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REVIEWER'S REPORT

Manuscript No.: IJAR-53275 Date: 12.08.2025

Title: VILLAGE HYDRAULICS: EXCLUSIVE MANAGEMENT STRUCTURING THE PROTEST OF LOCAL ACTORS IN THE COMMUNES OF ATHIEME AND BOPA IN SOUTHWESTERN BENIN

Recommendation:

Accept as it is.....

Accept after minor revision..... ✓

Accept after major revision

.....

Do not accept (Reasons below).....

Rating

Originality

Techn. Quality

y

Clarity

Significance

Excel.	Good	Fair	Poor
	✓		
		✓	
	✓		
		✓	

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Reviewer Name: DR S t . W i j d a n a h R a m**Date: 13.08.25**

Reviewer's Comment for Publication.

VILLAGE HYDRAULICS: EXCLUSIVE MANAGEMENT STRUCTURING THE PROTEST OF LOCAL ACTORS IN THE COMMUNES OF ATHIEME AND BOPA IN SOUTHWESTERN BENIN

Strengths of the Article

1. Contextually Relevant and Politically Sensitive Topic

- The article addresses a vital issue: rural water governance, social exclusion, and local political dynamics.
- Focusing on Athiémé and Bopa provides a concrete and localized case study with broader implications.

2. Robust Qualitative Methodology

- Employs grounded theory with triangulated data from interviews, observation, and document analysis.
- Involves 50 informants from diverse backgrounds, offering a rich and multi-perspective view.

3. Strong Theoretical Framework

- Applies social exclusion theory (Sen, Bourdieu, Caste) to analyze the impact of water governance reforms.
- The framework is well-suited to unpack the marginalization of local actors in resource management.

4. Detailed Actor Mapping

- Clearly identifies and analyzes various stakeholders: central government, local authorities, private operators (OMILAYE), diaspora, and community members.
- Shows how structural exclusion leads to resistance and reconfiguration of local power dynamics.

5. Critical Examination of Centralization

- Highlights the negative consequences of centralized water management, such as slow response times and lack of accountability.
- Provides concrete examples of community protests and infrastructure takeovers.

Weaknesses of the Article

1. Lack of Quantitative Data

- The article is entirely qualitative; no statistical analysis is provided to support or measure the impact of policies.
- This limits the generalization and empirical rigor of the findings.

2. Limited Policy Alternatives

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- While highly critical of the leasing model and OMILAYE, the article does not propose concrete alternatives or hybrid models.
- No policy simulations or reform scenarios are explored.

3. Dense Language and Structure

- The article is lengthy and heavily cited, which may overwhelm non-specialist readers.
- Some sections could benefit from stigmatization or clearer organization.

4. Over-reliance on Local Narratives

- While local testimonies enrich the context, the article relies heavily on them without independent verification.
- There's little discussion on potential biases or political motivations behind these narratives.

5. Missing Gender Perspective

- The article does not address how exclusion affects women or other vulnerable groups in water governance.
- This is a notable gap, especially given the gendered nature of water access in rural communities.

Conclusion of the Review

This article makes a valuable contribution to understanding social exclusion and local resistance in the context of rural water governance in Benin. Its strengths lie in its deep actor analysis and sharp critique of centralized policy. However, to enhance its impact, it would benefit from integrating quantitative data, simplifying its structure, and offering constructive policy alternatives.