, 2001; Shah, 2007; Speer, 2012). The aim of including this type of participatory planning institution in decentralization reforms is to empower citizens by encouraging their direct participation in planning local government projects (Fung & Wright, 2001; Ribot, 2007; Schneider, 1999).

Despite the popularity of participatory planning institutions, academics and practitioners have noted that politicians, bureaucrats, and interest groups are often able to capture such institutions (Agrawal & Gupta, 2005; Bardhan & Mookherjee, 2000; Lund & Saito-Jensen, 2013; Platteau, 2004; Shah, 2007; Véron, Williams, Corbridge, & Srivastava, 2006). When citizens do not attend and participate in planning meetings, politicians or interest groups can more easily bypass these institutions or fill meetings with only their own supporters (Mansuri & Rao, 2012; Platteau & Gaspard, 2003). If this interpretation is true, mobilizing citizens to participate in planning meetings should lead to lower levels of capture and a greater connection between citizen voice and service delivery outcomes (Lund & Saito-Jensen, 2013).

Many development practitioners utilize mobilization and information campaigns to encourage citizens to participate in politics and to reduce elite capture of policymaking processes (Björkman & Svensson, 2009; Mansuri & Rao, 2012; Pande, 2011). However, there is limited evidence about the effectiveness of such mobilization campaigns, particularly in the context of participatory planning institutions. This lack of evidence motivates two central research questions about

the link between mobilization, participation, and elite capture. How does mobilization by civil society organizations shape patterns of citizen participation in local government planning institutions? Does mobilization increase the likelihood that government allocations match citizen priorities, or is mobilization also susceptible to capture by interest groups or governing elites?

I provide an initial set of answers to these questions using a block-randomized field experiment conducted in a rural local government in north-central Kenya. I grouped the fourteen local government wards in the sample into pairs based on the degree of prior involvement by a local environmental organization and the level of ethnic diversity in each ward.

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One ward in each pair was randomly assigned to a treatment in which the environmental organization mobilized community members to attend the upcoming local government meeting and to publicly support the organization's preferred project at that meeting. Enumerators assessed the level of participation and meeting outcomes through structured qualitative observation of meetings in all treatment and control wards, and supplemented these observations with administrative records of the actual project proposals that the local government decided to fund.

This combination of randomized field experimentation and structured qualitative research provides a unique source of evidence about the operation of participatory planning institutions. Although other studies have randomly assigned mobilization, observed planning meetings, and examined administrative data, no studies have simultaneously used all three methods to understand the link between mobilization, participation, and elite capture (Björkman & Svensson, 2009; Fearon, Humphreys, & Weinstein, 2009; Olken, 2007, 2010; Paluck & Green, 2009; Beath, Christia, & Enikolopov, 2013; Casey, Miguel, & Glennerster, 2012; Lund & Saito-Jensen, 2013; Nolte & Voget-Kleschin, 2014). Despite the analytic leverage provided by this mixed-methods research design, the in-depth qualitative observation of planning meetings necessitates the small sample size used in this experiment. In order to overcome analytic challenges associated with small sample sizes, I analyze the results of the experiment using randomization inference, which allows me to test the null hypothesis of no treatment effect without making distributional assumptions that are often violated in small samples (Keele, McConnaughy, & White, 2012; Rosenbaum, 2002).

There are three sets of findings from the analysis. First, the mobilization had a significant and substantively large effect on citizen participation in local government meetings, as measured by the number of attendees, the number of individuals speaking, and the length of the meeting. Second, despite the effect of the mobilization on participation in the planning meeting, mobilization had no effect on the likelihood of the civil society organization's preferred project being ranked first or second by meeting participants. Mobilization also did not increase the likelihood that the local government actually allocated funding to the projects requested during the planning meetings.

Finally, although mobilization did not increase the match between project rankings in the meetings and actual project allocations, mobilization did have an effect on the specific nature of deviations. Mobilization decreased the likelihood that the local government requested funding for projects that had not been selected in the community meetings and increased the likelihood that the local government only requested funding for one project. Taken together, these results indicate that even if mobilization is successful in increasing participation in planning meetings, it may also cause elites to modify the tactics that they use to maintain influence over participatory institutions.

The paper proceeds as follows. In the next section, I draw on existing research to define the core concepts of "participatory planning institutions" and "elite capture" and to develop a set of testable hypotheses about the relationship between mobilization by civil society organizations, citizen participation, and political capture in local government planning institutions. I then describe the design of the mobilization experiment, focusing on the design of the intervention, the method used to randomly assign wards to the treatment and control conditions, the data collection methods, and the empirical strategy used to analyze the data. I then present the results of the experiment. I focus first on the effects of mobilization on participa-

tion, and then examining the effects of mobilization on capture of the planning institution by the mobilizing organization and governing elites. I conclude by briefly considering the theoretical, policy, and methodological implications of the empirical findings.

## 2. CONCEPTS, THEORY, AND HYPOTHESES

Broadly speaking, participatory institutions are designed to enable and encourage the direct involvement of citizens in the creation or implementation of public policies and public goods projects (Fung, 2006; Pateman, 2012; Speer, 2012).<sup>1</sup> This article focuses on one particular subset of participatory institutions: participatory planning institutions in local governments.<sup>2</sup> Participatory planning institutions can be defined as institutions that formally incorporate citizens into a government's processes for identifying public policy problems and proposing projects to address those problems (Smoke, 2008).<sup>3</sup> Although participatory planning institutions take on many different forms in practice, the common feature of such institutions are community meetings in which the residents of a given municipality or neighborhood rank policy priorities and suggest possible projects that the local government can implement to address those problems (Beard, Mirafteb, & Silver, 2008). The public works projects suggested by citizens may be funded by either a fixed budget set by the government or by a flexible budget set by citizens as part of the participatory process itself (Cabannes, 2004; Pateman, 2012; Shah, 2007; Smoke, 2008).

The earliest and best-known participatory planning institution is the system of participatory budgeting implemented in the Brazilian city of Porto Alegre in 1988 (De Sousa Santos, 2005; Fung & Wright, 2001; Pateman, 2012). In the 25 years since the creation of participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre, over 1,000 local governments around the world have implemented some form of participatory planning institution (Pateman, 2012). Although scholars and practitioners have developed a variety of normative arguments in favor of this global expansion of participatory planning institutions, the core idea in this literature is that broad public participation in participatory planning institutions empowers ordinary citizens vis-à-vis political and economic elites and narrow interest groups (Bland, 2011; Fung & Wright, 2003; Gibson & Woolcock, 2008; Pateman, 2012; Shah, 2007; Speer, 2012).<sup>4</sup>

One implication of this body of research is that the core normative goals of participatory planning institutions are undermined when governing elites or interest groups are able to capture the planning meetings. Scholars of participatory institutions have defined elite capture and interest-group capture in a variety of ways and have debated whether capture of participatory institutions is primarily harmful or benevolent (Dasgupta & Beard, 2007; Fritzen, 2007; Lund & Saito-Jensen, 2013; Pan & Christiaensen, 2012).<sup>5</sup> Some of this lack of consensus in the literature is due to the fact that different studies focus on different kinds of social and political elites. This study focuses on the governing elites in local governments: elected local government representatives and appointed bureaucrats in the locality.<sup>6</sup>

The most basic form of elite capture in participatory planning institutions occurs when governing elites disregard the policy priorities identified by citizens in planning meetings and implement some other project (Fung & Wright, 2003; Gibson & Woolcock, 2008). A second common form of capture in participatory planning institutions occurs when governing elites or local civil society organizations fill planning meetings with their supporters and exclude the broader com-

munity. In this type of capture, the meeting outcome represents only the preferences of the mobilizing group, rather than the community more broadly (Shah, 2007).

In these two examples, capture of planning institutions does not necessarily mean that governing elites or civil society organizations exploit the planning processes for personal enrichment or political gain. Even if elites disregard or influence the outcomes of planning meetings out of a benevolent desire to implement what they see as the best public project, their interference undermines the extent to which participatory planning institutions actually empower ordinary citizens to directly shape public policy (Fung & Wright, 2001).

This broad definition of elite capture does not mean that any divergence between planning meeting outcomes and actual project implementation is necessarily evidence of capture. Most participatory planning institutions include explicit rules and procedures that allow politicians, bureaucrats, and civil society organizations to participate in planning meetings. In particular, these rules allow governing elites to contribute their own per expertise to the planning process, and to forge compromises between different stakeholder groups (Beard *et al.*, 2008; Fung & Wright, 2001). At the same time, these rules and procedures also typically require that governing elites explain and defend deviations to the citizens who participated in the planning process (Gibson & Woolcock, 2008). When such rules and procedures are disregarded, elites and interest groups are able to capture the institutions by delegitimizing the voices of ordinary citizens and monopolizing control over public decision-making (Ban, Jha, & Rao, 2012).

Practitioners and academics have frequently advocated broad-based social mobilization as a strategy to reduce capture by governing elites and interest groups (Björkman & Svensson, 2009; Mansuri & Rao, 2012; Pande, 2011). Despite this interest in mobilization as a strategy to combat elite capture, there is limited theory or evidence that explicitly focuses on explaining the linkages between mobilization, citizen participation, and the capture of planning institutions by interest groups and governing elites. However, it is possible to derive testable hypotheses by drawing on a variety of other prominent theoretical perspectives from the study of comparative politics, political economy, and political behavior.

The theoretical linkage between mobilization and participation can be explained by the literature that conceptualizes political participation as a *collective action* problem. Because political participation generates positive externalities, individuals have incentives to free ride in nearly any form of political participation, ranging from voting to mass protests to participation in community-based planning meetings (De Rooij, Green, & Gerber, 2009; Downs, 1957; Finkel, Muller, & Opp, 1989; Ostrom, 1998). Mobilizing individuals to participate in politics may help to solve this collective action problem, either providing a focal point for coordination or by activating social norms that recognize participation as a valuable activity (Gerber, Green, Gerber, & Green, 2000; Gerber, Green, & Larimer, 2008; Schuessler, 2000). The testable implication of this theoretical tradition for participatory planning institutions is as follows:

**Hypothesis 1.** Mobilization by civil society groups will increase citizen participation in participatory planning meetings.

Three theoretical traditions can be used to generate alternative predictions for how mobilization shapes patterns of capture in participatory planning institutions. The first theory that is useful in this respect comes from the large literature

linking collective action and *interest groups* (Mitchell & Munger, 1991; Olson, 1971). The central argument of this perspective is that organizations that have the capacity to mobilize collective action also have the capacity to utilize that mobilization to capture policymaking processes (Olson, 1971, pp. 141–148). If this is the case, we would expect to observe that mobilization by a single interest group increases the match between the interest group's preferred bundle of public projects and the actual projects or laws implemented by the government. The testable implication of this theoretical tradition for local government planning meetings is as follows:

**Hypothesis 2a.** Mobilization by a civil society group will cause that group's preferred projects to be selected at participatory planning meetings.

The second theoretical perspective that can be used to derive testable hypotheses about the linkage between mobilization, citizen participation, and the outcomes of participatory planning meetings comes from theories that emphasize *information asymmetries and accountability*. In this perspective, governing elites are linked to citizens through a series of principal–agent relationships: citizens elect politicians to create policies that represent their interests and politicians appoint bureaucrats to implement those policies (World Bank, 2003).

A large body of research has identified that these political principal–agent relationships are characterized by information asymmetries that cause breakdowns in the chain of accountability linking citizens, politicians, and bureaucrats (Miller, 2005). In many cases, it is difficult for principals to observe the effort that their agents are exerting. Citizens are unable to perfectly monitor whether politicians are implementing their promised platforms and politicians are unable to observe whether civil servants are in fact implementing policies. Information asymmetries can also cut the other way. Politicians often do not have a full understanding of how their electoral mandate translates into specific allocations of public projects (Keefer & Khemani, 2005; Roemer, 2007). Street-level bureaucrats are often tasked with implementing programs that require substantial discretion in interpreting how to achieve the broad policy objectives (World Bank, 2003).

These information asymmetries limit the effectiveness of electoral and bureaucratic sanctions and incentives. As a result, governing elites frequently use substantial discretion in designing and implementing policies and projects. This tendency increases the likelihood that they either simply implement their own preferred projects or use the public funds for private purposes (Kunicová & Rose-Ackerman, 2005; Shi & Svensson, 2003). Participatory planning institutions should have the effect of mitigating both of these informational problems, leading to public goods allocations that are ultimately closer to citizens' preferences (Mansuri & Rao, 2012; Olken, 2010). However, if few citizens participate in planning meetings, governing elites will continue to use their discretion to design and implement projects, resulting in elite capture of the planning institutions. From the perspective of this body of theory, mobilizing citizens to participate in local government planning institutions can help to solve these information problems by increasing the extent to which citizens monitor the performance of both politicians and bureaucrats (Björkman & Svensson, 2009; Pande, 2011). The testable implication of this theoretical tradition is as follows:

**Hypothesis 2b.** Mobilization by civil society groups will lead to increased frequency of matches between the outcomes of

participatory planning meetings and actual funding allocations by the government.

A third theoretical perspective that can be used to link mobilization, citizen participation, and the outcomes of community-based local government planning emphasizes the role of *power* (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2008; Evans, 2005; Gibson & Woolcock, 2008; Moe, 2005). In this perspective, governing elites gain material and non-material benefits from holding public office (Gibson & Woolcock, 2008). Some of these benefits to holding public office come from the ability of elites to use public resources to enrich themselves personally or to create economic policies and institutions that are beneficial to them (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2008; Kunicová & Rose-Ackerman, 2005). Even in the absence of corruption, holding public office as a politician or a bureaucrat confers elites with other benefits, including a salary, high social status, and the ability to design and implement the public projects that they consider to be the most valuable (Gibson & Woolcock, 2008; Moe, 2005).

As discussed above, one of the primary normative justifications for participatory planning institutions is the fact that they provide opportunities for ordinary citizens to challenge the power of governing elites (Evans, 2005; Fung & Wright, 2001). However, it is not necessarily the case that participatory institutions automatically allow citizens to exert control over local policymaking processes. In fact, given that participatory institutions threaten the power of both politicians and bureaucrats, these governing elites have incentives to use their existing power to preserve their status and influence (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2008).<sup>7</sup> If politicians or bureaucrats are able to fill meetings with their own supporters or can simply replace meeting outcomes with projects that they prefer, they will be able to capture the participatory institution and maintain their power.

From this perspective, mobilizing citizens to attend participatory planning meetings can be understood as a strategy to reduce elite capture by creating new practices of political participation and deliberative contestation (Ban *et al.*, 2012; Björkman & Svensson, 2009; Gibson & Woolcock, 2008; Pateman, 2012). However, if governing elites have the ability and interest to protect their power by capturing participatory institutions, then they may also be able to use their position to devise new ways of maintaining control, even in the face of mobilization that increases citizen participation in planning meetings. The testable implication of this theoretical tradition for local government planning meetings is as follows:

**Hypothesis 2c.** Mobilization by civil society groups will cause governing elites to change the tactics that they use to capture participatory planning institutions.

### 3. LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND PARTICIPATORY PLANNING IN RURAL KENYA

I test these hypotheses using a field experiment involving one specific participatory planning institution: the Local Authority Service Delivery Action Plan (LASDAP) planning meetings in Kenya.<sup>8</sup> Kenya created participatory planning institutions as part of a broader set of decentralization reforms in the late 1990s. The main component of the reforms was the Local Authority Transfer Fund (LATF), which was designed to increase the funds available to local governments while simultaneously introducing accountability mechanisms to

ensure that the increased resources translated to improved service delivery (Smoke, 2008). The legislation earmarked five percent of the total national income tax revenues for the transfer fund, a percentage which was to be increased gradually over time (Kibua & Mwabu, 2008).

The LATF regulations stipulated that each local authority must submit “A Local Authority Service Delivery Action Plan setting out the Authority’s plans for the improvement of local services. . . in accordance with regulations issued by the minister for the time being responsible for local authorities” (LATF Act, 1998). When the Ministry of Local Government articulated the Local Authority Service Delivery Action Plan (LASDAP) regulations, it specified that residents of each local authority needed to be incorporated in the process of articulating the list of capital projects to be implemented in their ward in the coming year (Smoke, 2008; Devas & Grant, 2003). In the 2009 LASDAP handbook, the Ministry stated that the purpose of the LASDAP institution is to “enable stakeholder groups and local citizens to participate in service delivery choices” and had successfully “empowered local communities in developing capital investment plans that meet local needs and priorities” (LASDAP, 2009, pp. 2–3).

Despite the LASDAP’s stated aim of empowering ordinary citizens to directly participate in planning public projects, the process itself is managed by two types of governing elites: local authority bureaucrats and elected councilors. Local Authority bureaucrats are the civil servants tasked with managing local authority operations, such as collecting revenues and delivering basic public services (Smoke, 2008). The council clerk is the highest ranking administrative officer in the local government bureaucracy and is responsible for managing a small cadre of specialized civil servants, including a treasurer, works engineers, managers, and frontline staff for specific public services (Southall & Wood, 1996). Each local authority has a “LASDAP Desk Officer”, who is the civil servant responsible for organizing the LASDAP meetings in that locality (LASDAP, 2009, p. 10).

Councilors are the elected representatives in Kenyan local governments. Each councilor is elected to a five-year renewable term representing a local government ward. The primary role of councilors is to vote on the levels of local government fees and property taxes and on budgetary allocations for local authority operations (Southall & Wood, 1996). In the LASDAP process, councilors assist the LASDAP Desk Officer with mobilizing citizens to participate in the planning meeting in their ward and typically take charge of leading the meeting (LASDAP, 2009, p. 10). As noted below, councilors are also required to vote on the final allocation of projects selected during the LASDAP process, which is the final step in the LASDAP planning cycle (Shall, 2007).

The full LASDAP process runs from September to December of every year (LASDAP, 2009). Throughout September and October, one public LASDAP consultation meeting is held in each ward in every Local Authority in Kenya. The LASDAP Desk Officer is required to distribute notice of these meetings to citizens one month before the scheduled meeting in their ward (LASDAP, 2009). On the date of the planning meetings, all citizens who are in attendance are allowed to request public projects for their ward during the upcoming fiscal year (Cifuentes, 2008). If multiple projects are suggested, the two most frequently requested projects will be identified as the ward’s priority projects. The LASDAP Desk Officer then records these two projects and takes them back to the council headquarters, along with the full ranked list of all other projects suggested by the attendees (LASDAP, 2009).

The projects identified in the ward consultation meetings are then sent to the county council's technical committee (Cifuentes, 2008). The technical committee is chaired by the public works engineer (LASDAP, 2009). This committee assesses the feasibility of the proposed projects and makes any necessary modifications or suggestions. In the event that a highly ranked project is not technologically feasible, it may be replaced with the next highest project on the list. The full list of approved projects from all wards in the local authority is then brought to a consensus meeting in the local authority headquarters, which brings together the council clerk, the councilors, the technical committee, and citizen representatives and civil society groups from each ward (LASDAP, 2009). The purpose of the consensus meeting is for the technical committee to explain and justify their final recommended list of projects and for citizens to voice any concerns regarding changes made by the technical committee. The meeting also provides councilors and citizen groups with an opportunity to discuss the overall allocation of projects between wards and ensure that the total slate of projects fits within the local authority's allocated budget for that year (Devas and Grant, 2008).

After the consensus meeting, the list of proposed projects is sent to a full council meeting in which the councilors vote on the list of proposed projects. A majority vote is required to approve the list of projects and submit the Local Authority Service Delivery Action Plan to the Ministry of Local Government (LASDAP, 2009). The final plan lists the one or two projects that will be funded in each ward. In cases where two projects are approved, they are ranked to identify the priority of completion (LASDAP, 2009). The final LASDAP document is forwarded to the Ministry of Local Government by early December. The Ministry then reviews the LASDAP submission, and starts disbursement of the LATF funds in January (Kibua & Mwabu, 2008). The Ministry of Local Government typically does not intervene on the substance of the project priorities submitted by the local government, but does provide technical advice on the planned projects (Smoke, 2008, p. 96).

The LASDAP rules and procedures are designed to give citizens an opportunity to directly participate in planning for local service delivery while also incorporating the expertise of councilors and local authority bureaucrats. Academics and policy commentators in Kenya have noted that in practice, many of the LASDAP rules are disregarded, allowing both councilors and local authority bureaucrats to capture the planning institution (Cifuentes 2008; Rose & Omolo 2013; Smoke, 2008). The Ministry of Local Government itself recognized the vulnerability of the LASDAP process to capture by local governing elites:

There is a perception that many LA officers and councilors (sic) regard the LASDAP as a nuisance that is required to be undertaken in order to avoid incurring a LATF penalty. There is often little ownership and the Council may indeed override the LASDAP in the budget process and replace community selected (sic) projects with its own. Under these circumstances the elected representatives seek to dominate the consultation and consensus meetings, regarding them as a challenge to their own positions. This again leads to the discrediting of the LASDAP as a meaningful process and reduces citizen involvement.

[LASDAP, 2009, p. 4]

The Ministry's assessment of the shortcomings of the LASDAP process resonates strongly with the academic literature on elite capture in participatory institutions. According to this assessment, councilors and local authority bureaucrats are able to circumvent the rules designed to ensure deliberation and participation by dominating planning meetings and ignoring the results of those meetings. More generally, this descrip-

tion of the LASDAP process in Kenya links back to the central motivation for this article. Although LASDAP is designed as a participatory planning institution that empowers citizens to make decisions about public projects, the process is vulnerable to capture by governing elites. To what extent can mobilizing citizens to participate in LASDAP meetings reduce elite capture of this participatory planning institution?

#### 4. EXPERIMENT DESIGN, DATA, AND EMPIRICAL STRATEGY

##### (a) *The LASDAP mobilization experiment*

To test the hypotheses discussed above, I designed a small-scale block-randomized field experiment that was implemented during the 2009 LASDAP planning processes in the Laikipia County Council, a rural local government in north-central Kenya. The choice of Laikipia as the site for this experiment was driven by my extensive prior experience conducting field research in the region. During the course of conducting qualitative research throughout the region, I worked with my research team to start the SAFI Project, a nonprofit organization focused on solid waste management and environmental education.<sup>9</sup> During the fall of 2007, my Kenyan research team and I designed and implemented the SAFI project's first community-based waste management program as a randomized field experiment designed to assess the effect of community mobilization and monitoring by government and traditional institutions on collective action and littering behavior (Sheely, 2013).

Following the completion of the pilot program's implementation in 2007, SAFI's community facilitators continued collecting data on trash accumulation and littering behavior and started working with community members to create small businesses aimed at waste management and recycling. During this time, both the quantitative data and qualitative observations by SAFI's staff indicated that although the program had been successful in reducing littering behavior, the effect of the intervention on the level of trash in rural centers decreased over the long-term. Interviews, focus groups, and participant observation indicated that the return to increased levels of public waste in treatment villages was due to two factors: (1) the degradation of the trash cans that SAFI had provided and (2) the inability of the volunteer trash committees to adequately provide the necessary labor to collect and dispose of solid waste in public spaces.

These two factors led SAFI's staff to decide that long-term maintenance of its community-based waste management program would require combining its volunteer efforts and fundraising from international donors with ongoing financial support for infrastructure and labor by the Laikipia County Council. In particular, they decided that the LASDAP process was the best opportunity to raise local government funding for waste management, because the institution was explicitly designed to provide a venue for citizens and community groups to communicate with the county council about needs for local development projects. SAFI's leadership decided to mobilize members of the communities where it had worked to attend the LASDAP meetings in their ward. They also decided to encourage the individuals they mobilized to request funding for waste management, including the provision of durable trash bins and a salary for local waste collectors.

SAFI's plan to mobilize citizens gave me the unique opportunity to design a randomized field experiment that could provide the evidence necessary to adjudicate between the

alternative hypotheses linking mobilization, citizen participation, and elite capture in community-based planning. At the same time, randomly assigning wards to receive SAFI's mobilization campaign allowed me to provide SAFI with evidence about whether mobilizing communities to attend the LASDAP meetings was an effective use of the organization's limited staff and resources.

Building on the theoretical framework outlined above, the treatment in this field experiment was SAFI's campaign to mobilize residents of centers in its program area to participate in their ward's LASDAP consultation meeting. The mobilization program's protocol called for SAFI's staff to educate community members about the LASDAP process, encourage members to attend LASDAP meetings in their ward, and suggest that these community members identify sanitation as a priority for their ward. SAFI staff also encouraged potential meeting attendees to support investments in a package of waste management infrastructure (trash bins, trash sorting/storage plots, and public pit latrines) and services (paying for a designated public sanitation worker to collect and dispose of trash and maintain infrastructure).

SAFI agreed to have its program coordinators train its network of facilitators to implement the mobilization protocol in the wards randomly assigned to the treatment group. Each facilitator in the treatment group was assigned to mobilize 30 households in their center (and the surrounding area), focusing on a mix of individuals who were active in community organizations and less-involved residents. The mobilization period was three days before the date of the treatment ward's meeting.<sup>10</sup> This mobilization strategy was possible because of two aspects of SAFI's previous work in these communities. First, SAFI's initial community waste management program focused heavily on mobilizing communities to engage in public clean-ups. As a result, the organization's community facilitators had experience with persuading their friends and neighbors to engage in collective action. Second, SAFI's prior waste management activities in these communities increased its favorability and legitimacy among community members, increasing their willingness to respond positively to the mobilization by SAFI's staff.

Prior to the start of the intervention, SAFI obtained permission from the local authority bureaucrats and county councilors in each of the wards in the sample. SAFI first obtained permission from the LASDAP Desk Officer for the Laikipia County Council. Given that mobilizing communities to participate in the LASDAP consultation meetings is one of her major responsibilities, she was happy to have the organization's assistance in mobilizing citizens in the wards assigned to receive the treatment. After obtaining support from the LASDAP desk officer, SAFI project staff contacted the councilors in each ward in the sample. In all treatment wards, SAFI project staff contacted the local councilors and secured permission to mobilize community members for the meeting and to attend and observe the meeting; in the control wards, the staff obtained permission to attend the meetings. Given the support from the LASDAP Desk Officer and SAFI's generally positive reputation in the local communities, all of the councilors agreed to allow their wards to be included in the study.

#### (b) *Sample, blocking, and random assignment*

Because SAFI only had the operational capacity to work in the county council wards in which it had previously worked, the LASDAP mobilization experiment was conducted in a sample of 14 wards (Table 1).

I use a block-randomized design (Gerber & Green, 2012). I first matched the wards into seven pairs on observable characteristics, and then assigned one ward in each pair to receive the mobilization treatment. The fourteen wards were matched into pairs using two criteria: (1) extent of prior SAFI activity in the ward and (2) ethnic heterogeneity. First, the sample of wards was divided into three blocks, based on the number of centers in each ward where SAFI had worked previously: (1) Wards with no SAFI centers (2 wards), (2) Wards with 1–3 SAFI centers (8 wards), and (3) Wards with 4 or more SAFI centers (4 wards). Within these blocks, I grouped the wards into pairs, based on qualitative measures of whether their ethnic composition was primarily comprised of members of one ethnic group or was ethnically heterogeneous. I then randomly assigned one ward within each pair to receive the mobilization treatment, and assigned the other ward to the control condition of no mobilization.<sup>11</sup>

#### (c) *Data*

I use measures of four types of outcomes to test the hypotheses articulated above: (1) the level of citizen participation in the meetings, (2) the SAFI project's success at obtaining LASDAP funding for its preferred projects, (3) the match between the projects requested by meeting participants and the projects actually funded by the county council, and (4) the nature of any discrepancies between projects requested by meeting participants and final allocations by the county council. To measure these outcomes, I combine structured observation of behavior in the ward meetings with collection of publicly available administrative records. I measured citizen behavior through systematic, structured participant observation of the LASDAP meetings in all 14 wards in the sample. Enumerators who had previously carried out quantitative and qualitative data collection for SAFI conducted the participant observation. In order to facilitate the systematic observation of the meetings, I worked with SAFI's staff to develop an observation sheet, which provided guidelines of how to record each of the indicators and spaces in which to write them down.<sup>12</sup> The research team was also instructed to obtain the official project documents sent to the Ministry of Local Government by the Laikipia County Council.

Enumerators collected three distinct measures of participation in the LASDAP meetings. First, the enumerator counted the number of citizens attending the meeting, both overall and disaggregated by gender. They also counted total the number of organized civil society groups represented at the meeting. Second, the enumerator tracked every speech made by a citizen, and classified each citizen speech by which policy area or public project the citizen prioritized. Finally, the enumerator recorded the total length of the meeting from start to finish.

To measure the extent to which SAFI captured the outcomes of the LASDAP process, the observers recorded the number and proportion of citizens speaking in favor of funding public sanitation projects and the overall rank of sanitation in the meeting outcomes and final list. To measure the match between requests made by meeting participants and actual project allocations by the county council, as well as the nature of any discrepancies, the coordinators recorded the full ranking of all projects in the ward, which then can be compared with the official list of projects forwarded by the Laikipia County Council to the Ministry of Local Government.<sup>13</sup>

Table 1. *Ward pairs and assignment to treatment/control conditions*

| Ward Name  | Region         | SAFI Center Block | Total Number of SAFI Centers | Ethnic Composition | Treatment Assignment |
|------------|----------------|-------------------|------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| Mumonyot   | Laikipia North | No Centers        | 0                            | Homogenous         | Control              |
| Makurian   | Laikipia North | No Centers        | 0                            | Homogenous         | Treatment            |
| Gituamba   | Laikipia West  | Some Centers      | 1                            | Homogenous         | Control              |
| Kinamba    | Laikipia West  | Some Centers      | 1                            | Homogenous         | Treatment            |
| Il Digiri  | Laikipia North | Some Centers      | 2                            | Homogenous         | Control              |
| Loiborsoit | Laikipia North | Some Centers      | 1                            | Homogenous         | Treatment            |
| Marmanet   | Laikipia West  | Some Centers      | 3                            | Homogenous         | Control              |
| Muthengera | Laikipia West  | Some Centers      | 2                            | Homogenous         | Treatment            |
| Mutara     | Laikipia West  | Some Centers      | 1                            | Heterogeneous      | Control              |
| Mukogodo   | Laikipia North | Some Centers      | 1                            | Heterogeneous      | Treatment            |
| Muhotetu   | Laikipia West  | Many Centers      | 4                            | Homogenous         | Control              |
| Umande     | Laikipia East  | Many Centers      | 7                            | Homogenous         | Treatment            |
| Segera     | Laikipia East  | Many Centers      | 5                            | Heterogeneous      | Control              |
| Ethi       | Laikipia East  | Many Centers      | 6                            | Heterogeneous      | Treatment            |

Note: Measures of SAFI's prior involvement and ethnic composition in each ward are based on qualitative fieldwork undertaken in June, July, and August 2009.

#### (d) Empirical strategy

Given the small sample size of the LASDAP mobilization experiment, I analyze the data using randomization inference (Keele *et al.*, 2012). This analytic approach has a long history in the field of statistics (Fisher, 1935; Rosenbaum, 2002), and has recently started to be used to analyze data from randomized field experiments and observational studies (Bloom, Eifert, Mahajan, McKenzie, & Roberts, 2013; Ho & Imai, 2006; Keele *et al.*, 2012). The appeal of randomization inference in small-scale randomized experiments is that it uses only the random assignment of units to treatment conditions as the basis for inference. As a result, hypothesis testing using randomization inference does not rely on the distributional assumptions that cause problems when using parametric estimation methods with small samples (Keele *et al.*, 2012).<sup>14</sup>

Randomization inference is built around the test of the sharp null hypothesis that treatment has no effect for all units (Fisher, 1935; Rosenbaum, 2002). To conduct randomization inference analysis, the researcher calculates a test statistic that describes differences in outcomes across treatment and control groups (Keele *et al.*, 2012). The test statistic is then used to calculate an exact p-value, which is the probability of obtaining a test statistic of that extreme or more extreme if the treatment had no effect (Keele *et al.*, 2012; Rosenbaum, 2002). This p-value is calculated by simulating all possible permutations of treatment assignment, calculating the test statistic for all hypothetical sets of random assignment, and assessing the proportion of all hypothetical sets that produce a test statistic larger than the observed test statistic (Keele *et al.*, 2012).

Following Keele *et al.* (2012), the formal representation of the exact p-value used in randomization inference is:

$$p = \Pr(\mathbf{S} \geq S_i | \mathbf{H}_0) = \frac{\sum \mathbf{I}(\mathbf{S} \geq S_i)}{|\Omega|}.$$

In this formulation,  $\mathbf{S}$  is a test statistic defined as:

$$\mathbf{S} = f(y, \mathbf{T})$$

where  $\mathbf{S}$  is the result of a function  $f$  that operates on  $y$  (the observed outcomes) and  $\mathbf{T}$  (the random vector that assigns subjects to treatment).  $\Omega$  denotes all outcomes under all possible realizations of  $\mathbf{T}$ . As described above,  $\Omega$  is used to calculate the probability of observing a value of  $\mathbf{S}$  that is more extreme than  $S_i$  if the null hypothesis of no effect is true.

The test statistic  $\mathbf{S}$  that I use for this analysis is the average of the difference in outcomes between the treatment ward and the control ward in each pair.<sup>15</sup> Formally, this test statistic is represented as:

$$S = \frac{1}{n_p} \sum (Y_p(1) - Y_p(0))$$

where  $n_p$  is the number of pairs of wards,  $Y_p(1)$  is the ward assigned to treatment within each pair, and  $Y_p(0)$  is the ward assigned to control within each pair. I use this test statistic due to the ease of interpreting the average difference as the point estimate of the effect of mobilization (Keele *et al.*, 2012).<sup>16</sup> For each outcome, I calculate the exact p-value by simulating the mean difference under all 128 possible alternative combinations of within-pair assignment of wards to treatment and control and calculating the proportion of simulated mean differences that are larger than the observed mean difference.<sup>17</sup>

I calculate 90% and 95% confidence intervals by first assuming a constant-additive linear effect, and then calculating the smallest values of the treatment effect that would be rejected at the .10 and .05 level and the largest value of the treatment effect that would not be rejected at those significance levels (Rosenbaum, 2002). I report point estimates and confidence intervals graphically, with dots representing the point estimate of the treatment effect and lines representing the range of the confidence intervals (Kastellec & Leoni, 2007).<sup>18</sup>

## 5. RESULTS

### (a) Effect of mobilization on participation

The theories that view political participation as a collective action problem predict that SAFI's mobilization will lead to increased participation at LASDAP meetings (Hypothesis 1). Figure 1 presents point estimates and confidence intervals for the effect of mobilization on the number of citizens in attendance at the LASDAP meeting. The exact p-value enables us to reject the null hypothesis of no effect of mobilization on participation at the 0.10 level of significance ( $p = 0.07$ ). In treatment wards, an average of 40.143 more people attended the meetings, relative to control wards (Figure 1). To put this result into context, the average meeting attendance in control wards was 42 people. Mobilization

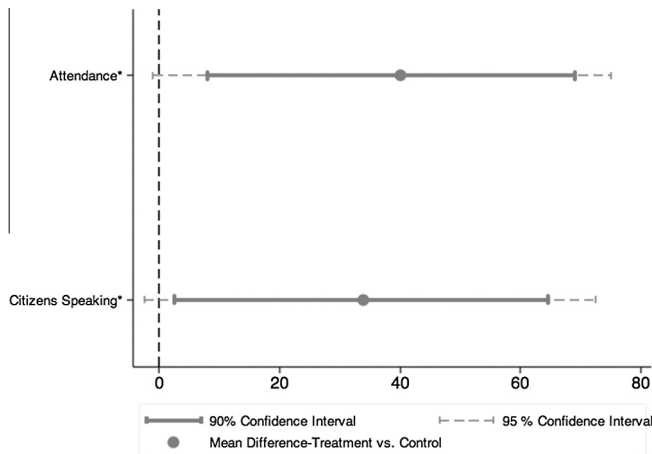


Figure 1. Randomization Inference Estimates of Effect of Mobilization on LASDAP Meeting Attendance and Participation. Note: Significance level of exact test of the sharp null hypothesis of no effect denoted as follows: \* $p < 0.10$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ . Confidence intervals are calculated by inverting the exact test.

nearly doubled the number of people in attendance at LASDAP meetings.

Mobilization also had a substantively large and statistically significant effect on the number of citizens who spoke at the meeting. It is possible to reject the test of the sharp null hypothesis of no effect of mobilization on the number of citizens who spoke in the meeting at the 0.10 level of significance ( $p = 0.08$ ). The average difference in the number of people speaking in treatment versus control wards is 33.857. As a result, mobilization had a large effect on the number of people who spoke in the meeting, relative to the control group average of 28.57 people speaking per meeting. Despite the size of this effect, this result also shows that not everyone who attended the meeting actually spoke, and that mobilization did not completely overcome this gap. Although mobilization increased meeting attendance by 40 people, it only led to 33 additional people speaking in the meeting.

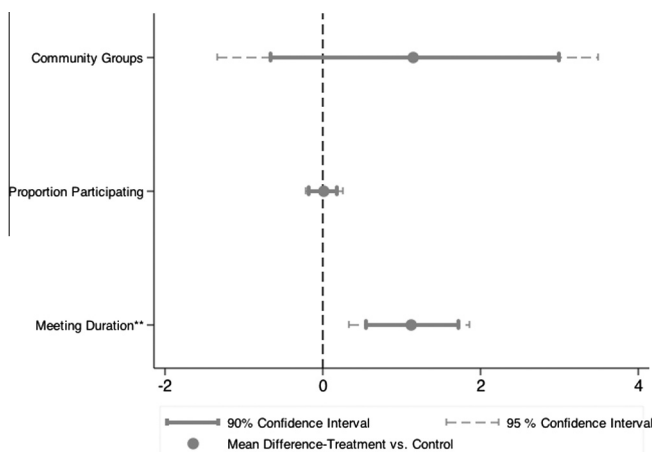


Figure 2. Randomization Inference Estimates of Effect of Mobilization on Community Group Attendance, Proportion of Individuals Participating, and Meeting Duration. Note: Significance level of exact test of the sharp null hypothesis of no effect denoted as follows: \* $p < 0.10$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ . Confidence intervals are calculated by inverting the exact test.

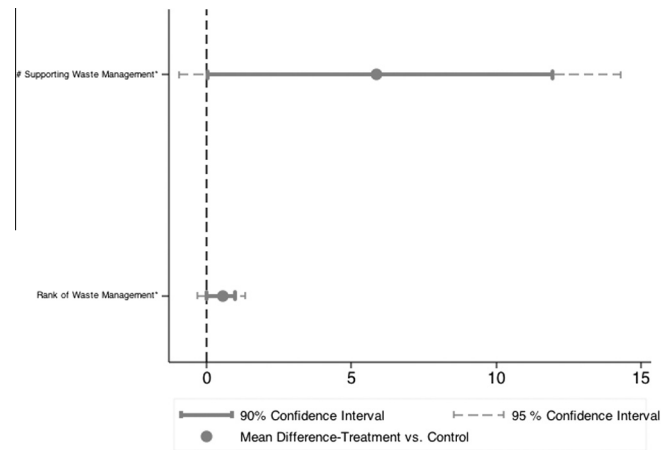


Figure 3. Randomization Inference Estimates of Effect of Mobilization on Number of Waste Management Supporters and the Rank of Waste Management Projects. Note: Significance level of exact test of the sharp null hypothesis of no effect denoted as follows: \* $p < 0.10$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ . Confidence intervals are calculated by inverting the exact test.

This finding is supported by the results of the exact test of the effect of mobilization on the proportion of individuals speaking in the meeting (Figure 2), which does not allow us to reject the null hypothesis of no effect ( $p = 0.44$ ). The results in Figure 2 also indicate that mobilization does not have a statistically significant effect on the number of community groups in attendance at the planning meeting ( $p = 0.17$ ).<sup>19</sup> In contrast, it is possible to reject the sharp null hypothesis of mobilization on meeting duration at the 0.05 level of significance ( $p = 0.02$ ). In wards that received the mobilization treatment, the LASDAP meetings lasted an average of over one hour longer than the meetings in control wards.

Taken together, these results provide support for Hypothesis 1, which predicts that mobilization leads to increased participation in planning meetings. Mobilizing citizens to participate in the LASDAP ward meetings led to levels of meeting attendance, individual participation in the meeting, and meeting duration that would have been surprising if the treatment had no effect on participation. The simple encouragement to attend the meeting doubled the number of people who chose to attend the LASDAP meeting and to actually speak at the meeting. In this case, face-to-face contact appears to have been sufficient to increase the number of people willing to participate in this particular form of collective action.

(b) Effect of mobilization and participation on interest group capture

The interest-group theories of politics summarized above predict that SAFI's mobilization campaign will lead to an increased probability of its preferred bundle of solid waste management projects being selected at ward consultation meetings (Hypothesis 2a). However, even a casual examination of the projects selected by citizens in ward meetings indicates that the results are inconsistent with a world in which mobilization allows SAFI to capture the outcomes of LASDAP meetings. Waste management was selected as one of the top two projects slated for funding in only one of the seven treatment wards and in none of the seven control wards (Table 2).<sup>20</sup>

I use two measures to better understand the connection between SAFI's mobilization campaign and its apparent



Table 2. Results of LASDAP ward meetings

| Ward Name  | Treatment Assignment | Meeting Priority 1 | Meeting Priority 2      | Meeting Priority 3      | Meeting Priority 4      |
|------------|----------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Mumonyot   | Control              | Social Hall        | Roads                   | Water                   | Dispensary              |
| Makurian   | Treatment            | Roads              | Water                   | Education               | <b>Waste Management</b> |
| Gituamba   | Control              | Roads              | Water                   | Education               | Social Hall             |
| Kinamba    | Treatment            | Water              | Roads                   | Education               | Social Hall             |
| Il Digiri  | Control              | Roads              | Water                   | <b>Waste Management</b> | Social Hall             |
| Loiborsoit | Treatment            | Water              | Roads                   | Education               | <b>Waste Management</b> |
| Marmanet   | Control              | Education          | Roads                   | Social Hall             | Water                   |
| Muthengera | Treatment            | Education          | Roads                   | Water                   | Dispensary              |
| Mutara     | Control              | Roads              | Water                   | <b>Waste Management</b> | Security                |
| Mukogodo   | Treatment            | Roads              | Water                   | <b>Waste Management</b> | Education               |
| Muhotetu   | Control              | Education          | Water                   | Roads                   | <b>Waste Management</b> |
| Umande     | Treatment            | Roads              | <b>Waste Management</b> | Water                   | Education               |
| Segera     | Control              | Roads              | Dispensary              | Water                   | <b>Waste Management</b> |
| Ethi       | Treatment            | Education          | Roads                   | Water                   | <b>Waste Management</b> |

Note: This table presents the top four projects selected in the meeting each ward. Waste Management is presented in bold to illustrate relationship between mobilization and success of Waste Management projects. Rankings are calculated based on field notes recorded by enumerators.

inability to capture the LASDAP meeting process in most wards: the number of people who supported waste management and the overall rank of waste management projects (Figure 3). On average, 5,857 more meeting attendees supported waste management projects in wards where SAFI conducted its mobilization campaign; it is possible to reject the null hypothesis of no effect of mobilization on this outcome at the 0.10 level ( $p = 0.08$ ).<sup>21</sup>

This pattern of statistically significant but substantively modest effects of mobilization on support for SAFI's favored projects is echoed by the analysis of the effects of treatment on the overall rank of solid waste management projects among all projects proposed in the consultation meeting (Figure 3). In the wards where SAFI mobilized citizens to participate in the meeting, the average ranking of waste management projects was half a rank higher than the wards where it did not do any mobilization. In treatment wards, the average ranking of solid waste management projects was between third and fourth place; in control wards the average was between fourth and fifth place. Despite the modest size of the effect of mobilization on project rankings, it is possible to reject the sharp null hypothesis of no effect at the 0.10 level of significance ( $p = 0.06$ ).

Taken together, these findings indicate that SAFI's mobilization program did increase the number of participants supporting the organization and the rank of the organization's preferred projects, but that the size of these effects was not enough to allow SAFI to capture meeting outcomes in most treatment wards. Although mobilization did increase support for solid waste management, these results do not support Hypothesis 2a, which predicted that mobilization would lead to an overall increase in the likelihood of meeting participants prioritizing waste management projects. The main reason that increased participation in favor of SAFI did not directly lead to the organization capturing the LASDAP process is that the increased attendance caused by SAFI's mobilization did not translate directly into supporters. One explanation for this pattern is that waste management may be a lower priority than other public goods for the individuals that SAFI mobilized. Even if supporters promised SAFI that they would attend the meeting and request waste management projects, there was no incentive to keep that promise when they actually attended the meeting, leaving them free to support whatever project they personally prefer. If this interpretation is correct,

then a civil society organization working on a more popular policy domain would be more successful at capturing the LASDAP planning meetings than SAFI was.

### (c) Effect of mobilization on match between meeting outcomes and project allocations

The information asymmetry theories summarized above predict that SAFI's mobilization campaign will lead to an increased match between meeting outcomes and the actual funding allocations approved by the local government (Hypothesis 2b). Table 3 lists the top two projects chosen by the meeting participants in each ward alongside the projects that Laikipia County Council chose in their final allocation of projects. There is only a perfect match between the projects selected in meetings and final projects in two wards—one treatment and one control—out of the fourteen wards included in the sample.

The point estimate of the effect of SAFI's mobilization on the probability of there being a match in a ward is 0 ( $p = 0.25$ ).<sup>22</sup> It is possible to examine this null result more closely by disaggregating this measure in two ways: (1) by examining the first- and second-ranked projects individually and (2) by simply assessing whether a project prioritized in the LASDAP meeting is on the final list at all, regardless of its rank (Figure 4). Disaggregating in this way provides little additional evidence that the treatment had any effect on the proportion of top-ranked projects that matched ( $p = 0.31$ ) or the proportion of the first or second priority project were funded at all ( $p = 0.19$  and  $p = 0.125$ ). In addition, mobilization reduced the proportion of second-ranked projects that matched. The final allocations for second-ranked projects matched in three control wards, but only in one treatment ward. The null hypothesis that an effect of this magnitude would be observed by chance if there was no effect can be rejected at the 0.01 level of significance ( $p = 0.00$ ).

These results indicate that there is no evidence that the SAFI project's mobilization increased the match between the projects requested by meeting participants and the final projects chosen by the local government. This is strong evidence against Hypothesis 2b, which was based on the assumption that mobilization can improve the operation of participatory planning institutions by reducing the informational asymmetries between citizens, politicians, and bureaucrats.

Table 3. Comparison of projects chosen in LASDAP meeting and final projects forwarded to Ministry of Local Government by Laikipia County Council

| Ward Name  | Treatment Assignment | Meeting Priority 1 | Funded Priority 1  | Meeting Priority 2 | Funded Priority 2  |
|------------|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Mumonyot   | Control              | <b>Social Hall</b> | <b>Social Hall</b> | <b>Roads</b>       | <b>Roads</b>       |
| Makurian   | Treatment            | Roads              | Education          | Water              | Roads              |
| Gituamba   | Control              | Roads              | Roads              | Water              | Cattle Dip         |
| Kinamba    | Treatment            | Water              | Roads              | Roads              | <i>None Funded</i> |
| Il Digiri  | Control              | Roads              | Education          | Water              | Water              |
| Loiborsoit | Treatment            | Water              | Water              | Roads              | Education          |
| Marmanet   | Control              | Education          | Social Hall        | Roads              | Roads              |
| Muthengera | Treatment            | <b>Education</b>   | <b>Education</b>   | <b>Roads</b>       | <b>Roads</b>       |
| Mutara     | Control              | Roads              | Dispensary         | Water              | Roads              |
| Mukogodo   | Treatment            | Roads              | Education          | Water              | <i>None Funded</i> |
| Muhotetu   | Control              | Education          | Education          | Water              | Roads              |
| Umande     | Treatment            | Roads              | Roads              | Waste Management   | <i>None Funded</i> |
| Segeera    | Control              | Roads              | Dispensary         | Dispensary         | Roads              |
| Ethi       | Treatment            | Education          | Roads              | Roads              | Water              |

Note: This table presents the top two projects selected in the meeting in each ward, along with the projects chosen by the Laikipia County Council. Projects are bolded for wards in which the meeting priorities and funded priorities match. Meeting priority rankings are calculated based on field notes recorded by enumerators. Funded priority rankings are calculated based on administrative documents.

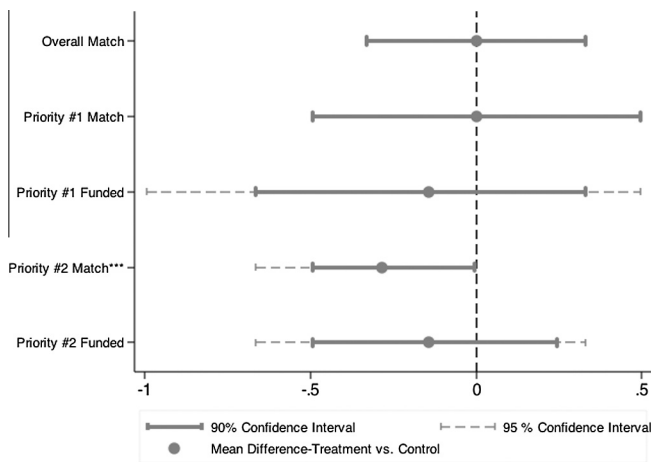


Figure 4. Randomization Inference Estimates of Effect of Mobilization on Match Between Requested and Allocated Projects. Note: Significance level of exact test of the sharp null hypothesis of no effect denoted as follows: \* $p < 0.10$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ . Confidence intervals are calculated by inverting the exact test.

(d) Effect of mobilization on discrepancies between meeting outcomes and allocations

Theories that emphasize the role of power in elite capture predict that SAFI’s mobilization will not lead to a reduction of elite capture of the LASDAP institution, but will instead lead to a shift in the tactics that governing elites utilize to influence the outcomes of participatory planning institutions (Hypothesis 2c). I utilized the procedural rules for the LASDAP discussed above to identify two distinct ways that final funding allocations can diverge from meeting outcomes. First, final allocations can be *out-of-order* relative to the rank ordering of projects decided by the meeting participants. This can involve either switching the rank of the two top-ranked projects from the LASDAP meeting or elevating an unranked project above one or both of the projects chosen by meeting participants. Second, final allocations can prioritize a *single project*. Although funding a single project in a given ward is allowed under the LASDAP procedures, this is a deviation in wards where meeting participants requested funding for two projects.<sup>23</sup>

These two types of discrepancy are similar in that they are both instances of the kind of elite capture identified in the Ministry of Local Government’s LASDAP handbook, in which a councilor or bureaucrat overrides the meeting outcomes and replaces the community-selected projects with his or her own preferred projects. In the case of out-of-order projects, the top priority project selected in the meeting is either not funded at all or is moved to second place, increasing the risk that funds will run out before it is implemented. In the case of single projects, one of the projects requested in the meeting is still funded, but the other disappears completely.

Despite this similarity, these two types of discrepancy differ in several ways. First, the two types of discrepancy differ with respect to monitoring and accountability. If citizens notice out-of-order projects and ask about it in the LASDAP consensus meeting, the councilor or county council bureaucrat will have to explain why they chose to fund a project of their own choosing, rather than the projects selected in the public planning meeting. In contrast, funding only one of the two top-ranked projects makes it easier for the intervening politician or bureaucrat to explain away interference if it is noticed by citizens. Public officials can explain single projects by arguing that funding was tighter than expected and promising to address the other project in the next funding cycle. Switching the order of project priorities is a form of elite interference that is easiest when monitoring and deliberation within LASDAP are weak, while funding only one project is a form of elite control that is robust to higher levels of deliberation and contestation within the planning meetings.

Second, the two types of discrepancy differ with respect to the precise way that they undermine the outcomes of the planning meetings. With out-of-order priorities, the councilor or bureaucrat’s intervention indicates that they believe that they have a better understanding than the wards citizens do about what their capital investment priorities should be. In contrast, funding a single project does not necessarily entail a switch in the order of priorities. As a result, when funding a single-project, the intervening politician or bureaucrat makes a decision about how best to implement the citizens’ expressed priorities, deciding that the resources are better spent on only one of the projects rather than both of them.

In the set of wards where SAFI mobilized citizens to participate in the LASDAP meeting, the frequency of out-of-order projects was 43% lower relative to wards in the control group (Figure 5). The order of the government-approved projects

diverged from the meeting rankings in only one out of the seven wards in the treatment group, but diverged in this manner in four out of seven control group wards. The sharp null hypothesis of no effect of mobilization on out-of-order projects can be rejected at the 0.05 level of significance ( $p = 0.03$ ). Mobilization increased the frequency of single projects by the same proportion that it decreased the frequency of out-of-order priorities (Figure 5). Although all wards in the control group received funding for two projects, three of the seven wards in the treatment group received funding for only one project. The sharp null hypothesis of no effect of the mobilization treatment on the frequency of single projects can be rejected at the 0.01 level of significance ( $p = 0.00$ ).

These results are consistent with the predictions of Hypothesis 2c: there is a systematic relationship between SAFI’s mobilization and the type of discrepancies between requested projects and final allocations by the Laikipia County Council. This finding is consistent with the theoretical perspective that predicts that governing elites will respond to possible threats to their power by adapting the way that they intervene in participatory planning institutions. Taken together with the finding that mobilization did not increase the match between meeting outcomes and final allocations, these results indicate that elite capture of the LASDAP planning meetings is pervasive and is robust to successful attempts to mobilize citizens to participate in the meeting.

An alternative interpretation of this set of findings is that rather than being an instance of elite capture, the deviations between the meeting outcomes and the final allocations are changes that were made within the framework of the LASDAP rules. As noted above, the LASDAP process provides explicit opportunities for both bureaucrats and politicians to use their expertise to suggest changes to the priorities suggested by community members. Local authority bureaucrats are able to add their input through the technical committee meeting by ruling out or revising technically infeasible projects. Councilors are allowed to speak in the consensus meeting and suggest alternative projects in cases in which a proposed project cannot be completed with a given budget allocation.

In order for of these types of intervention by governing elites to fit within the LASDAP procedures, they need to be proposed, explained, and debated at the all-county consensus meeting. This set of rules for deviating from the meeting outcomes is

designed to guard against elite capture of the planning process. By requiring that bureaucrats and politicians give reasons for making changes to the project allocations requested by citizens, these rules attempt to create a fair deliberation between community members and governing elites. When they are functioning, these rules help to ensure that the LASDAP institution strikes a balance between empowering citizens and drawing on the expertise and authority of public officials.

In the case of the Laikipia LASDAP process described in this study, the county council ignored the rules and procedures for explaining and debating change to project priorities. In particular, the county council-wide consensus meeting was never held. When SAFI’s enumerators showed up at the council headquarters for the scheduled consensus meeting on November 12, 2009, they were told that not enough citizens had shown up for the meeting, and it would be rescheduled. When the enumerators returned to the council headquarters the following week, they were told that the consensus meeting had already been held and that the county council had approved the final allocation of the projects. The fact that the consensus meeting was not held means that neither councilors nor local authority bureaucrats had to publicly give reasons for the changes that were made to the projects requested at the ward meetings. This failure to hold the consensus meeting supports the interpretation that the discrepancy between the meeting outcomes and final allocation is an instance of elite capture.

Because of the failure of the Laikipia County Council to hold the consensus meeting, there are several broader puzzles about the precise nature and dynamics of elite capture in this case that are beyond the scope of the current analysis. First, it is unclear whether the discrepancies in the project rankings are the result of intervention by councilors, local authority bureaucrats, or both. Without knowing whether the council clerk, the technical committee, the LASDAP Desk Officer, or elected councilors introduced the changes, it is difficult to know exactly which governing elites were able to capture the planning process and how they were able to do so.

Second, it is not clear why mobilization is associated with a shift from out-of-order priorities to single projects. One potential interpretation that could be tested in future analysis is that in the face of increased scrutiny caused by mobilization, Laikipia County Council officials utilized strategies that allowed them to maintain their control over participatory planning institutions while also reducing their exposure to political risk. If this explanation is true, focusing the available funds on a single project out of the set of projects selected in the planning meeting can be understood as a way for governing elites to maintain control over the process of allocating funds, while also minimizing the risk of being accused of subverting the LASDAP institution. Finally, the welfare implications of the patterns of the shift from out-of-order priorities to single projects are not clear. Are citizens equally well off under both forms of elite capture, or is one of these modes of involvement actually associated with more effective public service delivery?

## 6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results of the experiment presented in this paper indicate that SAFI’s mobilization program was effective in increasing citizen participation in ward consultation meetings and in changing the nature of discrepancies between the projects requested in ward meetings and the final projects selected by the Laikipia County Council.<sup>24</sup> The findings also indicate that although mobilization increased the level of support for SAFI’s preferred set of waste management

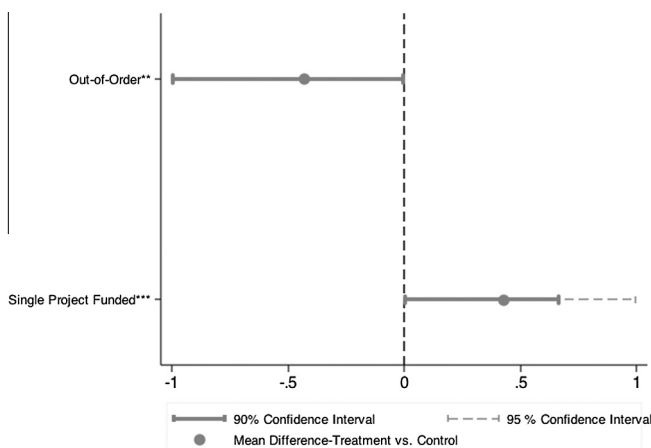


Figure 5. Randomization Inference Estimates of Effect of Mobilization on Type of Discrepancy Between Requested and Allocated Projects. Note: Significance level of exact test of the sharp null hypothesis of no effect denoted as follows: \* $p < 0.10$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ . Confidence intervals are calculated by inverting the exact test.

projects, this support was not substantial enough to allow SAFI to use the LASDAP as source of funding for waste management projects. In the one ward that did rank waste management as one of the top two priorities, the county council decided to only fund the top-ranked project. In this context, theories emphasizing power provide more explanatory leverage than theories focused primarily on interest group capture or information asymmetries.

From a methodological point of view, this study builds on a number of recent studies that showcase the value of combining randomized field experiments with systematic observation of naturally-occurring social and political behavior (Casey *et al.*, 2012; Fearon *et al.*, 2009; Paluck & Green, 2009). The analysis presented here also contributes to the growing use of randomization inference in the social sciences (Bloom *et al.*, 2013; Ho & Imai, 2006; Keele *et al.*, 2012; Rosenbaum, 2002). In particular, this study shows that such methods are extremely useful in analyzing small-scale field experiments implemented with limited budgets in challenging operational environments. This study serves as a useful corrective to critics of randomized field experiments who argue that such methods are prohibitively cost-intensive relative to their ability to contribute to provide answers to important research and policy questions.

Although I was able to use this small-scale field experiment to answer research questions about how mobilization shapes participation and elite capture, the real value in this study comes from highlighting new puzzles and questions that are potential avenues for future research in the literature on participatory institutions and elite capture. How does a civil society organization's policy focus and organizational capacity shape its ability to capture planning meetings? What kinds of mobilization are effective in simultaneously avoiding capture by elites and interest groups? Does mobilization have differential effects on capture of participatory planning institutions by politicians and bureaucrats? Do different tactics of elite capture have differential welfare effects for citizens?

In order to link the exploratory findings presented in this paper to more general theoretical and policy debates about participatory planning institutions, it will be necessary to engage in systematic extensions of this experiment that replicate the core intervention and measurement strategy in deliberately selected comparative case studies (Seawright & Gerring, 2008; Woolcock, 2013). One of the core challenges of working with a sample of fourteen wards in one local government is that it is difficult to assess the extent to which the effects of mobilization on participation and project allocations are externally valid (Rodrik, 2009). At the bare minimum, the next step is to replicate the study in a larger sample that allows for adequate statistical power and a more representative

sample. A case study approach to systematically testing the external validity of this experiment would embed the replication study in broader theoretical questions by deliberately sampling units in a variety of other local governments, including localities within Kenya that have different histories of political participation, communities in other countries that utilize other forms of participatory planning institutions, and different mobilizing organizations that vary with respect to their mobilizing capacity and policy focus.

Despite the exploratory nature of the LASDAP mobilization experiment, this study has important implications for academic and policy debates on decentralization reforms and participatory planning institutions in Kenya and beyond. Participatory planning institutions are a common element of decentralization reforms in many countries (Speer, 2012). The earliest instances of participatory planning institutions in Brazil were explicitly designed by progressive political parties to build the deliberative and participatory capabilities of citizens (Boulding & Wampler, 2010; De Sousa Santos, 1998; Fung & Wright, 2001; Gonçalves, 2014). However, as participatory planning institutions have spread worldwide, many governments, donors, and civil society organizations implicitly assume that holding planning meetings and encouraging citizens to attend those meetings is enough to ensure that citizens are empowered to play a meaningful role in planning public service delivery (Pateman, 2012).

The results of the experiment presented in this paper fit with this recent body of research highlighting the challenges of implementing participatory planning institutions in practice. The emerging consensus of this body of research is that in the short run, reforms and programs that increase citizen participation in local government planning institutions may not necessarily change the underlying power dynamics that allow elites to capture such institutions (Gibson & Woolcock, 2008; Lund & Saito-Jensen, 2013; Nolte & Voget-Kleschin, 2014). Both politicians and bureaucrats may be able to use their formal and informal resources to react to increasingly active and vigilant citizens in ways that allow them to continue to exercise their influence over participatory institutions. In contexts in which this is the case, simply mobilizing citizens to participate in participatory planning meetings will not be sufficient to ensure meaningful empowerment (Gibson & Woolcock, 2008; Lund & Saito-Jensen, 2013; Mirafab, 2004). If development practitioners want to use mobilization campaigns to reduce elite capture in participatory planning institutions, it may be necessary to complement short-term efforts to increase turnout at individual meetings with more long-term community organizing programs that seek to deeply transform local power relations through meaningful participation and deliberation.

## NOTES

1. The concept of participatory institutions includes a wide variety of real-world institutional forms. These range from collaborative governance projects in which citizens actively co-produce public services such as education, health-care, and policing (Fung & Wright, 2001; Joshi & Moore, 2004) to donor-driven Community Driven Development projects (Mansuri & Rao, 2004, 2012) to the municipal participatory budgeting institutions that were pioneered in Porto Alegre, Brazil and transplanted to hundreds of cities around the world (Cabannes, 2004; Pateman, 2012). Outside of public service delivery, participatory institutions have also been utilized in natural resources management (Morales & Harris, 2014), livelihoods projects

(Girard, 2014), agricultural research (Dalton, Lilja, Johnson, & Howeler, 2011), cash transfers (Nkonya, Phillip, Mogue, Pender, & Kato, 2012), and land acquisitions (Nolte & Voget-Kleschin, 2014).

2. In policy and academic writing, the term "participatory budgeting" is often used as the umbrella term that describes the kinds of participatory planning institutions discussed in this paper. However, there are many institutions that allow citizens to participate in project selection, but not in the process of negotiating and setting public budgets. This leads to a tendency to stretch the concept of participatory budgeting by applying it

to cases in which citizens are not involved in setting budgets (Pateman, 2012). As a result, following Matovu (2006), I use “participatory planning” as the broader concept to describe all institutions that incorporate citizens in diagnosing and solving public policy problems and use “participatory budgeting” to describe the subset of participatory planning institutions in which citizens are allowed to set at least some part of local government budgets. Note that this broad definition of participatory planning is different from the more narrow usage of the concept in urban planning (Forester, 1999).

3. Participatory planning institutions associated with local governments are largely distinct from the types of donor-driven Community Driven Development institutions discussed by Mansuri and Rao (2004, 2012). Although CDD projects create a participatory planning institution in which community members rank priorities and suggest public goods projects, CDD projects typically bypass local governments and instead use the participatory meetings to allocate funds provided by a donor or NGO. For this reason, participatory planning institutions are also distinct from customary participatory institutions that citizens use to provide public goods outside of government institutions (Díaz-Cayeros, Magaloni, & Ruiz-Euler, 2014).

4. One such normative argument focuses on the instrumental value of participatory planning institutions. From this perspective, allowing individuals to directly diagnose problems and suggest policy solutions takes advantage of their local knowledge and can increase the efficiency and effectiveness of government programs (Fung & Wright, 2001). For competing evidence on the effect of participatory budgeting on well-being in Brazil see Boulding & Wampler, 2010 and Gonçalves, 2014. For a more general survey, see Speer, 2012. A second normative argument in favor of participatory planning institutions is grounded in theories of participatory democracy and participatory development that were first articulated in the 1960s and early 1970s (Freire, 1970; Pateman, 1970). In these theories, the act of participating in governance empowers marginalized citizens by teaching them that they are capable of making decisions on issues that are important to them, which can in turn lead to the erosion of hierarchical social relationships that undermine democratic governance (Barber, 2004; Elden, 1981; Pateman, 1970, 2012). A third normative argument in favor of participatory planning institutions focuses on the empowering effects of deliberation (Cohen, 1997; Fishkin, 2009; Fung & Wright, 2001; Gibson & Woolcock, 2008). In this theoretical perspective, participatory planning institutions empower citizens by providing them with a public venue to voice their preferences and priorities, and for their perspectives to be heard and respected (Evans, 2004; Fung & Wright, 2001).

5. Most of the literature on elite capture focuses on assessing whether elites are able to use their status to gain disproportionate access to public goods projects (Dasgupta & Beard, 2007; Fritzen, 2007) and transfers (Pan & Christiaensen, 2012) and to misappropriate project funds for personal enrichment (Platteau, 2004; Platteau & Gaspard, 2003). This project-level focus has lead analysts to distinguish between possibly benevolent forms of elite control over project selection and implementation and more harmful forms of elite capture of the benefits of those projects (Fritzen, 2007). In contrast, this paper focuses on elite capture of the meetings themselves, in the form of selective mobilization or disregarding meeting outcomes. Even if this kind of elite involvement is benevolent, it undermines the normative goals of participatory planning institutions and can be considered to be a form of capture.

6. This usage of the term “governing elites” builds on the discussion in Gibson and Woolcock’s analysis of elite capture and countervailing power in participatory institutions in Indonesia (Gibson & Woolcock, 2008).

7. Acemoglu and Robinson’s treatment of the phenomenon of persistent elite control focuses on how authoritarian elites can capture national-level governing institutions after transitions to democracy. Despite this substantive focus on national-level institutions, their general ideas about

the general equilibrium effects of institutional reform on elite control are closely related to the literature on power and elite capture in participatory institutions: “political change influences the incentives of groups to use other instruments to achieve their political objectives” (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2008, p. 268). See Casey *et al.* (2012) for an application of this general approach to participatory local institutions in Sierra Leone.

8. County Councils were the elected local governments for rural areas in the system of local government that existed from Kenya’s independence in 1963 until the implementation of the country’s new constitution in 2013 (Southall & Wood, 1996). The new constitution elevated county councils to “county assemblies” and county councilors to “county representatives”. Under the new constitution, counties will have an expanded ability to legislate on local revenue collection and public service delivery, as well as increased responsibilities for managing local participatory planning processes (International Budget Partnership, 2012).

9. SAFI stands for Sanitation Activities Fostering Infrastructure. Safi also means clean in Swahili, one of Kenya’s two official languages.

10. The full set of implementation instructions for the mobilization campaign is included in the [Supporting Information](#), which is available online.

11. One possible concern in this kind of research design is the spillover of treatment from treated wards to non-treated wards, due to travel of individuals between wards (Gerber & Green, 2012, Chap. 8). In the [Supporting Information](#), I use data from a survey conducted in August 2009 to show that travel is limited between the treatment and control wards in this sample, indicating low risk of treatment spillovers. As a result, I do not undertake any further analysis using models to correct for spillovers. Thanks to one of the anonymous reviewers for this suggesting that I investigate this possibility more closely.

12. The full observation sheet is included in the [Supporting Information](#) document.

13. A copy of the administrative document listing the official project allocations is included in the [Supporting Information](#).

14. These advantages of randomization inference do not alleviate other potential problems associated with working with small samples, such as low statistical power and intensified problems with external validity due to the low representativeness of the sample. I note these potential issues in endnotes 20 and 22 below. I am grateful to one of the anonymous reviewers for pointing this out.

15. I also use several Sign Score test statistics as a robustness check. For the continuous measures presented in [Figures 1–3](#), I use the Wilcoxon Signed Rank test statistic (Rosenbaum, 2002). For the dichotomous measures presented in [Figures 3–5](#), I use McNemar’s test statistic (Rosenbaum, 2002). I report the details and results of both of these robustness checks in the [Supporting Information](#).

16. More detailed information on the estimation procedures for the exact test, point estimates, and confidence intervals are included in the [Supporting Information](#) document. For more information on these methods, see Hodges and Lehmann (1963); Rosenbaum (2003) and Sprent and Smeeton (2007).

17. For outcomes in which the observed test statistic is negative, I calculate the exact p value as the proportion of simulated test statistics that are more negative than the observed test statistic.

18. Full tables of results for the main analyses and robustness checks are included in the [Supporting Information](#) document.

19. It is also not possible to reject the sharp null hypothesis of no effect of mobilization on the proportion of meeting participants who are female ( $p = 0.48$ ). This measure is omitted from Figure 3 because the point estimate and confidence interval are much smaller than the other measures presented in the graph. The full results for the measure are included in the results tables in the Supporting Information document.

20. It is not possible to reject the sharp null hypothesis of no effect of mobilization on the likelihood of waste management being selected ( $p = 0.5$ ). This measure is omitted from Figure 3 because the point estimate and confidence interval are much smaller than the other measures presented in the graph. The full results for the measure are included in the results tables in the Supporting Information document. It should be noted that it is possible that the insignificance of this result could be due to low statistical power. The difference in proportions between the treatment and control group is 0.143. The sample size needed to detect a true effect of this size at a power of 0.8 depends on the desired level of statistical significance. At a significance of 0.01, the sample size would need to be at least 176 wards (88 in treatment and 88 in control). At a significance of 0.05, the sample size would need to be at least 126 wards (63 in treatment and 63 in control). In order to detect a true effect of this size at a power of .8 and the more marginal significance level of 0.1, the sample size would need to be at least 104 wards (52 in treatment and 52 in control) (Dell, Holleran, & Ramakrishnan, 2002; Fleiss, Levin, & Paik, 2003). As a result, interpreting this null finding as support against Hypothesis 2b should be taken with the appropriate caution.

21. I also examined the effect of mobilization on the proportion of individuals supporting Waste Management projects. For this measure, it is not possible to reject the sharp null hypothesis of no effect at conventional levels of significance ( $p = 0.16$ ). The estimates for this measure are not included in Figure 3 because they do not fit the scale of the graph, but they are included in the tables of results in the packet of Supporting Information.

22. For this measure, there is no sample size that would lead to a significant result, given that the proportion of wards with matching priorities is identical in the treatment and control group. However, one possible concern that the lack of any difference between the treatment and control wards is unique to this small sample, and that in a larger, more representative sample, there would be at least some difference between the groups. As a result, interpreting this null finding as support against Hypothesis 2b should be taken with the appropriate caution.

23. The Supporting Information includes a description of the rules used to code each of these types of discrepancy using the meeting observations and administrative records.

24. An alternative explanation for these findings is that the mobilization may have effects other than the specific causal pathways that are discussed here, which link mobilization, citizen, participation, and the outcomes of meetings. For instance, the mobilization treatment could have changed the behavior of government officials with respect to providing public services (for instance, due to the increased activity by SAFI in the area), which in turn could have shaped the other outcomes of interest. The ideal response to this kind of concern is to measure or manipulate the more intermediate variables that link the intervention to the outcomes of interest (Imai, Keele, Tingley, & Yamamoto, 2011). This type of causal mediation analysis is outside of the scope of the current study, but is a promising direction for extensions and replications. Recent applications of causal mediation analysis include De Mel, McKenzie, and Woodruff (2014) in economics, Bates and Block (2013) in political science, and Kimbrough and Sheremeta (2014) in an interdisciplinary journal. I am grateful to one of the anonymous reviewers for feedback on this point.

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#### APPENDIX A. SUPPLEMENTARY DATA

Supplementary data associated with this article can be found, in the online version, at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2014.10.024>.