



Rebuilding higher education institutions in post-conflict contexts: Policy networks, process, perceptions, & patterns



Ane Turner Johnson^{a,*}, Pascal Hoba^b

^a Rowan University, NJ, USA

^b UbuntuNet Alliance: Research and Education Network for Eastern and Southern Africa, Lilongwe, Malawi

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ABSTRACT

This research explored the rebuilding of a public university, Université Félix Houphouët-Boigny, in the West African nation of Côte d'Ivoire, destroyed as a result of a highly contested Presidential election. We began by viewing rebuilding as the result of policy networks, a pantheon of interdependent actors cooperating and competing to address policymaking. Then we investigated the characteristics of these efforts, focusing on the policies that result from the complex interplay between university stakeholders and government bodies and the subsequent implementation of policy into practice. The study resulted in a preliminary understanding of one institution's rebuilding efforts.

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1. Introduction

Conflict has had a devastating impact on education in sub-Saharan Africa. Educational institutions are often considered a legitimate target in conflict because of affiliations with the government or are seen as opportunities to destabilize communities (Reimers and Chung, 2010). Between 2009 and 2012, armed combatants in over 28 countries used universities for military purposes, destroyed facilities, and targeted students and faculty (Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, 2014, p. 54). In Côte d'Ivoire, following the 2010 election, combatants engaged in fighting on campus, injuring, and killing students and staff affiliated with oppositional political groups, forcing many universities to close their doors indefinitely (2014).

Yet the rebuilding of higher education institutions has been largely unsuccessful due to unsuitable reconstruction policies and mismanaged planning by actors working in concert or at cross-purposes (Zoepf, 2006). Additionally, evidence suggests that rebuilding efforts are often underfunded, ineffective, and/or derailed by more exigent national needs (McLean Hilker, 2011). As vehicles for development (Ashcroft and Rayner, 2011), the rebuilding and reopening of postsecondary institutions should be of paramount importance to governments and development

agencies funding the reconstruction of civil society in recovering nations. Moreover, effective rebuilding may have implications for sustained peace and the developmental capacity of nations in fragile contexts (UNESCO, 2011).

Using a qualitative case design, this research explored the rebuilding of a public university, Université Félix Houphouët-Boigny, in the West African nation of Côte d'Ivoire, destroyed as a result of a highly contested Presidential election. The study was driven by three research questions: How do actors interact during rebuilding? What happens during this process? How are post-conflict policies negotiated and manifested in the practice of rebuilding a university? We began by viewing rebuilding as the result of policy networks, a pantheon of interdependent actors cooperating or not cooperating to address to policymaking (Klickert et al., 1997). Then we investigated the characteristics of these efforts, focusing on the policies that result from the complex interplay between university stakeholders and government bodies and the subsequent implementation of policy into practice. Findings relate to the nature of interdependencies and relational patterns among policy actors in the rebuilding process, with a focus on process norms as they emerged from participant descriptions. As a result of these relational patterns, key decisions were made about rebuilding. However, perceptions of these policies, including fixations on certain decisions, demonstrated a lack of congruence in policy communication flows and, at times, mismanagement of the meaning-making process inherent to policymaking and implementation. The study resulted in a preliminary understanding of rebuilding during post-conflict reconstruction.

* Corresponding author at: Department of Educational Services & Leadership, Rowan University, 201 Mullica Hill Road, Glassboro, NJ 08028, USA.
Tel.: +1 8562564500.

E-mail address: johnsona@rowan.edu (A.T. Johnson).

1.1. Higher education and development

Higher education serves a critical role in the development process, worldwide. This role is often considered a given in the Global North, particularly in the United States. 'Nowhere has the connection between higher education and . . . development been more clearly drawn than in the United States' (Hodges and Dubb, 2012, p. 3). Considerations of the newly established global 'k-economy' can be found in Asia and Europe alike, where the knowledge produced by universities has significance for all sectors, both private and public (Marginson, 2011). Yet the role of higher education in development has been critically reexamined in developing nations. Many problematize 'development' as rhetoric often pursued by techno-managerial elites (Roe, 1995) without consideration of the contextual nature of higher education in developing nations (Johnson, 2013a).

In sub-Saharan Africa, 'International donors and partners regarded universities, for the most part, as institutional enclaves without deep penetration into the development needs of African communities' (Cloete, 2012, p. 137). Despite the very real capacity challenges many higher education institutions face, a burgeoning body of scholarship demonstrates that tertiary education has positively impacted development (Kimenyi, 2011), particularly traditional economic development indicators, such as per capita income (Gyimah-Brempong et al., 2006). Moreover, growth in the higher education sector has sought to attenuate many of the inequities, those that constrained development, formerly associated with the university in sub-Saharan Africa (Ashcroft and Rayner, 2011).

1.1.1. Higher education and conflict

In spite of, or perhaps because of, this growth and change, educational organizations have been besieged by armed conflict in many African nations, undermining their developmental capacity. In 2013, there were 97 ongoing conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa, accounting for more than 25% of all conflict, worldwide ('Conflict Barometer', 2014). Educational institutions are often targets of conflict, destroyed by combatants, or turned into military encampments (Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, 2014; Reimers and Chung, 2010). Universities are particularly vulnerable in many parts of Africa, due in part to a history of political interference on campus (Aina, 2010). As a result, institutions have been the site of conflict, often damaged and destroyed as a statement on national elections, subsequently weakening the role of higher education in development efforts.

Educational expenditures drop catastrophically during conflict, by 3.1–3.6% each year a nation is engaged in civil conflict (Lai and Thyne, 2007). The closing of institutions, targeting of educational stakeholders, diverting of resources from education, and inhibiting access to employment affiliated with education has a significant impact on development (O'Malley, 2010). Conflict also corrodes a country's developmental infrastructure, diverting resources from social sectors, like education (Novelli and Lopes-Cardoza, 2008). 'Fewer years in school translate into slower economic growth, diminished prospects for poverty reduction, and more limited gains in public health' (UNESCO, 2011, p. 136). Conversely, Thyne (2006) found that investment in and equitable distribution of education in fragile states lowers the overall incidence of civil conflict. Education affords a way out of the 'war trap' and the resulting poverty plaguing many nations at risk for conflict in sub-Saharan Africa (Poirier, 2012).

1.2. Post-conflict reconstruction

Of 37 peace agreements signed between 1989 and 2005, 70% mentions education (Dupuy, 2008). Educational references in

peace agreements tend to correspond with activities such as implementing the right to education, resuming educational services, and contending with the challenges created by conflict in the education sector (2008).

Providing education in a post-conflict context helps national reconstruction, in a different and more profound way than meeting only basic needs such as food, water, and shelter. Furthermore, an education that promotes human rights and civic values can go a long way in helping the next generation to work toward a self-sustaining and peaceful society. For precisely these reasons, development aid must also focus on education once the conflict has ended, and provide the assistance for it to be used as a tool for national reconstruction. (Acedo, 2011, pp. 181–182). The provision of education is critical to reconstruction, but what of the rebuilding of the institutions themselves?

Many supranational and international organizations have developed frameworks to address post-conflict reconstruction, that is the 'medium and long term process of rebuilding war-torn communities . . . rebuilding the political, security, social, and economic dimensions of a society . . . promoting social and economic justice' (Muriithi, 2006, p. 17). In 2006, the African Union (AU) and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) developed their post-conflict policy framework that addresses the need to rehabilitate education, under the aegis of humanitarian assistance, human security and rights, socio-economic development, and capacity-building. At no point in the framework is higher education addressed, which reflects a larger, historical trend toward primary and secondary education as the foundations of development in the African context (Bloom et al., 2006). Also, it is noteworthy that reconstruction is focused on broader developmental efforts related to the outcomes of social institutions, than on the actual process of rebuilding those institutions.

1.3. Networks in higher education rebuilding

As demonstrated above, post-conflict reconstruction is a complicated affair, necessitating the involvement of many actors, not unlike higher education policymaking in general in Africa.

Common sense suggests that the environment in which African organizations must operate is highly complex—a reflection of colonialism, non-governmental organizations, international financial institutions, governmental agencies, and traditional practices, in tandem with one another. Higher education organizations thus must exist in multiple, heterogeneous fields and negotiate the competing values of each. (Johnson, 2013a, p. 443)

The work reported here echoes this view: that many government, quasi-governmental, and non-governmental actors play a role in the rebuilding process, as a function of post-conflict reconstruction policy, due to interdependencies inherent to higher education in Africa. Policymaking on higher education has included the participation of many groups, including associations, international agencies, regional self-organizing educational networks, regional coordinating agencies, regulatory, and supranational organizations, among others. Policymaking in higher education is a messy and complex effort on the continent, without strict or clear boundaries, roles, or goals.

Networks are characterized by complex exchanges between government bodies (at various levels), and other institutions and configurations (Klijn and Koppenjan, 2000). These organizations and actors participate in a complex interplay of coordination, negotiation, alliance-making, adjustment, and problem-solving (O'Toole et al., 1999) to create policies addressing rebuilding. Moreover, the policymaking arena elucidates 'how actual

relationships among major institutions and key stakeholders influence the exertion of power and the flow of resources, such as money, information, and clients' (Stone and Sandfort, 2009, p. 1056). Therefore, the concept of policy networks serves to enable a more complete view of all actors in the field of rebuilding higher education institutions (students/student unions, administrators, Ministry officials, external bodies, etc.), not just those with legal or coercive power, and their interactions.

1.4. Context of higher education rebuilding

This work investigates rebuilding of a major public university, Université Félix Houphouët-Boigny (formerly the University of Cocody [UFHB]), in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. A West African nation, Côte d'Ivoire is home to 22 million people. In 2010, the country erupted into violence due to a highly contested Presidential election between Laurent Gbagbo (a former History professor at the University of Abidjan) and Alassane Ouattara (an economist with the International Monetary Fund), in which thousands were killed and over 60,000 were displaced. Historically, the country has been divided among religious and ethnic lines, characterized by contentious immigration policies and voting rights, geographic divisions, and colonial interference.

The largest city, Abidjan, saw the worst of the violence, as opposition forces sought to remove the former President from his compound. One year later, the AU, in a communiqué on the situation in Côte d'Ivoire, referred to the country as post-conflict and noted 'the significant progress made in the process of return to normalcy in Côte d'Ivoire since the assumption of power by President Alassane Dramane Ouattara and the establishment of the Government on 1 June 2011' (p. 1). The former President, Gbagbo, is currently in The Hague awaiting a war crimes tribunal.

During the conflict, university students across the nation were pressed into violence by opposing forces. Political camps manipulated student unions into threatening faculty, students, and administrators on campus. Students loyal to Gbagbo occupied UFHB, transforming it into a military encampment for a brief time. Academic services were disrupted and the university was closed. After 18 months of closure, UFHB reopened in September of 2012 to faculty and staff. Students returned to campus in December 2012.

2. Methods

This research explored a single, qualitative, case study of the Université Félix Houphouët-Boigny in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. The unit of analysis is the process, meaning the interplay between network actors and the implementation of decisions, policies, and practices resulting from this interplay. A case study was particularly appropriate because the boundaries between the organization and the policy field were not clearly demarcated (Yin 2003). Additionally, qualitative methods allowed for a focus on social or human problems within a natural setting, employing a constructivist lens (Lincoln and Guba, 2013).

2.1. Participants

Participants included faculty, key university administration officials, faculty union representatives, Deans, Vice Deans, librarians, departmental staff, student association and union members and organizers, and Ministry officials ($n=33$). Twenty-five participants were men and 8 were women, representative of the gender make-up of university administration, faculty, and the Ministry in Côte d'Ivoire. This research used non-probabilistic, purposeful sampling to locate participants for this study. Snowball sampling, in particular, was used. This particular strategy required that we start with a small sample and then seek more participants

through interactions with that initial group (Patton, 2002). Sampling ended when saturation was reached, meaning when no new information emerged from the data collection process (Guest et al., 2006).

2.2. Data collection

Fieldwork took place in three phases: December 2013, April 2014, and June 2014. Data were collected from key stakeholders at the university, the government, and students participating in the rebuilding process. Participants were all asked the same questions, but the structure of the protocol allowed us to ask probing questions to elicit detailed description and better understand how the participants make meaning of their experiences — this is referred to as the *responsive interview* (Rubin and Rubin, 2005). Focus groups were used for the student interviews, consistent with Morgan (1988) recommendations, using a thematic guide. Participants were asked about the activities that they believed to be essential to the rebuilding of the institution and how decisions were made about rebuilding. All interviews took place in French and were translated and transcribed into English for analysis purposes.

2.3. Data analysis

In this process we engaged two common case study analysis techniques: categorical aggregation and conceptual propositions. We employed categorical aggregation to analyze the data collected during the research process. This entailed sequencing action, categorizing conditions and properties, and assembling impressions and patterns regarding the case (Stake, 1995). We then compared the aggregations to propositions related to the policy network concept (Yin, 2003). The dynamic of the analysis was on how the propositions helped to explain rebuilding as a process. The validity of the data was determined when direct associations between network actor interplay and rebuilding decisions, policies, and practices were made during analysis. Corroborating and disconfirming accounts were explored in the analysis and interpretation in order to ascertain the truth-value of the case.

3. Findings

Three major findings are discussed below: relational patterns; culture, conflict, and congruence; and perception (mis) management. Each finding focuses on the nature of the policy network as it contested, collaborated, made decisions, and managed the meaning of rebuilding. There is considerable overlap between findings; while they are presented separately as is the fashion, they are not clearly delineated and are inherently interrelated. We use data from our interviews to illustrate findings, making our interpretations publicly available to scrutiny (Anfara et al., 2002).

3.1. Relational patterns

As noted earlier, post-conflict reconstruction is the domain of many organizations, groups, and individuals alike. When focused on a particular cause of public importance, these entities may be referred to as a network. The interplay of this network is governed by interdependencies and process norms that influence the way that these actors acknowledge or not, communicate or not, with one another (de Bruijn and Ringeling, 1999). There is no established blueprint for steering these norms; 'The type of issues, the pattern of bargains, and structures of opportunities and constraints within each sector create particular types of politics that may or may not resemble those implied by national political traditions and constitutional norms' (John, 2012, p. 5). As

Lowi (1972) observed, the policy determines the politics. To this end, our data demonstrate distinct patterns and norms in the communication process related to rebuilding policy-making along three strata: the Ministry, the university, and the students, with decreasing power in the process.

3.1.1. Ministry

First, data demonstrate that decision-making regarding the rebuilding process was highly centralized within the government, and often within the Ministry of Higher Education, in Côte d'Ivoire after the crisis. Centralization of decision-making also emerged as a process norm within the network.

The key decision making on this process was the government. The government takes the decision. The ministries in charge have to implement it. They are the one who will come to the operational, to give a responsibility to the Presidents of the various public universities because it is the State that provides all the resources of the public universities (Upper level administrator at the university).

'[I]f the most important actors in a network are committed to this structure more are satisfied with the outcomes of the steering process they will also be committed to the substantive outcome of the procedure' (de Bruijn and Ringeling, 1999, p. 157). In this case, the substantive outcome of the rebuilding process, and its centralization within the Ministry, was changing the culture of higher education in Côte d'Ivoire.

The government has done the right thing because it was a project for a new university, to centralize, also to decongest the old universities, the construction of a new university. So the government has really done the right thing (Ministry official, Research).

The official viewed the work of the Ministry as a part of a larger goal that necessitated the norm of centralization of decision-making within the network. Indeed the centralization process ensured the maximization of their own goals and values, the reform of the university.

3.1.2. University

Upper level administrators and mid-level managers (to a lesser degree) were also key to the rebuilding process. These constituencies were, at times, concerned about the highly centralized nature of the Ministry, creating configurations within the administration that perceived themselves as being excluded from decision-making, despite their high level positions within the institution.

All we did was organized by the Ministry. There are a lot of partners, particularly those who were giving money for the reopening. So the partners discuss directly to the Minister of Education and his permanent secretary reported it to us. There is a list of private companies. The Ministry was supervising, dealing with the Francophony, the World Bank and so on (Former interim President).

In each interview, we asked about the presence and actions of external actors who were key to the rebuilding process. Of the 33 high-level administrators, faculty, deans, and students who participated in this study, only this participant, a faculty member who served as the interim President during the closure of the university and managed the administrative aspects of the rebuilding, noted the presence of other network actors, such as Francophone governments, industry, and development agencies. The World Bank allocated \$150 million in 2011 in recovery financing to improve governance in Côte d'Ivoire; yet, the absence of this data, in tandem with descriptions of the rebuilding process by other participants, gives support to assertions about the highly centralized nature of the rebuilding process and the preeminence of the Ministry in the network.

According to university officials, the Ministry violated process norms (those of consensus building and empowerment), which then resulted in concerns for the legitimacy of the policy decisions among many university participants. To this point, a participant stated,

We put in our report all the things that have disappeared or destroyed like the doors and we sent it to the official of the university at that time, the administration. The Minister has pushed me away because I wanted first the equipment in the lab to be restored before beginning classes and so on, so that we do not lose the equipment. But it wasn't the point of view of the Minister so you know... (Dean)

In order to contest the closedness of the Ministry to input from university actors, a faculty union representative stated he used alternate means to garner attention over the problems at the university and the decisions taken by the Ministry.

For instance, the Ministry, even yesterday . . . he said to me he had a very important appointment somewhere [dismissing the faculty member]. So unfortunately, we complain about many situations. We [the faculty union] . . . react in newspapers. See when we have an assembly, we denounce what happen to our academy, I mean university. But the reaction is very slow.

Despite concerns about the relationship between the university and the Ministry in the governance of the rebuilding process, at least institutional members were able to 'get face time' with officials, those on the upper rung of policy decision-making. This was not the case for students.

3.1.3. Students

There is some debate as to whether or not policy actors must acknowledge one another in order for policymaking to take place (Isett et al., 2011). From the student's perspective, despite their interdependencies with other policy actors, they were virtually ignored in the rebuilding process. 'Because now before the arrival of the new Minister [of higher education], we tried to discuss [our concerns]. Unfortunately, they have rejected all the discussions.' Like the faculty union at the institution, the students tried other methods to express their concerns, needs, and goals in the rebuilding process. The members of a former student union on campus explained,

Yes we came to the administration and we gave our point of view; we met the staff of the Ministry . . . First, we wrote it and put it in an envelope, we wrote an email and sent it to the Ministry, to the university, and to the media, and we made some brochure and gave it to students.

In protest of the norms of decision-making established by the Ministry and the university administration, students believed that other, less desirable, options were available to them, such as violence, consistent with historical approaches to grievances on university campuses in sub-Saharan Africa (Federici and Caffentzis, 2000). 'We are not involved in the decision-making. Every time, they impose decisions on us, which brings about rebellion,' stated a student, a former member of a union on campus. Despite being the primary beneficiaries of rebuilding decisions, students were systematically excluded. One of the first decisions made by the Ministry was to ban student unions on campus. 'In networks, processes of attracting and repulsing various organizations are constantly taking place . . . actors in the network will try to strengthen their own position by eliminating certain organizations from the network' (de Bruijn and Ringeling, 1999, p. 161). Therefore, the banning of a consolidated student voice on campus by the Ministry, through the use of their legal authority in the policy-making process, served to further centralize their power over rebuilding and higher education.

3.2. Conflict, culture, and congruence

There was a struggle to determine priorities and to establish congruence between university officials, policy priorities, and administrative structures during the closure due to a culture of political interference at the institution, compromised decision-making, and political imprisonment as a result of the conflict. The former interim President stated of this culture,

Anyway, at the university, it's the students who took decisions [prior to the closure]. But I'd like to add that we know youth is not violent. There's someone hidden behind, some high personality, at the university level. They have secret meetings. And managing the university, these managers belonging to political party, they implement their decisions, the political party decision. [After the closure] we were three to make the decision at the university and the two people with me wanted things to fail [due to political differences].

The participant brings to light the permissiveness of university administration in allowing politics to influence decision-making. There is a burgeoning body of research that explores the notion of culture (in its many forms) and its role in policy networks, as well as the impact of culture on the policy-making process (Weare et al., 2014). '[N]etwork structures that are highly fragmented (characterized by many disconnected groups of actors) or sparse (characterized by few overall relationships) potentially signal entrenched political conflict and noncooperation' (Henry, 2011, p. 361). In this case there was a pervasive culture of politicization and violence that may have influenced the way that policy decisions were conceived of by participants and the fragmented nature of the network.

Due to this pre-existing culture, participants were highly critical of the intent and priorities of the Ministry, which had established a rigid hierarchical policy-making structure within the network. When describing the culture, the interim President stated, 'Even at the level of officials, if you have a name for those who are in power today that you are with them, you became suspicious (sic). Mistrust at all levels . . . !' Participants often critiqued the focus of decision-making during the rebuilding process, while highlighting problems of capacity and infrastructure – problems they insisted should be the priorities of rebuilding. 'We have gone 4 to 5 months, we have no water. You come here, you need the toilet, you take your car and you go to the toilet in the city. Today, it is solved, but it was difficult.' Most college-level administration, faculty, and students echoed this criticism, underscoring a lack of congruence between the Ministry, the university administration, and the university body on the priorities of rebuilding.

A fixation on the choice to paint buildings during the rebuilding process, instead of improving infrastructure, was indeed persistent throughout our interviews and often resulted in participants' perceptions regarding the efficacy of leadership and decision-making.

In fact, we realize after the opening that no building has been built. No new building, yeah. When we left the campus, we were more than 60,000 students and the university was closed for 2 years. So there were 2 new generations of students from high school. So that has increased the number up to 70,000 though you know that normally there should be only 15,000 students at the university (Dean).

Without decisions to change the basic infrastructure of campus, the pressure on its capacity was at a breaking point. Of this, relating it to the work of faculty, a Vice Dean stated,

The rehabilitation consists only on the painting and the taking care of what was; there were no new things built. Here in our department, the problem is important, we have 211 teachers

and only 81 of them have their office. So the others work in the nature. So we are trying to motivate them and sometimes we share rooms in the department because there is African solidarity. So we tried to motivate teachers to work together in the same offices till we found solution. At the same time, we continued to ask the President of the university to build new offices.

Two students in Psychology added,

Female student: I think that the life condition of students today has changed a little bit because it is true that before there were problems within the staff but today there is still a little problem, for example we, students, do not have enough space. We do not have enough lecture rooms for our courses. We still need equipment.

Male student: At the university, you can say that there was an improvement, the presidency was here for a year and after the reopening of the university, there was no more violence. There is also the problem of infrastructure. It is true that the framework has been improved, but what we have seen is that there are no buildings, no buildings could be built.

When asked about the disconnect in decision-making, another participant, a director at UFHB, stated, 'It seems that the university is ruled by another place.' Interviews consistently revealed that the other place, meaning the Ministry of Higher Education, was unable to establish policy congruence with other network actors due to political divisiveness and lack of knowledge. Upon asking a Ministry employee in ICT about the nature of policy-making at the Ministry, he stated, 'The rebuilding only concerns the buildings. But they didn't think about the materials, the working materials . . . they only thought about the educational aspect later'. So while decisions were being made at the Ministry, they were not informed ones. To this end, the Ministry employee added, 'Here in the [Ministry], our Minister is a literary and even now he doesn't use much his computer,' meaning that he was not aware of the needs of the campus. Despite this lack of knowledge, the Minister maintained absolute authority over the process.

The two cultures inherent to the network – one of violence and the other of unilateralism – combined to create the conditions for revolt around the lack of policy congruence. A student union representative stated of this,

We think that there is a relationship between the authorities and students and this is what linked us. We don't forget to remind them every time, when we are there, because we are students. Without students, they cannot exist so they have to create the condition for what they are here so that they can be at ease. Otherwise, we are going to create a condition so that we replace them.

Indeed, during a visit by the Minister of Higher Education to campus early in the reopening of the institution, students cut the cord to his microphone and overturned and burned his car. By our third fieldwork visit, the Minister had been replaced. 'The culture of a network acts as a constraint and/or opportunity on/for its members. Policy networks are political structures . . . not unchanging structures' (Marsh and Smith, 2000, p. 5). This is also reflective of a long history of student activism in Africa and their relationships with repressive regimes (Federici and Caffentzis, 2000). In this instance, the clash of cultures created an opportunity to rid the network of a destabilizing element.

This data shows a lack of congruence between the needs of the institution and the decisions being made by the Ministry. Each network actor echoed concerns regarding the nature and appropriateness of policy decisions. Yet the pre-existing culture of the institution of violence and mistrust and the rigid nature of the decision-making process precluded collaboration and

engendered conflict between the varying levels of the network. Returning to the previous finding, these cultures were then exacerbated by the differing goals of the network actors: rebuilding versus reformation.

3.3. Perception (mis) management

Perceptions of the policy field and the management of those perceptions is a critical component of policy implementation. Often actors become fixated on particular perceptions of the field that prevent forward momentum in the process (Termeer and Koppenjan, 1997). These perceptions become embedded, contributing to the social and psychological exclusion of actors in the field (Schaap and van Twist, 1999). Perceptions of insecurity were dominant in many participants' narratives.

Insecurity on campus, as a result of the conflict and Ministry decision-making, dominated many descriptions of policy. Participants reported that students without employment were offered positions as security personnel on campus, however a lack of competence in this area and a continued culture of political divisiveness increased insecurity for the campus community, resulting in violence and harassment.

We wanted to create the university police that should depend on the authority under the control of the President. But something wrong happened. The Ministry [of higher education] decided to take this project. And even they asked me to go and work [with the] Ministry on this commission, on this project for the introduction of the university police. So, it was a question about our initial project. We will train first the youth who wanted to take part at this university police. And we try to lay out some recruitment criteria. And what happens, the Ministry seems to take only [candidates who showed] political support. And they have no training. And [the Ministry] created violence on the campus between the students and the police at the university. And so in this university police we have formed [a] union of sorts. And it was denounced by the students. And it created a terrible conflict, a very hard conflict (Dean).

The characterization of the university police as a union is telling, considering the mistrust and fear of student unions on campus, and is a serious indictment of the Ministry's efforts in this. Policy actors must be *able* and/or *willing* to perceive the reality of a situation (Schaap and van Twist, 1999). To some degree, the Ministry appeared unwilling to either perceive the nature of the campus after the conflict or allow that reality to play a role in their decision-making. Their continued focus on 'political games,' as one participant described it, functioned as the Ministry's frame of reference and increased insecurity on campus.

4. Conclusion

The work reported here was guided by three research questions: How do actors interact during rebuilding? What happens during this process? How are post-conflict policies negotiated and manifested in the practice of rebuilding a university? These questions were structured to elicit a holistic sense of the process as well as specific decisions and the manifestation of those decisions. As a result, key network actors were identified: the Ministry, administration, and students. We determined that the lack of collaboration and the pre-existing cultures of the actors played a role in network interplay. Next, the analysis produced specific policy decisions and the conflict between network actor goals in the rebuilding process, specifically the focus of the Ministry on reform and the focus of other actors on rebuilding. Key challenges to the rebuilding process were also identified, which we highlight below.

4.1. Conflict

While the conflict may have been officially over in Côte d'Ivoire, the conditions for it were still present within the university. Several participants noted how the nature of the university was that of a microcosm, representative of the countries' diverse people, problems, and possibilities. The interim President of the university during its closure referred to the university as 'a laboratory or a sample of what is happening on the national level.' Johnson (2013b), in her work on peacebuilding at universities in a conflict-affected Kenya, highlights this notion when a participant in her study stated, "Oh, [the conflict] touched the campus, touched every genetic code of the system. Because it was tribally based" (p. 336). Due to the ethnic and tribal identifications at the heart of many African conflicts, the university is not immune to violence as it brings together those varying epistemologies and affiliated politics (Konings, 2002). In this case, the conflict on campus did not cease just because the conflict in the community was at an end and was further exacerbated by network relational patterns, a willingness to use violence on the part of some actors, and contested policy decisions during the rebuilding and reopening of the university.

4.2. Fragmentation

The success of the rebuilding process is dependent upon the involvement of local and state actors in policy formulation and decision-making, yet one of the biggest challenges to post-conflict reconstruction is the coordination of many actors (Bender, 2011). The process is then further challenged by issue intractability, or what Rittel and Webber (1973) referred to as 'wicked problems' when describing those impossible problems in public policy. Wicked problems are societal in nature, lack clear boundaries and definitions, have no ultimate test for solution, lack overall guidance, have no room for trial and error, and every attempt toward resolution counts (1973).

For wicked planning problems, there are no true or false answers. [Parties'] judgments are likely to differ widely to accord with their group or personal interests, their special value-sets, and their ideological predilections. Their assessment of proposed solutions are expressed as 'good' or 'bad' or, more likely, as 'better or worse' or 'satisfying' or 'good enough.' (p. 163)

The issue of rebuilding is one such wicked problem that requires collective action for solution, but defies those same efforts. While the policy network is essential to its governance, rebuilding lacks clear boundaries, has no international blue-print to guide the process, and is either done badly, well, or good enough, according to the actor's perspective. van Bueren et al. (2003) suggest that wicked problems are further exacerbated by strategic and institutional uncertainty in which actors do not have the appropriate technical know-how to solve a problem and the responsibility for decision-making is contested. Moreover, within this context, the state and the higher education system were weak, due to the conflict, and information sharing (e.g., the role of external agencies in rebuilding) was restricted, resulting in a policy network that was highly fragmented and characterized by disconnected relationships amongst actors.

5. Preliminary considerations for rebuilding

The above findings may paint a negative portrait of the rebuilding process, which is really only one side of a multifaceted issue. Indeed this story of rebuilding is hardly told in its entirety. In the third phase of our research, after a strike on campus by

students and faculty about the insecurity on campus, the university police system was reformed. A new Minister of Higher Education had been hired and relationships between the university administration and the Ministry were improving. Rebuilding, as the outcome of many policy actors, cannot be temporally bound. However, there are some possibilities that are worthy of consideration as we press forward toward developing an understanding of rebuilding higher education institutions in post-conflict conditions as a result of the complex interaction of invested actors.

- 1. Network relations and process norms.** Political conditions may make relations between policy actors difficult at first, particularly in post-conflict environments. However, post-conflict reconstruction, particularly of universities, needs the input of a variety of actors, including students. Procedural norms might be established during the process that provide opportunities or venues for various constituencies to voice their own values and goals.
- 2. Perception management.** Neglect of network actor perceptions can result in further marginalization of actors and block efforts at addressing poor conditions and joint decision-making on campus. Therefore, actors may seek to make public the reasoning behind decisions and seek opportunities to reinforce meaning and consensus, particularly in fragile contexts.
- 3. Policy priorities.** On a more pragmatic level, there are several services and physical spaces on campus that are critical to the academic environment; these include the libraries, the classrooms, offices for faculty, bathrooms, and internet access—all essential services on a college campus. While it may not be possible to address all services and spaces concurrently, decision-makers must make the academic spaces of the university a priority in the rebuilding process.

So what does rebuilding mean for development? Unfortunately, there are no overall agreed upon indicators for measuring the success of reconstruction, as it is typically channeled through individual projects funded by international donors and deemed effective according to program goals and outputs (Kadirova, 2014). In this case, considering the role of the university in economic development, the work of the network resulted in the reopening of the university and students returning after two years, two years in which the needs of the labor market in Côte d'Ivoire went unmet. Moreover, the university system in Côte d'Ivoire was one of the most respected in the Francophone region, host to students from across West Africa. The reopening of the university enabled students from the region to return and complete their studies, contributing to the economic growth of West Africa, and therefore reducing grievances, overall, that lead to civil war (Thyne, 2006). However, capacity issues at the institution continue to undermine its role as an authentic player in development; adequate infrastructure, appropriate remuneration and space for teaching staff, and political interference on campus all have implications for the quality of graduates from UFHB. Improving the relations between network actors may allow for improved decision-making that could attenuate the policy problems left unformulated in the rebuilding process and shore up the capacity of the institution to authentically contribute to national development efforts.

Higher education rebuilding is the province of many actors, both elites and non-elites alike, working together or in contest to establish the priorities and values of the process. In the case of the University of Félix Houphouët-Boigny in Côte d'Ivoire after the election crisis of 2010, the Ministry acted to centralize its authority over the rebuilding process, at times creating resentment among other policy actors. Policy decisions appeared incongruent with the needs of the campus and disenfranchised campus constituents

who should play a role in the implementation of those decisions. The management of perceptions by network actors demonstrated a failure to ensure agreement among campus members, allowing for the rise of feelings of insecurity. We establish but a few preliminary areas for consideration as research moves toward a framework that may have practical implications for future rebuilding efforts. This work reported here scratches the surface of understanding the rebuilding of higher education institutions. The process is not bound by time and further work must be done to understand the long-term impact of the policy decisions made and the meaning of those decisions for development and post-conflict reconstruction.

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