

Middlemen at a Corner: Youth, Party Cells and Street-Level Politics in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

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Party flags dot the landscape across Tanzania, and the predominant green flags signal the presence of the ruling Chama cha Mapinduzi's (CCM) party cells. Rune Hjalmar Espeland poses the question of why do young urban Tanzanians still gather under CCM's tattered flags? This thesis is based on nearly one year of fieldwork in a suburb of Dar es Salaam. He followed young middlemen attached to CCM cells that incorporate their hangouts, taking part in their everyday lives, while studying street-level politics and urban order more broadly.

He develops the term 'middleman' to capture several related features concerning the combined in-betweenness of certain urban youth. A novelty of this approach lies in the way it relates intermediary class position, economic brokerage and political entrepreneurship to generational sentiments and urban masculinity. Espeland's main argument is that young middlemen engage with the base structures of CCM because the ruling party offers a combination of protection, status and opportunities largely unattainable outside the system. This thesis thus differs from those studies that contend the African youth have rejected party politics and ideology. It is therefore a contribution to a wider debate on youth unemployment and politics, as well theorising on urban middlemen.