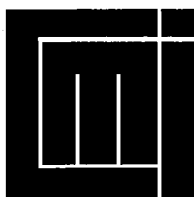


Local Government and Decentralisation in Sub-Saharan Africa

An Annotated Bibliography

Kjetil Børhaug

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Summary:

A renewed interest in local government and decentralisation in developing countries has emerged in recent years, and many students now turn to this subject. A substantial literature is already available, even if a lot more needs to be done. The present work is an attempt to guide new students of African local government to some of these contributions. The first part of the paper provides a rough categorisation of the literature, and the second part contains a short presentation of books and articles. The bibliography is by no means complete.

Sammendrag:

Dei seinare åra har vist ei fornya interesse for lokalt sjølvstyre og desentralisering i utviklingsland, og stadig fleire utviklingsforskarar orienterer seg mot dette feltet. Det finst alt ein betydeleg litteratur om emnet, samstundes som mykje framleis er ugjort. Denne bibliografien er eit forsøk på å gi ein introduksjon til ein del av denne litteraturen. Første del innheld ein grov tematisk oversikt, og siste del innheld korte presentasjonar av ein del utvalde bøker og artiklar. Bibliografien er på ingen måte fullstendig.

Indexing terms:

Local government
Decentralisation
Public administration
Africa

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1. Background and introduction

A renewed interest in local government and decentralisation has emerged in recent years among scholars, government officials, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and in the international donor community (Jerve and Naustdalslid 1990; Askvik and Jerve 1991; St. melding 51, 1991-92:226). There are several reasons for this renewed interest.

(1) The recognition that popular participation has a potential to improve government legitimacy, quality of project planning and implementation. Furthermore, popular participation, it is contended, can best be achieved within a system where political and administrative decisions are decentralised.

(2) The economic crisis in Africa. The crisis has undermined even further the resource basis of African governments, and has forced them to adopt a "rolling back the state" strategy. This tendency has been reinforced by the ideological orientation of many donors in general, and by Structural Adjustment Programmes in particular. Decentralisation may ease the pressure on scarce government resources by improving efficiency and by mobilising resources and labour locally.

(3) The disappointing results of centralised government. The central planning and implementation systems adopted in many African countries have not performed well, and the response is a renewed interest in local government.

(4) The increasing interest in public administration in developing countries in general. It has been recognised that unless the government institutions function properly, neither donor assistance nor indigenous efforts are likely to produce the desired results. The role and potential of local governments are elements of this larger issue.

In the present paper, the reader is given an introduction to some of the literature on the issue of local government. The usefulness of the literature search is reinforced by the cyclically changing interest in local government in Africa (Mawhood 1983). It has been a central theme in development research ever since the last years of colonialism, and it has played a varying role in the development strategies of African countries (Kasfir 1983; Mutahaba 1989). Most African states have been through periods of both centralisation and decentralisation, with mixed experiences. Not surprisingly, there is a substantial and varied literature available on local government in Africa, which is worthwhile to consider. This work is an attempt to systematise the literature in order to give some guidance to new students of local government in Africa.

Below, the type of literature will be introduced, then categorised and finally, some general remarks about the literature will be made.

2. Literature on local government and decentralisation

The principle underlying the search for relevant literature has been to look for literature indexed under *local government* and *decentralisation* or containing these key words in their titles. However, there are other types of literature which are relevant for the study of sub-national administration, planning, decision making, implementation and participation. The literature on integrated rural development programmes, rural development and community development obviously have insights valuable for local government research. This literature has been omitted from this bibliography.

The contributions included in the bibliography examine local government in Sub-Saharan Africa. The experiences and studies from Asia and Latin America are not included, even though some authors make references to these geographical areas as well.

As will be shown below, many authors define decentralisation so as to include privatisation, parastatals and cooperatives. However, they then often do not examine these types of decentralisation, and concentrate their attention on decentralisation within the political-administrative system. Even if cooperatives, parastatals and privatisation are included in most definitions, they are seldom studied as examples of decentralisation. Research on these kinds of decentralisation has to be found elsewhere.

Decentralisation may occur within purely administrative systems, and this type is normally labelled deconcentration. Viable local governments in Africa depend on deconcentration of the functional ministries, and deconcentration is often a component in the development of local governments. But deconcentration can also be justified for other reasons than local government and popular participation. It is often simply a matter of improving the structure, i.e. the division of work within an organisation (Leonard and Oyugi 1985). This literature is also omitted as we focus on deconcentration only in conjunction with development of local government, i.e. linked to political decentralisation.

Many contributions to the literature examine decentralisation reforms. The general theoretical literature on reforms and reorganisation is huge, and varied. This body of literature would also be relevant, but is left out of the present work.

Even with the said literature left out, the field is still very large. This bibliography does not claim to include all literature of interest, nor does it claim to represent all the issues and perspectives. However, searching various sources (libraries, indexes, list of references) has led to the collection of a substantial literature which covers a wide range of issues, and which may hopefully serve as a useful introductory guide to the field.

3. Categorising the literature

The literature items are presented alphabetically and with a short annotation aimed at indicating the main focus of the items. The annotations are not standardised in format, length or type of information. Such a solution would be unpractical as the literature is quite varied in design and methodology.

Below, the items are presented in tabular form. The table shows how various general themes and issues are treated, the geographical area the researcher is concerned with and whether the theme is the primary issue for the author or a secondary issue discussed in connection with another main theme. Finally, the table indicates whether the author has written an empirical or a theoretical work.

The categorisation of issues does not represent a theoretically derived typology. Rather, it reflects what the authors were concerned with. Such a method has its weaknesses. It will always be possible to subdivide categories or to define new categories. It can always be argued that categories should be merged in order to improve the overview. Hopefully, a balance has been reached, categorising the literature well enough for it to be a useful guidance, but without splitting it up too much. In total, 11 categories are applied. As most authors discuss several important issues, most items are placed in more than one category. The categories are as follows:

1. *Conceptual elaborations*

Many authors naturally elaborate on the concept of decentralisation and local government. The definitions vary, but it is difficult to identify any significant definitional controversy in what is being written. Fesler wrote in 1965 that the concept of decentralisation is poorly developed and difficult to measure. Gasper makes more or less the same point in an essay from 1991, and it is striking that the theoretical definitions have remained very wide and imprecise. Perhaps the most influential definition is the one presented by Nellis and Rondinelli (1986), distinguishing between devolution, administrative deconcentration, privatisation and delegation to semi-autonomous functionally specialised organisations such as parastatals.

2. *The rationale for local government*

Many authors are concerned with why decentralisation of government is important and worth doing. Decentralisation can be seen as a remedy for most ills. The reason is most likely to be that among donors and leaders in the Less Developed Countries (LDCs), centralisation policies have been strong until recently, and many authors have felt a need to argue that decentralisation has merit. Most authors do not say very much about the dilemmas between the many good purposes of local

government, are rather uncritical of decentralisation and local government, and say very little about possible negative effects.

Some of the contributions argue generally how decentralisation might promote valued goals. Others, like Lee-Smith and Stren (1991) or Montgomery (1972) examine more closely one particular advantage that is said to be promoted by decentralisation.

3. Critiques of the rationale for local government

As noted, many authors are very optimistic about the potential of local government, and many of them ignore the dilemmas and possible drawbacks of such decentralised systems. But there is also a literature discussing whether decentralisation is on balance a positive effort. They contend that decentralisation might favour some values and suppress others, and that the advantages of decentralisation are in many cases internally inconsistent.

4. The history of African local government

In several contributions, the history of local government is outlined. The starting point was the colonial rulers' attempts at control. The political needs of the colonial rulers have shaped local government to this day. The colonial heritage has by some been described as a problem that reformers have tried to overcome (Mutahaba 1989), while others have argued that the colonial district administration, aiming at control, law and order, was a very convenient tool for the independent regimes to take up (Picard 1981).

5. Local government efficiency and technical performance

Efficiency is here understood as the costs of reaching an objective. Reaching the objective can be done efficiently — at low cost — or inefficiently — at high cost. Many authors discuss the low efficiency of local governments. Technical performance is a related, but wider concept, referring to whether the numerous routines and rules of bureaucratic structures and planning procedures are adhered to. Many authors discuss how factors in the environment of local governments, not least the central government, influence and almost determine local level efficiency. These authors provide familiar lists of shortages in the local government: shortages of money, infrastructure, personnel, knowledge undermine the efficiency and technical performance of the local governments. Furthermore, interference from politicians and bureaucrats in the capital as well as local elites are factors that often undermine local level efficiency. There are a few studies discussing cases of satisfactory performance and efficiency and the conditions for such performance are identified (Olowu and Smoke 1992; Sterkenburg 1990).

6. *Local government policy*

There are some interesting studies which try to examine what values and interests are promoted or neglected by existing local governments, and why the local government promotes these values and interests. These studies should be done more often as most decentralisation reforms, as well as some donors' beliefs, seem to be based on very strong convictions about what will be promoted by a decentralised system. These studies show that the actual outcome of local government policies and administration might very well be problematic in the light of important values in the society (Keller 1977).

7. *Decentralisation reforms*

Africa has experienced many decentralisation reforms, and most of them have been failures. Gasper notes that this conclusion may be based on the mistake of taking the rhetorics of the reform proposals too literally (1991). Conyers argues that the western academic is often not able to appreciate the results that were achieved, even if the stated goals were not reached completely (1986). With these reservations in mind, it is fair to say that most decentralisation reforms have run into trouble and are seen as failures. These processes are extensively studied, illustrated by the long list of references.

The reasons found for the failures are varied, and similar to the reasons for poor local government performance. They include the characteristics of the local environment, of central government, the local government itself, the content and design of the decentralisation reform, shortages of support and monitoring and poor implementation of the reforms. Some studies add the influence of donors. Several studies indicate that the failure of reforms in terms of stated goals might conceal a success in terms of real, informal ruling elite goals (cp. Samoff's articles).

8. *Explaining centralisation*

Studies of failed decentralisation reforms frequently refer to the interests and attitudes of central level power holders as reasons for failure. These tend to favour centralisation and in many cases even reverse their own decentralisation reforms. Several authors have discussed why the regimes are so basically centralist. The typical African regime is by several authors described as being faced with the dilemma of mobilising people while at the same time maintaining absolute central control of policy making processes (Mawhood 1987).

9. *Explaining the continued existence local government*

The African experience with local government is not very good. It is filled with stories of local government inefficiency and of reforms that failed because the regime that decided on them acted according to traditional, centralist attitudes and interests. It is well worth asking why the regimes continue to promote local government and decentralisation. The authors listed under this category describe the dilemma faced by LDC regimes, and their need to control local government.

10. *Donors' role in decentralisation*

Donors have increasingly acted in favour of decentralisation and popular participation by supporting local reform processes or NGOs promoting meaningful popular participation. There are not many studies on donor experiences, but it appears that donors can only play a modest role in decentralisation processes.

11. *Research priorities*

Finally, some authors are concerned with the further direction of research on local government in Africa. One direction is to intensify studies of actually existing local governments, another to examine closer how decentralisation can contribute to development.

The authors' contributions to the various themes are categorised as follows in tabular form. The table lists, under each issue, the author, the geographical area, whether the theme is the primary or a secondary issue, and finally, whether the contribution is mainly theoretical or empirically oriented.

P=Primary theme

S=Secondary theme

T=Theoretical approach

E=Empirical approach

Conceptual elaborations			
Author	Country	P-S	T-E
Conyers 1990	Third World	S	T
Davey 1983	Africa	S	T/E
Gasper 1991	Zimbabwe	S	T/E
Mutahaba 1989	Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia	S	E
Mutizwa-Mangiza 1991	Zimbabwe	S	E
Olowu and Smoke 1992	Africa	S	TE

Conceptual elaborations

Author	Country	P-S	T-E
Nellis and Rondinelli 1986	Third World	P	T
Rondinelli 1991A	Third World	S	T
de Valk 1990C	Zimbabwe	S	T
Wunsch and Olowu 1990	Africa	P	T

The rationale for local government

Author	Country	P-S	T-S
Akpan 1990	Nigeria	P	T
Aziegbe 1991	Nigeria	P	E
Barkan and Chege 1989	Kenya	S	E
Batley 1991	Africa	S	T/E
Bird 1987	Third World	P	T
Davey 1983	Third World	P	T/E
Lee-Smith and Stren 1991	Africa	P	T/E
Mannion and Brehony 1990	Tanzania	P	E
Mascarenhas 1989	Third World	P	T/E
Mawhood 1974	Third World	P	T/E
Mawhood 1983	Africa	P	E/T
Montgomery 1972	Third World	P	E
Mutahaba 1989	Tanzania, Kenya, Zambia	S	T/E
Mutizwa-Mangiza 1991B	Zimbabwe	S	E
Pausewang 1988	Ethiopia	S	E
Rondinelli 1981	Third World	S	T/E
Rondinelli and Nellis 1986	Third World	S	T
Wunsch and Olowu 1990	Africa	P	T/E

Critiques of the rationale for local government

Author	Country	P-S	T-E
Faniran and Areola 1976	Nigeria	P	E
Fombad 1991	Cameroon	P	E
Gasper 1991	Zimbabwe	P	T/E
Mawhood 1983	Africa	P	T/E
Mutizwa-Mangiza 1991B	Zimbabwe	S	E
de Valk 1990B	Zimbabwe	P	E/T

The history of African local government

Author	Country	P-S	T-E
Batley 1991	Africa	S	T/E
Kasfir 1988	Africa	S	E
Mawhood 1983	Africa	P	E
Mawhood 1987	Third World	P	T/E
Molebatsi 1990	Botswana	S	E
Mutahaba 1989	Third World	S	T/E
Samoff 1989	Tanzania	S	E

Local government efficiency and technical performance

Author	Country	P-S	T-E
Egner 1987	Botswana	S	E
Gaspar 1990	Botswana	P	E
Helmsing and Wekwete 1988	Zimbabwe	P	E
Helmsing 1991A	Zimbabwe	P	E
Helmsing 1991B	Zimbabwe	P	E
Mutizwa-Mangiza 1991B	Zimbabwe	P	E
Nkya 1991	Tanzania	P	T/E
Olowu and Smoke 1992	Africa	P	E
Sikabanze 1990	Zambia	P	E
Sterkenburg 1990	Botswana	P	E
Tordoff 1988	Botswana	P	E

Local government policy

Author	Country	P-S	T-E
Covell 1980	Madagascar	P	E
Keller 1977	Kenya	P	E
Kingsland 1982	Gambia	P	E
Mannion and Brehony 1990	Tanzania	S	E
Maro 1990	Tanzania	P	E
Molebatsi 1990	Botswana	S	E
Montgomery 1972	Third World	S	E/T
Mutizwa-Mangiza 1991B	Zimbabwe	P	E
Pausewang 1988	Ethiopia	P	E
Picard 1981	Botswana	P	E
Ross 1988	Africa	P	T/E

Local government policy

Author	Country	P-S	T-E
Samoff 1979	Tanzania	A	T/E
Samoff 1983	Tanzania	P	T/E
Segodi 1990	Botswana	P	E

Decentralisation reforms

Author	Country	P-S	T-E
Adamolekun 1991	Africa	P	E
Barkan and Chege 1989	Kenya	P	E
Bonney 1982	Papua New Guinea	P	E
Conyers 1990	Third World	P	T
Hill 1979	Tanzania	P	E
Kalapula 1990	Zimbabwe	P	E
Maro 1990	Tanzania	P	E
Mawhood 1974	Africa	P	T/E
Mawhood 1983	Africa	P	T
Mawhood 1987	Third World	S	T/E
Mijere 1985	Zambia	P	T/E
Molebatsi 1990	Botswana	P	E
Mutahaba 1989	Tanzania, Kenya, Zambia	P	E
Mutizwa-Mangiza 1991B	Zimbabwe	P	E
Nellis and Rondinelli 1986	Third World	S	T/E
Picard 1980	Tanzania	P	E
Picard 1986	Swaziland	P	E
Picard 1979B	Botswana	P	E
Rondinelli 1981A	Africa	P	E
Rondinelli 1981B	Sudan	P	E
Samoff 1979	Tanzania	P	T/E
Samoff 1983	Tanzania	P	T/E
Samoff 1989	Tanzania	P	T/E
Tordoff 1980	Ghana	P	E
de Valk 1990B	Zimbabwe	S	E
de Valk 1990C	Zimbabwe	P	T/E
Werlin 1990	Liberia	P	T/E

Explaining centralisation

Author	Country	P-S	T-E
Egner 1987	Botswana	P	E
Fowler 1991	Africa	P	E
Helmsing and Wekwete 1988	Zimbabwe	S	E
Kasfir 1983	Africa	P	E
Mawhood 1974	Third World	P	T/E
Mawhood 1983	Africa	P	T/E
Mawhood 1987	Third World	P	T/E
Samoff 1979	Tanzania	S	T/E
Samoff 1989	Tanzania	S	E
de Valk 1990A	Zimbabwe	P	T/E
Wunsch and Olowu 1990	Africa	P	T/E
Bonney 1982	Papua New Guinea	S	E
Hill 1979	Tanzania	S	E
Mawhood 1983	Third World	P	T/E
Olowu and Smoke 1992	Africa	S	E
Picard 1979A	Botswana	P	E
Picard 1979B	Botswana	S	E
Samoff 1989	Tanzania	P	E

Donors' role in decentralisation

Author	Country	P-S	T-E
Fowler 1991	Africa	S	E
Kalapula 1990	Zimbabwe	S	E
Lindgren 1991	Zimbabwe	P	E
Sikabanze 1990	Zambia	S	E
Werlin 1990	Liberia	P	E

Research priorities

Author	Country	P-S	T-S
Adamolekun 1991	Africa	S	E
Batley 1991	Africa	P	T/E
Conyers 1984	Commonwealth	P	T
Conyers 1986	Third World	P	T
Lee-Smith and Stren 1991	Third World	P	T/E
Naustdalslid 1991	Third World	P	T
Nkya 1991	Tanzania	S	T

4. Concluding remarks

The authors apply a huge variety of theoretical perspectives, methodologies and data. It is beyond the scope of a bibliography to develop a systematic presentation and discussion of these approaches. However, some basic distinctions should be made.

Some authors understand the role of local governments and attempts to develop them primarily as a political issue and can be distinguished from others who emphasise non-political and technical design problems. Samoff, Mawhood, and Werlin base their writings on the assumption that the centralisation or decentralisation processes are strongly influenced by how powerful actors see their power enhanced or reduced thereby. Mutizwa-Mangiza, Helmsing and to some extent Rondinelli consider decentralisation as an attempt to make the governmental system more efficient, and they place less emphasis on the political aspects of decentralisation.

Another distinction can be made between a doctrinal approach and a critical approach. The doctrinal approach tends to assume that decentralisation is inherently positive and should be promoted whenever possible. The critical approach sees decentralisation of government as a process that will promote some values and interests to the detriment of others. The question is therefore what values should be promoted. Surprisingly many authors tend towards the doctrinal approach.

Another distinction is between those who look at the needs of the local communities and how can a decentralised system may best meet these needs, and those who look at state objectives for local government and how these objectives can be met. Most authors write within a statist perspective. Considering that the justification for decentralisation is the promotion and acceleration of local development processes and participation, it is striking that so few choose the needs of the local community as their points of departure (cp. Lee-Smith and Stren 1991)

Seen in total, the literature is characterised by a vague and general conceptual framework. Decentralisation is a relational concept, relative to a previous state of centralisation, which may vary across cases in both degree and form. Comparisons and measurements are difficult to make. The concept of decentralisation remains very wide as it includes a huge variety of forms, objectives and degrees. This is likely to be a reason for why there are very few instances of controversy and debate in the field. There are no competing "schools" that contest each other and there are very few critiques of the research and models of others. In as far as scientific progress depends on clear statements, debate and controversy, this is perhaps indicative of the state of the art in this field of research.

5. Introduction to selected items

Adamolekun, L.: Promoting African Decentralization, in *Public Administration and Development*, vol. 11, no. 3, 1991, pp. 285-292.

Decentralisation reforms in SSA have in practice become deconcentration efforts, even if deconcentration has allowed for some controlled consultation of the local population. The reforms have resulted in mixed achievements, and the principal problems have been: (1) The one-party system, which monopolises political power, and is cautious about delegating real decision making power; (2) Financial weaknesses. Due to financial shortages, the local governments are often unable to perform the delegated functions; (3) Inadequate revenue yields. The financial weakness is aggravated by inadequate local capacity and authority to collect revenues; (4) Central expenditure control. The transfer of responsibilities is often too limited, and central control over expenditure decisions often remains strong.

In light of these general problems, research should focus on alleviating the financial weaknesses. This implies examination of local government income and expenditure and on how to expand financial resources and strengthen financial control. There is also a need to examine how local officials can be made more sensitive to local needs by means of training.

Akpan, P.: Local Government Structure as a Spatial Framework for Rural Development in Nigeria, in *Public Administration and Development*, vol. 10, no. 3, 1990, pp. 263-276.

Akpan argues that rural development, a priority objective in Nigeria, depends on suitable administrative structures, not the least local government structures. He gives an historical overview of the development of such structures in Nigeria, and argues that the decentralisation reform of 1976 did not include the political and administrative arrangements that are necessary for locally driven rural development. More specifically, he argues that the sub-national levels of government should organise the present village structure in the countryside, encourage local popular participation, utilise traditional leadership and loyalties, improve integration between various sub-national levels in the government hierarchies, allow the local governments to engage in both service provision and productive development, and finally, integrate initiatives and policies launched at various hierarchical levels in the country. He argues for a national hierarchy of many levels, for which division of work as well as integration are important objectives.

Areola, O. and A. Faniran: The Concept of Resources and Resource Utilization among Local Communities in Western State (Nigeria), in *African Environment*, vol. 2, no. 3, 1976, pp. 39-51.

It is often contended that planners are indifferent to people's needs and ignorant of local circumstances. Many argue that it is urgent to give the local population power over local development, in order to ensure that projects are based on accurate and relevant knowledge about local resources. This study has examined what local communities knew about the natural resources in their area.

It was found that people knew much about the resources they were actually using. The local communities had only vague knowledge about the potentials of untapped resources, they were partially negative to new resource uses, and in some cases they held unrealistically positive expectations. However, people were willing to engage in common projects locally, provided it gave immediate benefits for the local community.

There is a need for local authorities and elected leadership to organise and develop local resource uses. The local government of the community was found to be incapable in this respect. Strengthening and developing the local government is needed for the local authorities to play such an innovative, planning and developmental role.

Aziegbe, S.A.: *The Paradox of Creating a Special Agency for Rural Development in Nigeria.* Paper presented for the XVth. World Congress of International Political Science Association, Buenos Aires, July 21-25, 1991.

Nigeria has long neglected development of the rural areas, and policies were biased towards the urban areas. A directorate with the task of promoting rural development was set up in 1986 as a semi-independent development authority. It engaged in numerous projects, and its performance was generally disappointing. Problems of poor implementation, missing infrastructure to support projects, inadequate training efforts and generally poor technical quality in construction works were pointed out as indications of poor performance.

The directorate was not linked to local governments or other channels for participation. In fact, it duplicated local government in many areas. Projects were not based on felt needs and met with indifference. Maintenance was lacking and technologies were not appropriate for the users. The author concludes that local governments should have a larger role to play, as they promise to ease these problems related to participation, not the least maintenance needs.

Barkan, J. and M. Chege.: Decentralizing the State: District Focus and the Politics of Re-Allocation in Kenya, in *Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol. 27, no. 3, 1989, pp. 431-453.

Based on the Kenyan experience, the authors seek out the possibilities and limits of decentralisation. Central control in policy making suffers from the main weaknesses of poor information about local circumstances, shortages of resources and capacity and weak mobilisation and support among target groups. These problems can only be alleviated by means of popular participation in planning and implementation. Popular participation depends on relatively autonomous local level institutions with resources and leadership, enabling them to enter into a bargaining process with the central state. The outcome of such a bargaining relationship would be a balance between national goals and local needs. The obstacles to decentralisation derive from the center's unwillingness to give away power and from the huge resource needs of the expanded local institutions.

Decentralisation in Kenya under President Moi resulted less from bureaucratic initiatives to improve administrative efficiency than from the President's need to restructure the regime's political base. The reforms were in essence aimed at winding down the clientelist structure of the former Kenyatta regime, and to build a new base comprising the regions and ethnic groups supporting Moi. This was done by strengthening the district administration by providing it with resources and decision making power. The outcome was not the firm control over these powers by the local population, but more of a reshuffle of power within the state machinery. The proportion of resources channelled to the districts remained very small. The decentralisation reform was determined not by ideas on how development might be accelerated, but by power holders wishing to distribute and consolidate power.

Batley, R.: The Role of Local Government in Development, in J. Naustdalslid (ed.): *Local Government and Development*. Workshop on Local Government and Development, NIBR, Oslo, 1991.

The disappointing results of the centralised system introduced in most Sub-Saharan African countries after independence have led to new interest in local government or privatisation, not the least encouraged by donors. New policy principles, like basic needs, sustainability and accountability, did also lead to a new focus on decentralisation. Decentralisation is expected to facilitate resource mobilisation, local adjustment, utilisation of local knowledge, improved accountability, improved coordination and finally, improved balance between investment and recurrent costs. On the other hand, there is still a need for national integration and for control of poorly performing local units and their expenditure.

The author singles out the need for improved local government effectiveness as a main challenge for research on local government. Institutional arrangements will determine the effectiveness and cost efficiency of performance. Research should focus on institutional factors such as formal structures, accountability and responsiveness, leadership and strategy, coordination, finances, staff and finally, the relationship to the private sector. Research should examine how these factors are related to efficiency and performance.

Bird, R.: A New Look at Indirect Taxation in Developing Countries, in *World Development*, vol. 15, no. 9, 1987, pp. 1151-1161.

This article is a contribution to the renewed debate about the merits of direct versus indirect taxation in LDCs. Bird's main argument is that indirect taxation may be more promising than many realise. Indirect taxation dominates in LDCs because of insufficient administrative capacity to undertake direct taxation and because of the informal nature of the economy. In general, indirect taxation increases in importance the less developed a country or a region is. The exact form of indirect taxation systems vary substantially. There is a lack of research on how taxation systems influence a whole range of social and economic concerns. Knowledge is needed in order to develop better systems, not the least in order to create viable local governments. It is particularly important that taxation systems are adjusted to the often ignored variations among the poor citizens.

Bonney, N.: Local Government and Political Development in Papua New Guinea, in *Public Administration and Development*, vol. 2, no. 2, 1982, pp. 113-127.

What are the prospects for local government in Papua New Guinea? The author answers by outlining the historical development of local government in Papua New Guinea. It was imposed as an alien structure by the Australian colonial authorities. In some parts local government was met with initial enthusiasm, which faded as few benefits were forthcoming. In more advanced areas it met with resistance as the local leaders saw it as an imperialist structure. However, the local government model gave the first introduction to large scale political organisation, which facilitated the anti-colonialist opposition movement. Ultimately, this movement gained independence, but remained fragmented and linked to strong regions. After independence, policies of far-reaching devolution to the provinces were effected, which weakened the central state. Provincial government was based on the district level local government model that once triggered the anti-colonialist movement.

The prospects for the original district based local government are poor. District government is substituted by provincial government, discredited as a colonial

means of repression, and ignored by the local people as it consistently failed to deliver services.

Conyers, D.: Decentralization and Development: a Review of the Literature, in *Public Administration and Development*, vol. 4, no. 2, 1984, pp. 187-197.

Conyers deals with local government research in Commonwealth countries. After a huge interest in local government around 1960, a centralisation period followed, which was again replaced by a renewed interest in local government in the 1970s.

Four topics have received particular scholarly attention: (1) The concept of decentralisation; (2) The role of decentralisation in development; (3) The various organisational models of a decentralised structure, e.g. legal framework, division of work within and between levels, coordination and financing; and (4) Monitoring and evaluation of local governments.

She argues that there has been too few evaluations of local government, that their effects go largely unexamined and that comparisons in particular are missing. A lot of relevant knowledge might exist under different headings, i.e. integrated rural development, community development, participation, regional planning, rural development and organisational design. As relevant knowledge is also acquired in many different disciplines, there is an obvious need to compile and link knowledge from these diverse sources.

Conyers, D.: Future Directions in Development Studies: the Case of Decentralization, in *World Development*, vol. 4, no. 5, 1986, pp. 593-603.

Three general problems for development research apply as well to research on local government in LDCs: (1) Language. Many concepts are unclear and understood differently in different contexts. Many of the concepts are also very value-laden, like the term decentralisation itself. (2) Theory and practice. Pure academic research is often irrelevant because the academic is not familiar with local circumstances. Worse still, academics operate with strict distinctions and criteria and tend to become pessimistic about Africa's prospects. Their research is simply not constructive. Examples include decentralisation studies, which mistake rhetorics for operational goals and describe reforms as failures, being unable to see the progress that is after all being made. (3) Substantive differences. Within some disciplines, the differences between the Western world and Africa is too heavily emphasised. One consequence is that all theoretical and methodological insights are seen as being Western and therefore as irrelevant. The emphasis on this distinction blurs the fact that decentralisation varies both within

the Western world and within the Third World. It seems somewhat arbitrary to make this distinction more critical than other distinctions.

There is a need for more detailed and balanced studies that should focus on context, on what decentralisation was intended to achieve, and who benefitted therefrom. There is a need to clarify concepts and to strive for a unified theory.

Conyers, D.: Centralization and Development Planning: A Comparative Perspective, in P de Valk and K.H. Wekwete (eds.): *Decentralizing for Participatory Planning*. Aldershot/Brookfield: Avebury, 1990.

Conyers discusses first dimensions of decentralisation and then problems of decentralisation. Decentralisation is often categorised according to degree, where devolution, delegation, and deconcentration are forms of decreasing degree. But each of these forms may vary on crucial dimensions: (1) What activities are transferred? A distinction can be made between routine matters and developmental planning. (2) What types of decisions are transferred? Policy making involves many types of decisions, and it may vary what decisions are transferred. Typically allocation of funds and control in personnel matters are not transferred to any significant extent. (3) To whom are decision-making powers transferred? It makes a difference whether such powers are transferred to local MPs, chiefs or representative elected councils. (4) What form of power is transferred? The power transfer itself may take many forms. It may be judicial, administrative, or political. These forms are not equally stable and robust.

Decentralisation reforms often encounter a combination of the three following problems: (1) Design problems. The reform itself is not well prepared, it is often based on vague concepts, and support is often missing. (2) Implementation problems. Clear responsibilities, capacity, bureaucratic acceptance and resources are often missing and undermine implementation. (3) Impact. The fate of decentralisation reforms depends on their success, and local governments have often been abolished based on assertions of poor performance. But it is difficult to evaluate the results of decentralisation. Many problems in local governments are not caused by decentralisation but by more general administrative, economic and developmental factors.

Covell, M.: Who Governs in Fianarantsoa? Political Interaction in a Malagasy Town, in *Journal of African Studies*, vol. 7, no. 3, 1980, pp. 152-160.

The author analyses the relationship between population and government authorities in a Malagasy town. She finds that the relationship is characterised by

poor communication between the two. Contrary to what is often assumed, this has not led to opposition in the population or to complaints among officials that the local people do not contribute and play their role.

The government authorities prefer a minimum of political activism because they do not have the resources that would be needed to respond. Neither do they have resources to launch initiatives that might depend on target group cooperation. The local people are organised in voluntary associations and in neighbourhood councils which do not engage in interest articulation against the local governmental authorities. The reasons are that policies are not decided locally, but nationally. Local level officials are not sensitive to local needs. Policies are only rarely implemented. The population is consequently ignorant about what the government does. The local associations and neighbourhood councils function as buffers between people and government and as substitutes for the government. The people and the government are weakly integrated and both have an interest in the continuation of this weak relationship. The leadership of the associations and neighbourhood councils are oriented towards the status quo, their position depend on their function as buffers, and they act according to paternalistic attitudes that restrict political activism.

Davey, K.: *Financing Regional Government. International Practices and their Relevance for the Third World.* New York: John Wiley, 1983.

The main theme in this book is how the activities of sub-national units should be financed in LDCs. The author distinguishes between five main types of functions that might be delegated to sub-national units: service provision, regulatory functions, development, representation, and coordination and planning. The main types of funding systems are: Central government allocations, taxation, user fees, loans and enterprise. Each of these are divided into several sub-types. By financing systems are meant the ways functions are linked to various types of funding. There is no objectively best way to organise financing. Any type of financing must be evaluated in light of the following main criteria: (1) Reasonable administrative costs as compared to incomes; (2) justice, as this is understood in different cultures; (3) administrative feasibility; and (4) political feasibility. The author discusses various taxation systems extensively in the light of these criteria.

A financing system can be linked to great autonomy for the sub-national level, or to the opposite. The scope of activities and the proportion of public spending in themselves are no measures of decentralisation. The discretion allowed for local government in how to solve tasks and how to spend resources for this purpose is the critical variable. Wide scope and sufficient resources are necessary, but not sufficient conditions for local autonomy.

The author concludes that no arrangement can be adjusted to all values and considerations. Any arrangement will maximise some values to the detriment of others. The choice is political. It is not easy to predict how most arrangements will influence issues and values.

Egner, B.: *The District Councils and Decentralization. 1978-1986.* Report to SIDA, Gaborone, 1987.

Egner gives a detailed overview of the district level institutions in Botswana, and discusses whether they have the capacity that justifies further devolution. Generally, the system is characterised by centralisation. Projects and plans depend on ministerial approval, personnel matters are centralised to a national manpower service, and the districts are dependent on the central state for funds. The justification for centralisation has been the poor performance of the councils. However, throughout the 1980s, the manpower situation has improved, and the training of personnel has also greatly improved. There are still shortcomings, but the central state's reluctance to devolve responsibilities to the councils cannot be justified by referring to weak capacity.

Low implementation rates for the district councils are not explained only by capacity weaknesses in the districts, but also by the central bureaucracies' inadequate role in district council projects. The district councils' planning of projects and their implementation are made very difficult by the central bureaucracies': (1) Reluctance to inform about implementation targets; (2) withholding of money that should be disbursed to councils; (3) slow approval processes concerning project approval and fund releases; (4) insistence on deciding issues that legally should be left to the councils' discretion; (5) detailed regulations of how money is spent in various projects. The councils' contribution under the drought relief emergency programs illustrated that there is a capacity in the districts. There is a need to strengthen training further, to develop administrative infrastructure, to improve administrative routines and accounting. But the mixed implementation performance stems not only from these problems.

Fombad, C.M.: The Scope for Uniform National Law in Cameroon, in *Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol. 29, no. 3, 1991, pp. 443-456.

The development of a well-functioning state depends on national standardisation of the laws and their application. In former colonies, this means that the legal inheritance from the former colonial power and the indigenous legal traditions must be harmonised. This is a very complex task, because the indigenous

standards vary, and in many countries, more than one colonial power have ruled, and the imported legal traditions are therefore inconsistent on many points.

The development of these different legal bases into a national framework depends on a judicial professional training that takes due account of all the existing traditions. It furthermore depends on systematic gathering of knowledge about the various legal systems as well as their application. Both the training and the systematic analysis are often missing in many countries, creating large problems. Not least the indigenous legal traditions are often ignored in judicial training.

Fowler, A.: The Role of NGOs in Changing State-Society Relations: Perspectives from Eastern and Southern Africa, in *Development Policy Review*, vol. 9, no. 1, 1991, pp. 53-84.

NGOs are often singled out as crucial for the development of local self government. NGOs may supplement local public organisations, and they are important components in civil society, which is a precondition for real democratic debate. However, they are seldom allowed to take up these functions. Fowler examines how NGOs represent a threat to most African regimes, which prevent their development. The regimes' very basic interests in hegemony, security, autonomy, legitimation and revenue are at stake when NGOs grow strong. Fowler elaborates on why NGOs will often be dangerous to regimes as they threaten such basic interests. Regimes attempt to control NGOs by means of legislation, administrative cooptation and political appropriation. Donor assistance to NGOs is a delicate matter. It might strengthen the challengers, as state officials see it. It might also create centralisation and donor dependencies among the NGOs, and undermine their role as people's organisations.

Gasper, D.: Development Planning and Decentralization in Botswana, in P. de Valk and K.H. Wekwete (eds.): *Decentralizing for Participatory Planning?* Aldershot/Brookfield: Avebury, 1990.

Gasper reviews the development of the sub-national (i.e. District) planning system in Botswana. He emphasises that the district planning system was intended to be a component of the national planning system, administered by the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning. The principal actors in the sub-national planning system are elected councils, field branches of sectoral ministries, to some extent Land Boards, and the prefectorial District Administration. The planning process is run by a District Development Committee where all these organs are represented under the leadership of the District Administration.

The design of programmes and projects is mainly left to the national level institutions, and the local organs initiate and plan only a small part of local projects. District planning means mostly that these district actors coordinate and plan the implementation of projects, and that they give some feed back and input to the national planning structure. Coordination in the districts works relatively well due to their small proportions. This facilitates informal and smooth coordination. Dedicated staff is also important. District planning is increasingly considered as relevant input for national planning and local actors have been given increased scope for decision making about initiation and design of projects, but it is still mainly a deconcentrated system.

Gaspar, D.: Decentralizing of Planning and Administration in Zimbabwe, in Helmsing, Mutizwa-Mangiza, Gaspar et al.: *Limits to Decentralization in Zimbabwe Essays on the Decentralization of Government and Planning in the 1980s*. The Hague: Institute of Social Studies, 1991.

Gaspar's point of departure is the widespread belief that decentralisation can solve almost any problem in African societies. Very often analyses are designed as an examination of how decentralised a local government system really is, and it is normally concluded that there is not enough decentralisation. The reasons are then found in the many centralising forces. But what decentralisation can actually achieve and what a proper measure of decentralisation is, is seldom clarified.

Among the many conceptual problems in the decentralisation literature is that decentralisation implies many dilemmas, and decentralisation is not always positive for all values. Some points can be made: (1) Decentralisation often reduces equity because local governments are easily captured by local elites. (2) Decentralisation is said to increase efficiency and effectiveness, but it often remains undefined what efficiency and effectiveness is. Clientilism often increases under decentralised systems, and that hardly increases efficiency. (3) Decentralisation is by many seen as a contribution to growth, but the kind of growth and development that is expected is often poorly defined. (4) Decentralisation is justified by the need for coordination. But decentralisation does not necessarily solve coordination problems. On the contrary, it might make them worse simply because the number of actors is higher. (5) It is often not very clearly defined why participation is so important. Is it to reach consensus or to find better technical solutions, or is it a good thing in itself? (6) Decentralisation normally aims at both improving administrative standards and participation. These two objectives are often inconsistent with each other. (7) What contributes to national integration? This value is used as argument both for and against decentralisation.

The phenomenon called decentralisation is complex and varied, and is used in so many contexts that it is problematic to cover all with a single concept. However,

some general tendencies can be identified: (1) States decentralise when they feel secure or when they are short of resources. (2) Decentralisation is normally combined with strong state presence in the districts. (3) Decentralisation is often used as a means to spread the blame for the state of things. (4) Decentralised systems are so complex that they normally lead to conflicts and different interpretations. (5) Decentralisation is controversial because it affects the balance of power. Decentralisation is always shaped by political forces, being a matter of political power.

Helmsing, S.H.J. and K.H. Wekwete: Financing District Councils in Zimbabwe, in *Planning and Administration*, vol. 15, no. 2, 1988, pp. 20-29

The authors attempt to highlight problems of linking local government responsibilities with adequate resources. In general, there must be a fair match between tasks and resources. Local revenue generation has a potential, and it can take many forms such as taxation and fees, income generating activities, and loans. But even if this potential is better utilised, there will be a need for central grants. Furthermore, there are several reasons why a substantial part of the local budgets should be financed through central grants: (1) It facilitates the necessary amount of control. (2) Local and national organs are parts of the same overall system, and should function within common priorities and plans. (3) Central allocations compensate for regional differences. (4) Central grants may take many forms and do not necessarily imply detailed central control. It is crucial that they are organised in ways that allow for some local discretion on how they should be used.

The Zimbabwean experience started in 1980 with a grave imbalance among local communities along racial lines. This is still the case. But the dependence on the central government has been slightly decreased. The districts vary according to their ability to mobilise resources locally, even if the sources of revenue have increased in number. Local government spending has increased, but expectations have increased even more. Key challenges are to improve the local ability to raise revenue, to ensure equity in the distribution of resources, and to design a system for central government grants that allow more local discretion.

Helmsing, A.H.J.: Survey of District Income Generating Activities, in N. Mutizwa-Mangiza and A.H.J. Helmsing: *Rural Development and Planning in Zimbabwe*. Aldershot/Brookfield: Avebury, 1991A.

The author examines the potential of local government enterprises as income generators. The results have often been disappointing. The author presents a survey of such activities in Zimbabwean local government. Income generating activities

are those that the private sector would normally engage in, and there might be competition from market actors.

Income Generating Projects (IGP) have a long history in Zimbabwe. The colonial powers financed urban local administration by local government monopoly on beer trading, housing and services. One underlying purpose was to block the Africans in their economic advancement. In the survey, liquor undertakings dominate, but there are also others. The typical problems are that IGPs run up deficits and create relatively few jobs. The local administrations' management of the IGPs is weak in many cases. The profitability is often lower than in comparable private enterprises. Most IGPs require very specialised and dedicated manpower that local governments do not have at their disposal. Local governments have problems funding the necessary investments. In conclusion, there is not a very large potential for local governments' IGP, and they are too demanding in terms of funds and expertise. For those already in operation, the challenge is to improve management.

Helmsing, A.H.J.: Transforming Rural Local Government; Zimbabwe's Post-Independence Experience, in N. Mutizwa-Mangiza and A.H.J. Helmsing: *Rural Development and Planning in Zimbabwe*. Aldershot/Brookfield: Avebury, 1991B.

The local government structure of Zimbabwe was inherited from the apartheid regime, and a critical challenge has been to remove the discrimination against the majority of the population. This discrimination was built into the dual governmental structure of separate and privileged Rural Councils for the white communities. They enjoyed substantial autonomy and resources, and they delivered a variety of services and planning functions. They ran their black townships of workers as self-financing entities, based on incomes from housing, beer sales and the like. The local authorities in the rest of the country were strictly controlled by the District Commissioner, had weak administrations, few resources and performed few functions.

In the first years after independence, the aim was to help District Councils catch up with Rural Councils. This did not succeed in terms of resource provision. Since 1988 the amalgamation of the two types of councils has been sought, but the effective implementation has been slow or absent, and the Rural Councils still function as separate entities.

Hill, F.: Administrative Decentralization for Development, Participation, and Control in Tanzania, in *Journal of African Studies*, vol. 6, no. 4, 1979, pp. 182-192.

Hill examines the 1972 decentralisation reform in Tanzania. The reform aimed at increasing administrative efficiency and coordination, and popular participation. The author shows that these objectives were not achieved, mainly because the regime's need for control over society and over the administration led to only partial and inadequate implementation of the reform. The reform provided an opportunity for the regime to send oppositional civil servants to the regions in order to break up the administrative unity and hierarchy that threatened the party leadership's control. The new structure was marked by confusion, i.e. unclear division of work within and between national and regional levels. One reason was that Nyerere intended to keep the bureaucracy in a state of flux and thus prevent it from unified action, another reason was the party's inability to fill the key role as coordinator and creator of policy guidelines. The civil servants added to this confusion as this was a functional way to spread responsibility and avoid criticism. Participation could have been improved by strengthening the district councils which were organs for local interest articulation. Because of fear of opposition, the regime abandoned these councils, substituted them with appointed party officials, and thus reduced the channels for participation.

In short, the decentralisation reform was shaped by the regime's desire for control, which blocked participation and effective administration. The problems of administrative performance are not related to decentralised structures in particular. They derive from administrative weakness and from tensions between the bureaucracy and the political leadership. These issues are not specific to decentralised structures.

Kalapula, E.S.: Approaches to Sub-National Planning and the Changing Planning Environment in Zambia, in A.H.J. Helmsing and K.H. Wekwete (eds): *Sub-National Planning in Southern and Eastern Africa. Approaches, Finances and Education*. Aldershot/Brookfield: Avebury, 1990.

A main objective for the Zambian strategy for sub-national development has been to compensate for the regional imbalances left by the colonial power. The focus of this article is on the various planning approaches that have been applied since independence to implement this strategy.

The First National Development Plan (FNDP) channelled extra resources to the least developed regions. Planning and coordination of policy and specific programs were largely left to the central level. Sub-national development committees and elected councils had a responsibility to plan and coordinate the implementation, and to formulate regional development programmes. The results were that the weakest provinces did not have the capacity to implement much of what was proposed, and the imbalances remained largely unchanged. The Second National Development Plan (SNDP) continued the strategy but established planning units

in each province, and emphasised integrated planning of implementation and local inputs to the national level. But policy decisions remained in the central head quarters. Participation was also sought to be strengthened as a device for consultation. Only in the Third National Development Plan was devolution put on the agenda. The provinces should now also be allowed to initiate and plan their own projects, and the elected organs for popular consultation were further developed.

However, the contextual conditions for sub-national planning have deteriorated. The financial crisis has made planning and active public policy difficult in general. The country has increasingly become dependent on donors, not the least in the important agricultural sector. Donors consequently dominate the planning of public policy. Initiation, design and implementation of projects are in their hands, and the scope for recipient planning and coordination is limited, not the least at the district level.

Kasfir, N.: The Origins of Local Government, in: P. Mawhood: *Government in the Third World. The Experience of Tropical Africa*. New York, Toronto: John Wiley, 1983.

Kasfir discusses historical reasons for the abolition of local governments in most African countries. Local governments in anglophone Africa were mainly created by the British before independence as a means for the pursuit of colonial objectives. Such objectives were to create an efficient sub-national administration, to provide an arena (and a distraction) for the educated and politically activated social groups, and to prepare for independence in the long run. Development was not a goal, the ambition was rather to train the people in management until they would be in charge themselves. This limited democracy would be a rather controlled and guided exercise that would not allow any uncontrolled actions. The key objective was training. Still, the limited participation that was allowed was used by the emerging nationalists for popular mobilisation.

Local government had been the arena where the winning nationalist factions had fought their battles against other factions, and they were naturally afraid that losing factions might use these arenas for the same purpose, in particular oppositional chiefs. Local governments were thus abolished. Other factors as well made it rational for the new regimes to roll back local government such as the following: (1) The new leaders acted not only within the modern state system, but also within a parallel, traditional system of clan or ethnic loyalty, characterised by patron-client relationships. The new regimes withdrew resources from local government to dispose of in patron-client relationships. (2) The colonial local government set-up was discredited. (3) The colonial local government had an authoritarian structure, and as this attitude still prevailed after independence, local

government was seen as inadequate for the tasks of the new states. 4. Many African countries were too poor to finance local government. (5) Trained personnel was scarce and it was not possible to fill all local government positions. (6) Strong beliefs among regime leaders in central planning and strategic use of scarce resources. (7) In some countries, important ambitions of socialist transformation. (8) Fear of opposition.

Keller, E.: Harambee! Educational Policy, Inequality, and the Political Economy of Rural Community Self-Help in Kenya, in *Journal of African Studies*, vol. 4, no. 1, 1977, pp. 86-106.

The author examines the flourishing self-help movement in Kenya, and discusses its potential to contribute to the development of the country. The self-help movement means that rural communities mobilise traditional leadership and organisation in order to initiate, fund, implement and maintain development projects of various kinds, not the least secondary schools. Eventually, the state may take over the responsibility for such assets, but not automatically.

The problem has been that self-help projects are conceived of from a very narrow conception of community needs. Society at large and other communities are only considered as far as they may provide additional resources. The regime as well as the national administration have been reluctant to coordinate and control the self-help movement out of fear of social unrest. The consequence is that these local efforts have not been adjusted to actual education needs, national policies, standard of services and implications for recurrent costs. Furthermore, they enhance rather than address inequalities as the most prosperous communities are those best able to launch self-help projects. There is thus a need to maintain the movement, but to coordinate it better with the enforcement of national policy guidelines.

Kingsland, J.: Resource Allocation Decisions in Gambian Local Councils, in *The Journal of Developing Areas*, vol. 16, no. 2, 1982, pp. 213-232.

This analysis discusses the issue of influence in Gambian local government councils. Behaviour in council meetings is assumed to be guided by a number of decision making rules (how to act in various situations) and decision making criteria (what are relevant premises and values in a decision). In the councils local chiefs, elected councillors, executive officers, and the area (district) commissioner are represented. Kingsland finds that the commissioner has the largest influence. Because of his superior knowledge of the system in general, his professional expertise and his ability to switch between languages, rules and criteria his judgements prevail in most cases. Furthermore, he is the interpreter of the rules

and he is thus able to manipulate the rules whereas chiefs and councillors are constrained by them.

A second issue is to what extent are decision making rules and criteria determined by local culture? Kingsland assumes that decision making rules and criteria may stem from individual characteristics, group norms and processes (i.e. the council), organisational setting, and the environment. The author concludes that in the councils he studied, decision making rules and criteria stem to a great extent from the environment (societal needs, the central state's demands and the options for external funding), and from the group processes (characterised by the commissioner's superior knowledge of the governmental system and of languages, which was used to manipulate decisions). The organisation as such was the source of few rules and criteria. These decision making rules and criteria tended to constrain the role played by chiefs and elected councillors, the bearers of local culture and values. In fact, local culture of consensus-seeking and respect for authority tend to give the commissioner an even more predominant role. The rules of the local political processes are those given by the central state and by the competence and knowledge of its local representative, the commissioner.

Lee-Smith, D. and R. Stren: *New Perspectives on African Urban Management*, in *Environment and Urbanization*, vol. 3, no. 1, 1991, pp. 23-36.

Research on urban management has often chosen as its point of departure what the problems are as seen from the state's perspective and what the state can do to solve them. As many states are forced to reduce their activities, it is even more important to choose the urban society itself as the point of departure, to ask what its needs are, how they can be met, and finally, how the state can contribute to finding solutions.

Urban societies are complex, but four important dimensions are pointed out by the authors: (1) The urban areas have experienced a cut-back in resource allocations, per capita public spending has been very much reduced, but there is no large urban bias. The urban areas are closely linked to the rural economy, and spending in the cities will have wider repercussions than what is often recognised. (2) The informal sector is almost the only growing African sector. Even though informal organisation of economic activities avoids costs of formality, there are also costs of informal organisation, like uncertainty, lack of services and infrastructure and the fact that the informal sector is not much considered in development planning and physical planning. (3) The informal sector has a large proportion of women, and the needed support to this sector has to consider this fact. (4) As seen from the local level of urban societies, the problem is poor access to services and inadequate infrastructure.

The crucial problem is often that the state is hostile to the informal economic sector, and thus overlooks the potential of this sector. The state is not the sole provider of relevant services. There is a huge community of various local organisations and NGOs that fill important roles. The state cannot replace them, but possibly play a supporting role. There is a need for more research on the community organisations, on the interplay between community organisations, NGOs, enterprises, local government and the informal economy. There is a need to examine how this partly informal structure is related to the state and how these relations can be improved for the benefit of urban development.

Lindgren, L.: Can Development Assistance Improve Local Government? in J. Naustdalslid (ed.): *Local Government and Development*. Workshop on Local Government and Development. NIBR, Oslo, 1991

One of SIDA's priority objectives is the development of public administration in recipient countries. SIDA engaged the Swedish Association of Local Authorities (SALA) in a program aimed at the development of Zimbabwe's local government structure. The author's main concern is the prospects for development assistance in this field. SALA has increasingly developed a close cooperative relationship with its national counterpart. Advice, support and consultancies have been offered. Detailed procedures and manuals for management, planning, coordination, budgeting and implementation are developed and training arranged for. SALA has also advised on the proper degree of local autonomy and democratic representation, as SALA views these matters. SALA has worked from an underlying goal structure favouring local autonomy, democratic local leadership, planning and uniform service provision across districts. SALA/SIDA have succeeded in introducing improved management and planning techniques, and in training officials in their application. However, the objectives of SALA also relate to the distribution of power and resources in Zimbabwe, and these problems have proved to be beyond the reach of a donor. The more basic political preconditions for local government are difficult to address in donor projects.

Mannion, J. and E. Brehony: Projects of the People or for the People: A Look at Villagers Participation in three Projects in two Villages in Tanzania, in *Public Administration and Development*, vol. 10, no. 2, 1990, pp. 165-178.

This study examines the hypothesis that popular participation is a critical condition for project success. Participation may be of three types. The first is labelled empowerment, in which initiation, planning, design and implementation of projects are decided under the control of the local community. The second is labelled community development, in which guidelines and policies are provided by actors

outside the local community, but the latter has a say in the specific operationalisation and implementation of the policy guidelines. Third, participation may take the form of collaboration, in which participation is reduced to the provision of information and labour to projects decided upon and implemented under the control of outside actors. These three types represent different participation degrees.

The main findings are: The weaker the participation profile is, the less participation there is. Those who did participate were not representative. Common people avoided projects with a weak participation profile because there were sanctions towards them if the project did not lead to expected results. In as far as participation took place, it was marked by a concern to solve felt problems. Participation increased if it took place in small groups. There is a need to organise for participation, and to train village leaders in how to organise and achieve it.

Maro, P.S.: The Impact of Decentralization on Spatial Equity and Rural Development in Tanzania, in *World Development*, vol. 18, no. 5, 1990, pp. 673-693.

Tanzania decentralised its governmental system in 1972, and this article examines the effects of decentralisation on equity among districts and villages, and on rural development. Concerning equity, the reform led to some improvements. The villages were established as the lowest governmental level, and service centres and growth poles were designated for the whole country. The planning system should now receive inputs from the lowest level, the village. Even if the impact of that input is disputable, this reform meant that all local units were systematically considered in the planning procedure, and localisation issues were more systematically considered, whereas in the previous sectoral planning, localisation was not an important premise at all. In particular, resources for health and education projects were increasingly channelled to weaker districts after the reform.

The local units — the villages — should now plan for productive development. In some villages such planning took place. This planning should provide inputs to district planning. However, the plans made in the local villages by non-experts were not provided in ways compatible with the planning methodology of the district planners, and were transformed when they got to the district level. Concerning district planning, Maro argues that this planning elaborated on how production could be expected to develop, but it did not include measures to influence that development.

Mascarenhas, A.: Issues in African Rehabilitation, in *African Environment*, vol. VI, no. 3-4, 1989, pp. 23-24.

The environmental problems are placed in the broader context of the African crisis as environmental problems are closely related to problems of poverty and underdevelopment. The reasons for the crisis in general and the environmental crisis in particular are very complex. One of them, however, is the centralisation of decision making and implementation of public policy. Centralisation has meant that improper technology has been transferred, costly and advanced solutions have been chosen, simple solutions that could have worked have not been tried out, and drastic changes have been pursued while indigenous knowledge has not been utilised.

A priority in the work to rehabilitate the natural resource basis in the local communities is to enable the local people to take on this responsibility themselves. This implies that investments must be based on peoples' needs, that decision making must be generally decentralised, that the poorest groups in particular are attended to, that projects are adjusted to local ecologies and to existing farming systems, that local organisational forms are utilised, and that it is recognised that western concepts and technology have limited applicability. Local communities would be able to achieve much if given the chance and the necessary assistance.

Mawhood, P.: Negotiating from Weakness: The Search for a Model of Local Government in Countries of the Third World, in *Planning and Administration*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1974, pp. 17-32.

Mawhood's concern is to examine why the central state is in need of a true local government characterised by devolution to local autonomous organisations. The point of departure is that there are differing interests, values and perceptions between central government and local communities. Local governments are indispensable because they are capable of bridging this gap. In a western, pluralist society devolution and deconcentration are alternative methods to reach the same end; decentralised decision making. In both cases, the local community is capable of mobilising and influencing decisions. In LDCs this is not so. In these countries local state officials are insensitive to local pressures, and only devolution can facilitate real local influence in decision making.

The independent states throughout Africa centralised formal decision making power soon after independence in the belief that nationalism had erased legitimate interest differences, and that centralised, coordinated control was functional for accelerated development. Local participation was thus blocked. The problem was that the local communities are made of groups with their own leadership and

distinct interests and values. If the state is going to act and implement policies, it has either to cooperate with these or suppress and control them. The latter option is beyond the resources of the post-independent states, and the former is blocked by lack of devolution. The formal decision making structure was thus one of centralisation while actual social power was spread across the various communities, whose members withdrew from the centralised state because its policies deviated from the local interests and values.

For the public sector to function properly, the channels of communication between state and society have to be developed and improved. Only local governments with some autonomy can fill that role. The state needs a local counterpart with whom to negotiate. In this way the gap between central and local interests, cultures and values can be bridged. Training, more resources and improved management techniques cannot overcome the basic weakness of broken communication channels.

The argument that devolution is only possible in well established nation states has little merit as there are no cases of civil war or social unrest that are caused by the local government system. Local government itself is an imported phenomenon in rural areas, and will not develop by itself. It has to be purposefully designed to provide options for interest articulation while being supervised to some extent to avoid abuses. This implies that interest conflicts have to be accepted as normal as devolution would institutionalise the articulation and balancing of conflicting interests and values. Local autonomy has to be accepted as an important norm, and this norm needs an institutional base at the central level in the ministry responsible for local government. Finally, the local government must be provided with autonomy, resources and support.

Mawhood, P. (ed.): *Local Government in the Third World. The Experience of Tropical Africa.* New York, Toronto: John Wiley, 1983 (introductory and concluding chapters).

Mawhood describes the history of local governments in Africa and argues that local governments have been established and abolished cyclically because of a constant tension between the state's need for control and the need for mobilisation and active popular participation. In most countries, local councils were part of the colonial inheritance. They were in most cases abolished by the new independent regimes because of regime fears about political competition. The 1960s were thus characterised by centralised planning. The arguments in its favour were to utilise resources effectively and to create a unified nation. The centralisation model performed poorly, and led to a renewed interest in decentralisation in the 1970s. Decentralisation took the form of administrative deconcentration, whereby planning and implementation were tried to be adjusted to local needs in sub-

national deconcentrated services. However, these systems also performed badly, and failed to mobilise people for development purposes. A revival for devolution is on its way.

True local government is characterised by a budget of its own, a relatively wide scope of functions, representative decision making, separate legal existence and ability to allocate resources. Key design problems have been how large they should be – there is a tension between the criteria of viability and legitimacy; how strong the executive branch should be; how the financial system should be designed; and finally, what control the councils should have in personnel matters. Any local government is semi-dependent and useful for the state as a means of receiving feed-back and as a means of reaching and influencing people. Control and top-down influences predominate and the local authorities are rarely strong enough to enter into a bargaining process which would be ideal. The center attempts to control local government in order to pursue four major interests in its relationship to the districts; political control, economic regulation, equity and minimum standards and administrative efficiency.

In conclusion, a basic dilemma underlying decentralisation reforms has been how the state could mobilise and reach people while maintaining control. The central state pursues both objectives. The dilemma has been how to make people participate without their also sharing power. The need for control blocks true devolution, but the control aimed at by centralisation is also not achieved. The state will still have to deal with reluctant social groups in the districts, groups with power and upon whom the central state depends in order to implement policies. In a centralised system, the central state has to deal with them through informal channels. Decentralisation requires central political support, resources and advice. It requires a recognition that political conflict is normal. The local governments need a strong institutional patron at the center. Decentralisation is important for the state in order to have a constructive relationship to groups in society.

Mawhood, P.: Decentralization and the Third World in the 1980s, in *Planning and Administration*, vol. 14, no. Spring, 1987, pp. 10-23.

The importance and forms of local government in Africa have varied substantially. Considering its changing importance in governments' policies, the point of departure is the introduction of local government with some autonomy in anglophone Africa by the British. The French preferred a prefect model. The newly independent states abolished local governments, and the 1960s and early 1970s were marked by centralised policy making. The problems of centralisation led to renewed interest in decentralised government and to numerous reforms aimed at administrative deconcentration. Political decentralisation, open to popular participation, was not allowed. In essence, governments sought mobilisation of the

people, but were unwilling to share political power. The consequent poor mobilisation of local citizens became a problem, and the 1980s have been characterised by a recognition that popular participation is necessary. These phases reflect the various ways that states have tried to penetrate and mobilise local communities while maintaining control.

Local governments have also varied substantially in form. Local government is a western model that has been transformed in its meeting with the national and local cultures, and taken specific shapes where it has been introduced. Africa's tradition of local self-help is not found in Asia, and in African societies it also varies greatly in strength and forms. The prospects for local government in Africa vary greatly with the economic and political situation. National political competition and conflict undermine the prospects. As the economic crisis forces the state to withdraw from many fields, the room for local government is enhanced. The prospects are also increased by the gradual political socialisation into western models of government throughout the countries. By the end of the 1980s, these conditions lead the author to expect expanded scope for local government.

Mijere, N.: *The Mineworkers Resistance to Governmental Decentralization in Zambia. Nation Building and Labour Aristocracy in the Third World.* Thesis, Brandeis University, 1985.

Mijere's analysis of decentralisation in Zambia is mainly concerned with what determine the regime's and other key actors' attitudes towards decentralisation. He contends that political conflict and class struggles are the key factors determining various actors' actions in the field of decentralisation. A detailed analysis shows how the regime until the late seventies opposed strong local governments out of fear of opposition and fragmentation of the country, and because centralisation offered options for clientilism. The local government inherited at independence thus survived only a few years as truly autonomous bodies, except in the townships around the Copperbelt. In the late 1970s, the issue of local government was again on the agenda. Mijere shows how the question of decentralisation in Zambia was understood by all participants as a question of how to allocate governmental resources among class antagonists, and of who should control local councils. The dissertation shows very clearly that decentralisation is not primarily a question of the most suitable and efficient development administration, but a process of power and resource distribution, and of how various actors perceive their share of power and resources increasing or decreasing as a result of reforms. In this study, the regime and the mine workers were the main opponents, each struggling for resources and power.

Molebatsi, C.O.: Planning based on Consultation: Botswana's Search for Grassroots Participation in District Planning, in A.H.J. Helmsing and K.H. Wekwete (eds.): *Sub-National Planning in Southern and Eastern Africa*. Aldershot/Brookfield: Avebury, 1990.

Botswana has had popular consultation as a key principle, in particular after 1976. The participation is linked to district planning. Prior to 1976, district planning was mainly planning of how to implement nationally decided programmes without much participation. However, it was realised that participation could ensure adequate information to the planners, stable local mobilisation of resources, and it was recognised that participation was a right in itself. For consultation to be meaningful, it has to be linked to decision making, i.e. to district planning. Furthermore, the district planning must influence national planning. This influence has increased in recent years. Participation is organised through elected councils and development committees. It is also organised as conferences, surveys, and meetings in the traditional decision making forum, the *kgotla*.

The author's main argument is that this formal structure for participation is suitable, but the problems lie in its operation. Many civil servants are negative about the value of consultation, and do not take it seriously. Elected councillors often do not have much formal education, and are in a weak position in dealing with civil servants. The representativity of councillors varies. The general public has often been rather apathetic towards consultation exercises.

Montgomery, J.D.: Allocation of Authority in Land Reform Programs: A Comparative Study of Administrative Processes and Outputs, in *Administrative Science Quarterly*, vol. 17, no. 1, 1972, pp. 62-75.

This study compares administrative arrangements for land reform implementation and their outputs in 25 developing countries. Output refers to whether peasants got a more secure tenure, higher incomes, had their political strength improved, and whether the administration became more capable of serving the farming communities.

Three types of administrative arrangements for land reform implementation are identified: (1) Centralised, national structures control implementation. This type produced poor results, except that farmers obtained more secure tenure. This is because the land owning elites often have the best access at this level, and the poor peasants' access is minimal. The experience of the problems and the understanding of the need for improvements are also weakest in the capital. (2) Decentralisation to several specialised organs, to autonomous special task agencies or to provinces and regions. The results were better in these cases, but these

organs are also linked to strong socio-economic interests and tend to undermine reforms. (3) Devolution, i.e. that implementation was left to political leaders and organs at the local level. This type also runs the risk of local elite control, but in the cases where this was avoided, results were good. Elitism can be avoided by giving a key role to elected organs and by providing them with technical expertise. Devolution makes information more easily available, the implementors are more motivated, the communications are better, and community solidarity is stronger. For these reasons, devolution produced the best results.

The choice of administrative arrangements is mainly related to regime intentions and seriousness. Administrative traditions may also be of importance, as well as the actual conditions in the rural areas.

Mutahaba, G.: *Reforming Public Administration for Development. Experiences from Eastern Africa.* Connecticut: Kumarian Press, 1989.

In this book Mutahaba examines many forms of public administration reform, including decentralisation (Ch. 4). Decentralisation is defined as the transfer of responsibility for management and decision making from the central state to sub-national units. Such units may include NGOs, field organisations or local autonomous bodies. He distinguishes between deconcentration and devolution. Deconcentration is the transfer of responsibilities within the state bureaucracy. Responsibility is transferred to a local prefect, to functionally specialised agencies or to both with the aim of prefect coordination. Devolution, on the other hand, is a more radical form of decentralisation. It includes a far-reaching transfer of power to a political body at the sub-national level. Few LDCs have ever really tried this as central supervision and financial control have normally remained strong. Devolution, moreover, depends on a corresponding measure of deconcentration.

The arguments for decentralisation are numerous, and may be grouped as follows: (1) Efficient administration; (2) increasing responsiveness; (3) facilitation of national development goals, i.e. to facilitate implementation of national policies and programmes.

The obstacles to decentralisation reforms have been: (1) Inadequate organisational resources at the local level, and inconsistent and unclear division of work and responsibility; (2) central level interference and lack of commitment to decentralisation reforms; (3) the ruling elite's fear of real participation and power sharing; (4) resource scarcity; and (5) inadequate coordinating mechanisms. These general points are made after detailed examinations of decentralisation reforms in Zambia, Tanzania and Kenya. The lack of resources and lack of political commitment are singled out as crucial obstacles.

Mutizwa-Mangiza, N.: Local Government and Planning in Zimbabwe. With Special Reference to the Provincial/Regional Level, in N. Mutizwa-Mangiza and A.H.J. Helmsing: *Rural Development and Planning in Zimbabwe*. Aldershot/Brookfield: Avebury, 1991A.

Decentralisation is a hotly debated issue in Zimbabwe, and reform proposals were forwarded in the late eighties. Decentralisation is believed to counter the problems of the earlier centralised system, to improve equity in public policy, and to cope better with the increasing complexities of major policies. This article assesses the reforms critically.

The author recognises the importance of resource provision, political commitment and supervision as conditions for successful local government, but focuses in particular on the weaknesses of the proposed formal structure of sub-national governments. His critique can be summarised as follows: (1) Divisions of work and responsibility are unclear and overlapping. This will most likely lead to confusion and unclear loyalties. (2) The influence of elected representatives in planning processes is not well catered for. (3) The reforms envisage that planning should take place at district, provincial and state levels. What autonomy each level should have in relation to the others is unclear. (4) It is unclear how various types of planning (i.e. physical planning, economic planning, and planning of sectoral activities) will be integrated. (5) The links between planning and implementing agencies are unclear.

There is thus a need for substantial clarifications in the proposed organisational design. An additional problem is that after 1980, many ministries launched major programmes and reforms and many of them improvised cooperative arrangements with local level units. How these arrangements will be dealt with in a new decentralised structure is unclear.

Mutizwa-Mangiza, N.: Decentralization in Zimbabwe. Problems of Planning at the District Level, in N. Mutizwa-Mangiza and A.H.J. Helmsing (eds.): *Rural Development and Planning in Zimbabwe*. Aldershot/Brookfield: Avebury, 1991B.

The aim of this article is to examine the problems faced by the sub-national planning system of Zimbabwe. The importance of effective planning is reinforced by the long neglect of the majority of the population, by the civil war, and by the need to reconcile the dual structure of both society and the Government. The sub-national system is described as a mixture of devolution and deconcentration, The former is denoting the powers transferred to elected and semi-autonomous

councils, and the latter is denoting the discretion transferred to local branches of functional ministries and the generalist prefect in the districts.

Under the planning system, councils at village and ward level give inputs to district planning. District planning is integrated in the provincial plan, which is being forwarded to the ministerial level for integration with national planning. However, this system has many deficiencies: (1) Poor coordination and low political control; (2) difficulties in achieving inputs from the lowest levels of popular consultation; (3) planning at lower levels has an undefined status, and it is unclear whether the district input has any effect on the national planning where public policies are finally decided; (4) the state's financial and budgetary controls over the sub-national organs make autonomy almost negligible; (5) planning processes are unclearly related to budgeting; (6) what sub-district plans should contain and what purpose they should serve are not clear; (7) poor specialisation and coordination in the districts and between district and other levels create confusion; and (8) poor capacity and expertise at sub-national levels.

Naustdalslid J.: Introduction and Background to Workshop on Local Government and Development, in J. Naustdalslid (ed.): *Local Government and Development*. Workshop on Local Government and Development, NIBR, Oslo, 1991.

The author argues that development of viable local governments is important and necessary, because it is a crucial component in the institutional development in Africa. Development in general as well as donor aid depend on the existence of sound governmental institutions. In as far as developmental problems have their roots within a country, the institutional factors will be of relevance. Frustration because of poor bureaucratic performance is the immediate reason why institution building is on the agenda.

Institutional development cannot be imposed from the outside, and it takes time. It must be an indigenous development, based on learning from other countries as well as learning from experiences made in the country in question. Donor contributions should not the least be to support such indigenous research. Important research challenges are: (1) What factors affect institutional performance? (2) What creates legitimacy and support among the local people? (3) How can donors contribute to institutional development?

Nellis J.R. and Rondinelli, D.: Assessing Decentralization Policies in Developing Countries: The Case for Cautious Optimism, in *Development Policy Review*, vol. 4, no. 1, 1986, pp. 3-23.

Decentralisation is increasingly being promoted in LDCs. The reasons are donor pressures, poor performance of centralised policy making and implementation structures, policy changes emphasising equity and poverty alleviation and finally, financial problems in many countries. The objectives formulated in decentralisation reforms are numerous: (1) Improved mobilisation of support for public policies; (2) reduction of the workload for the central state; (3) improved adaptability in implementation; (4) better information to policy makers about local problems, preferences and opportunities; (5) national unity by letting people exert influence and thus have a stake in the state system; (6) more equitable allocation among districts and groups; (7) facilitate maintenance of investments; (8) improved administrative penetration of the country; (9) improved coordination; and (10) decentralisation as a norm and a value in itself.

Perhaps the most common definition of decentralisation and local government is the one presented by Nellis and Rondinelli. They distinguish between four types: (1) Decon-centration: Transfer of management responsibility and some discretion to adjust policies, within the bureaucratic organisations of the state; (2) Delegation: Clearly defined functions are made the responsibility of relatively independent organisations, e.g. parastatals, whereby these organisations are given rather wide discretionary powers, and are not directly controlled by superior hierarchical levels; (3) Devolution: Strengthening of sub-national units, with a defined legal existence, outside ordinary hierarchical control and with a certain autonomy. The local government must also be responsible to the local constituency; (4) Privatisation: The state withdraws from certain tasks and leaves it to the market, to NGOs or to self-help organisations to meet the needs in question. These can all take a variety of forms, and existing local government structures also combine these four types in numerous ways.

Implementation of decentralisation reforms depends on: (1) Support and commitment from bureaucratic and political power-holders at the central level; (2) values, attitudes and culture conducive to decentralisation and local self-help and responsibility; (3) programmes designed in ways that promote decentralisation; and (4) availability of resources. These conditions are often not present and decentralisation must therefore develop slowly and incrementally. Reforms must be simple, accompanied by resources and training. Support for decentralisation must be built by showing results and progress. It has to be recognised that decentralisation might be costly and time-consuming in the short run. We do not know enough about the actual effects of decentralisation reforms, but it seems that participation, local autonomy, improved planning and management capacity and improved equity have been achieved in some instances. However, progress is at best incremental, and future reforms should aim at progressing slowly.

Nkya, E.J.: Local Government in Tanzania, in J. Naustdalslid (ed.): *Local Government and Development*. Workshop on Local Government and Development. Oslo: NIBR, 1991.

There are three main constraints on local government performance in Tanzania: (1) Financial problems; (2) political problems related to party interference, low legitimacy, poor performance and decreasing legitimacy; and (3) institutional problems – complex and poorly coordinated organisational division of work, unintended central control, lack of resources, low ability to link administrative procedures to participation.

Varying performance is related to the local governments' relations with the private sector, the patron-client networks, interest conflicts in the local community, the central government's relationship with local governments, donor assistance, ethnicity, socio-economic problems, and the local people. There is a need to advance the knowledge of these relations and their effects on local government performance.

Olowu, D. and Smoke P.: Determinants of Success in African Local Governments: an Overview, in *Public Administration and Development*, vol. 12, no. 1, 1992, pp. 1-17.

There is a renewed interest in decentralisation and local government in Africa because of: (1) Economic decline and donor pressure; (2) awareness of the ability of local governments to promote economic growth; (3) increasing demands for popular participation; (4) cutbacks in public spending related to structural adjustment programmes; (5) population increase and urban growth.

In attempting to identify the determinants of successful local governments, Olowu and Smoke give a rather wide definition of successful decentralisation. They define local governments as successful when they control substantial resources and provide a reasonable level of services. The determinants of success in this rather wide sense are: (1) Among successes, urban local councils dominate. (2) Size is not critical for revenue generation. (3) All the examined success-cases are designed on the colonial model for local government. (4) The successful cases are all located in regions that are relatively well developed economically. (5) Success is dependent on clear responsibilities and powers, and many of the success cases have powers and responsibilities fairly close to the colonial model. (6) Revenues come from indirect taxation on economic activities. (7) Most of the cases have one or a few revenue sources that are dominant. (8) Most of them have local authority enterprises as an important source of revenue. (9) They vary greatly concerning the proportion of their budgets that comes from central government grants. (10)

All successful local governments are relatively closely supervised by the central state. (11) There is a cooperative relationship between councillors and officers. (12) There are formalised coordination arrangements with the prefect. (13) There are arrangements for consultation of the citizenry.

Pausewang, S.: *Local Democracy and Central Control*. Bergen: Chr. Michelsen Institute, 1988 (DERAP Working Papers A 382).

This paper is based on data from Ethiopia. The state – district relationship had been characterised by extreme central control and oppression. Furthermore, the relationship was exploitative as the state's main interest was to expropriate resources from the peasants, and spend them to the benefit of the state and the urban population. The author poses the decentralisation problem as how to get rid of central government's exploitation of the peasant population. The institutional problem is to establish local institutions that are not tools for such exploitation, and which may allow for indigenous local collective self-help and development.

The collapse of the imperial state apparatus gave an opening for genuine local organisation. The potential of the peasants to organise was impressive which does not mean there were not problems of corruption and nepotism. Hostility to urban citizens and to outside advice and assistance were also reported. Furthermore, the need for food supplies to the urban poor were not attended to. Finally, the state was blocked from access to resources it needed to exist. Thus, some sort of state intervention was needed. However, the intervention proved destructive when it came. The revolutionary regime consolidated itself, and regained control of local institutions whereby much of what was achieved was subsequently undermined.

Development has to start with local control over and effective use of resources. This is the only way to secure real democracy as well. The period of state collapse showed the capabilities of local peasants. State rule can and should be rather cautious and allow large local freedom for peasant self-rule.

Picard L.: District Councils in Botswana-a Remnant of Local Autonomy, in *Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol. 17, no. 2, 1979A, pp. 285-308.

Why has the district council survived in Botswana? The councils have experienced severe deficiencies because of shortage of resources, inadequate manpower, administrative inefficiency, and state interference. Deficiencies of the same type and magnitude have led to abolishment in other countries.

There are three main explanations: (1) District Councils were introduced very late in the colonial phase, and colonialism did not end in a bitter liberation struggle. The councils are therefore not associated with colonial repression. (2) A powerful ministry has defended the continued existence of councils because these councils were controlled by this ministry, and were an asset in its attempts to acquire resources and status. The ministry has thus defended the councils when they came under attack. (3) The regime has been eager to preserve an image of liberal democracy and public debate, and the councils have been functional for the regime as arenas for this. On the other hand, the councils have been very weakly connected to actual decision making, and the debates and decisions in them have therefore not constituted any threat to central control. What has been decentralised is not decision making, but political criticism.

Picard, L.: Rural Development in Botswana: Administrative Structures and Public Policy, in *The Journal of Developing Areas*, vol. 13, no. 3, 1979B, pp. 283-300.

At independence, Botswana inherited a British-inspired local government system and a prefectorial District Administration. After a period of centralisation during the 1960s, increased rural development activity placed decentralisation on the agenda again around 1970. Picard examines what determined the outcome of the processes deciding the decentralised structure, and the rural development policies that were developed in conjunction with this.

The reform aimed at increasing the role of the prefectorial District Administration, which should form the leadership and coordinating mechanism for the ministerial field services, local councils and tribal administration. These should meet in the District Development Committee, chaired by the District Commissioner (the prefect). A District Administration officer should serve as the DDC secretary. This organisation was decided by the ruling elite in control of the state, and the actors in the districts had no say in these matters.

After conflict and bargaining between the ministries of finance and local government, it was decided that expatriates should fill the new positions, that they should report to the Ministry of Local Government, and that councils should still have some decision making powers. This meant a victory to the Ministry of Local Government in its struggle with the Ministry of Finance over who should control and use the district structure. In the whole process, the key decision makers were these two ministries, and their main criteria for choice were influence and power between them, not what would benefit the districts.

The rural development policies that this district structure should be in charge of were also developed at the central level to a large extent. Expatriates have influenced policies considerably, but only within guidelines set by the national

political ruling elite and effectively enforced by the same elite. The policy was to preserve existing socio-economic structures, to invest mainly in infrastructure projects, and it was guided by general pragmatism.

Picard, L.: Socialism and the Field Administrator. Decentralization in Tanzania, in *Comparative Politics*, vol. 12, no. 4, 1980, pp. 439-457.

The article examines the motives behind the Tanzanian decentralisation reform in 1972, and assesses the extent of goal realisation. The motives were to democratise government decision making and to improve administrative efficiency. Important background factors for the reform include ideological principles and the need to implement the many huge developmental schemes that Tanzania launched in this period. The reforms have enhanced the administrative deconcentration to the regional and partly to the district level, but the political devolution has not been parallel to this. The political leadership in the regions and districts were given a weak position relative to the administration due to poor competence and missing mechanisms for political control. The political leadership is mainly composed of appointed party officials. Representative organs are missing, and direct consultation and participation have thus not been forthcoming. Still, Picard concludes that even if the reform became mainly a deconcentration reform, it has improved administrative coordination in decision making, and it has led to a more responsible relationship between administration and clientele in the districts. After all, he contends, civil servants based in the districts do have a better perception and understanding of local issues than an official based in the capital.

Picard, L.: Independent Botswana: The District Administration and Political Control, in *Journal of African Studies*, vol. 8, no. 3, 1981, pp. 98-110.

It has often been argued that the colonial administrations were too oriented towards rules, hierarchy, control and status quo, and that development required a new type of bureaucracies as well as a new type of civil servants. Not the least has this been argued with reference to the prefectorial district administrations. These changes did often not occur. Picard discusses why the District Administration of Botswana has remained control- and rule-oriented. His main thesis is that the ruling elite has deliberately kept the District Administration unchanged. The District Commissioner is an important ruling elite agent, and reports directly to the President's Office in matters of relevance for security and political events in the districts.

The ruling elite perceives the District Administration primarily as a tool for political control. Of particular importance is that the District Administration is in

charge of supervising the functioning of traditional authorities and the Tribal Administration. The traditional authorities are perceived to be the most dangerous potential opposition force against the regime.

Prior to the election set-backs for the regime in 1969, control was mainly about supervision of the traditional authorities and reporting of political developments. During the election campaign, control also included active mobilisation and overt control. After 1969, political control has also implied that the district administration secures support from other agencies for the implementation of projects of political significance, i.e. visible infrastructure projects. Control was a main task for the District Commissioner under British rule, and remained so after independence.

Picard, L.: Traditionalism, the Bureaucracy, and Local Administration: Continuity and Change in Swaziland, in *Journal of African Studies*, vol. 13, no. 4, 1986, pp. 116-125.

Local government in Swaziland is in a situation of paralysis and deadlock, and the explanation for this is a combination of factors related to social classes' struggle for state power. The colonial power left the political and administrative structures of the king relatively untouched during the colonial period, and it was the king who seized power after independence. The monarchy had its power base in the traditional socio-economic elites. Gradually, a new middle class of farmers, civil servants and small entrepreneurs emerged. These groups were blocked from political power and hence from the state's resources.

The local government system that was introduced in the 1970s became a battleground between these two main social forces. The king wanted to prevent the new middle class groups from gaining control of the local governments, while the growing middle class was strong enough to paralyse local government as long as they were kept outside it. The result has been deadlock and the local government reforms have been brought to a halt until the struggle for power between traditional and modern social groups comes to a conclusion.

Rondinelli, D.: Government Decentralization in a Comparative Perspective, in *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, vol. 47, no. 2, 1981A, pp. 133-145.

Decentralisation is increasingly being sought by LDC governments after a period of centralisation. It has, however, proved difficult to introduce working decentralised systems. Decentralisation is defined as the transfer of legal and

political authority to plan, decide and manage public functions from the central state to sub-national organs. The degree of decentralisation varies. The weakest form is deconcentration, which is defined as delegation of routine decisions and some discretion downwards in the national hierarchies. The exercise of discretion is under the direct hierarchical supervision of headquarters. Delegation refers to a wider transfer within defined functional areas, and the exercise of the delegated authority is not under direct hierarchical control. Examples would be parastatals or special development authorities. Devolution is defined as transfer of authority in several functional areas to organs that are not under direct hierarchical control of the state. In the case of devolution, the local government controls its own resources and is responsible to the local people and may act independently towards the central state.

The expected benefits of decentralisation are numerous: (1) Adjustment to local variation; (2) reduced rigidity and red tape; (3) improved knowledge about people's needs and problems; (4) mobilisation and penetration of the periphery; (5) improved capacity in the districts; (6) reduced workload in central departments and ministries; (7) improved coordination, flexibility and creativity; (8) more suitable localisation of infrastructure and service points; (9) higher efficiency for complex and integrated programmes; and (10) for popular participation, improved equity, knowledge of needs and problems, reduction of the power of local elites, and higher national identification.

Implementing decentralisation reforms has proved difficult. The problems are numerous: The political support is not adequate, and there are often hidden motives of improved control through decentralisation. The central bureaucrats are not supportive, partly because they have their own power ambitions, partly because they distrust the expertise of local level officers. Communications are poor, and conditions in the districts are not well known in the capital. Decentralisation is often accompanied by a lot of new control and monitoring measures which undermine autonomy and morale at the local level. The central ministries have neither the resources nor the capacity to give sufficient technical and financial support. The local organisations themselves suffer from lack of resources and personnel. Participation is made meaningless by not being linked to control of resources locally. In many cases, the local tax base is too limited. In many districts the infrastructure is poor, and the district does not function as a unit. Social and economic integration often do not coincide with district boundaries. In many districts, there are few or no enterprises, NGOs and interest organisations that can interact with the local government as expected. Resistance from local elites, as decentralisation reforms have often aimed at weakening them. Centrist attitudes among officers both in the central ministries and in the local administration and councils.

Rondinelli, D.: Administrative Decentralization and Economic Development: The Sudan's Experiment with Devolution, in *Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol. 19, no. 4, 1981B, pp. 595-624.

Sudan has launched decentralisation reforms in two stages in the 1970s. In the early seventies, a deconcentration reform centred on the province level. Some years later, a reform aimed at furthering deconcentrated responsibility and popular participation was launched. Rondinelli gives a detailed review of the contents of these reforms and the problems they encountered. The main concern, however, is to examine the conditions for effective implementation of such reforms. These are as follows: (1) Support and commitment from political and administrative leaders at central, regional and local level. This implies acceptance of power transfers and active support to the organs with new responsibilities. (2) Clearly defined structures, i.e. division of work and authority, and clearly defined procedures for planning, budgeting and reporting. These processes also have to be both simple and flexible. (3) Realistic assessments about what those who receive new tasks are capable of doing. This problem has several dimensions. One is the availability of resources, personnel and qualified manpower of the needed types. Another is the culture of the local governments, which is not always conducive to decentralisation. (4) A minimum of general development. If communications and transport as well as involvement in the formal economy are more or less absent, decentralisation is not feasible.

Ross, M.H.: Political Organization and Political Participation. Exit, Voice and Loyalty in Pre-Industrial Societies, in *Comparative Politics*, vol. 21, no. 1, 1988, pp. 73-89.

Why does the extent of political participation vary? One theory argues that it increases as the resource base in society increases. An alternative theory argues that participation depends on the political organisation of society. Participation has two dimensions. First, the extent of the involvement: Is participation for the few or for large proportions of society? Second, the range of participatory decision making: Are decisions limited to a few fields or are they concerned with a large range of issues? The author has examined determinants of participation in traditionally organised societies within modern African states.

The main finding is that political power is increasingly concentrated as socio-economic complexity in society increases. The people's involvement decreases under these circumstances. Seen in the light of the resource base theory, this is surprising. Ross explains this by arguing that in relatively advanced African societies, exit is not an option because resources are not mobile (land) and because strong cross-cutting ties are developed. When exit is difficult, power holders can

abstain from allowing voice. In industrial and primitive societies, this is not the case. Furthermore, in most African societies, loyalty reduces exit options because it links people tightly to communities.

Ross concludes that it is superficial to consider development level as a determinant of political participation. It depends on the specific structures that allow or inhibit voice and exit, and that result in varying degrees of loyalty. He suggests that in primitive societies, exit is easy and participation (voice) is thus necessary to maintain the local system. With increasing development, exit is less easy and voice is thus not allowed, unless the existence of cross-cutting ties create groups that form the basis for voice. With high development levels, industrial societies have increased options for exit and thus voice increases again. Concerning most African societies, they are in the middle in this three-step model, where voice is restricted unless various legitimate associations and cross-cutting ties give a basis for some voice. But this, Ross contends, has a limited democratic potential as voice in such societies is often ritualised and weakly linked to decision-making.

Samoff, J.: The Bureaucracy and the Bourgeoisie: Decentralization and Class Structure in Tanzania, in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 21, no. 1, 1979, pp. 30-62.

At independence, Tanzania opted for centralisation. The rationale was to control scarce resources efficiently, to facilitate strategic action, to integrate the nation, and to provide donors with one single point of responsibility. A major reason why the centralised model failed was its inability to mobilise target groups for policies and programmes. Samoff details the decentralisation efforts in Tanzania in the 1970s, and shows that the democratisation component remained weak in spite of increased participation being a major official goal of the reforms. This is partly explained by the weak power and competence that were given to representative organs, but also by the orientation of local government officers. This orientation was characterised by a definition of development as a technical exercise. People's participation was at best seen as a necessary symbolic exercise and as a source of information for the governmental decision-makers.

Why do the Tanzanian governmental institutions perceive development and decentralisation in such a technical and a-political manner? Samoff contends that the reason is the class structure in Tanzania. The ruling class has the state itself as a basis for economic power, and cannot open it up for participation, as it could have done if its economic power was located in the private economy. However, there were countervailing powers against this technocracy. Peasants have chosen exit and protest and often with success, thus blocking central government policies.

Samoff, J.: Bureaucrats, Politicians and Power in Tanzania. The Institutional Model of Class Struggle, in *Journal of African Studies*, vol. 10, no. 3, 1983, pp. 84-96.

Samoff's main objective is to examine how class conflict manifests itself in political behaviour in the field of building local government institutions in Tanzania. The bureaucracy is the dominant faction of the ruling class, and it is their perceived class interest that determines the changing conditions for local government. Because the economic interests of the dominant class are in the state itself, real popular participation cannot be allowed. The opposing classes, in particular the petty bourgeoisie in the more prosperous districts, conquered some of the elected councils that were inherited from the British, and managed to have their class interests defined as the district's interests. As a response, the dominant bureaucratic class abolished local councils, and strengthened the regional administration instead. Legitimacy was after this reform sought not in democratic principles, but in superior technical knowledge. This base of legitimacy was gradually undermined as actual development results did not materialise, and this is what has led to a renewed interest in decentralisation. Local government institutions are thus arenas where opposing classes struggle for power and resources. Furthermore, class struggles are concerned with the formation of such institutions as they affect the access of various classes to political decisions.

Samoff, J.: Popular Initiatives and Local Government in Tanzania, in *The Journal of Developing Areas*, vol. 24, no. 1, 1989, pp. 1-18.

Samoff describes the abolishment of Tanzanian local government in the 1960s and its return in the 1980s. This abolishment is often portrayed as a mistake, as a failed attempt to accelerate development. To the contrary, Samoff argues that both to abolish and to resurrect local governments were conscious choices that served different ruling class purposes. Abolishing local governments reduced the threat from opposing classes, i.e. a combination of petty bourgeoisie, local populists, and traditional authorities based in the districts. Ruling class interests were thus secured, but only for a while. Even if the reform improved administrative performance, it reduced the state's local legitimacy and made governing and mobilisation of the people difficult. Local governments are therefore being revived because legitimacy has become a more serious problem than class opposition. Democratic legitimacy will be improved until the fear of opposition again becomes the dominant problem, which will lead to renewed centralisation and control. This dilemma between ruling class needs of legitimacy and social control cannot be resolved unless the balance between the main social classes is drastically altered.

Sikabanze, M.A.: Finance of Sub-National Development and its Implications for Public Planning: The Zambian Experience, in A.H.J. Helmsing and K.H. Wekwete (eds.): *Sub-National Planning in Southern and Eastern Africa. Approaches, Finance and Education*. Aldershot/Brookfield: Avebury, 1990.

Zambia has experienced a weakening of its public finances during the 1980s, and the results are increasingly that projects are under-funded, that the administration cannot fully utilise its capacity and that maintenance is ignored. This situation has had two important consequences. First, it has led to decentralisation. Local units are increasingly made responsible for implementation, maintenance and funding of projects. They are expected to mobilise local resources that evade ordinary taxation. However, the allocations to sub-national government have steadily decreased, and cover only recurrent costs while local revenues have not increased as expected. This has led to the second main consequence, namely that investments are now mainly donor-funded. The donors' contributions are channelled through central ministries, where local input is low and cross-sectoral coordination weak. Budgeting and accounts by-pass ordinary procedures, and are thus not known in national and local planning units. The donors also monitor and evaluate the projects. According to the 1980 reforms, planning of development projects is a local responsibility. However, the local organs are not given the resources to do that, and the donor engagement is not conducive to local level planning.

Segodi, R.: Financing District Development in Botswana, in P. de Valk and K.H. Wekwete: *Decentralizing for Participatory Planning?* Aldershot/Brookfield: Avebury, 1990.

Democratic principles have been the main justification for decentralising planning to the districts in Botswana. But does the planning system respond to local needs? The District Development Plan is a general plan for all activities in the district. It defines problems and potentials, projects to be undertaken and implementation schedules. However, the National Development Plan defines many premises for the district plans. Most projects to be implemented locally are national sectoral projects, decided upon in the ministries. The scope for local priorities is limited to a number of open programmes in the NDP, which allow districts to submit various projects within the frames of these NDP programmes. There is thus some scope for local choice of priorities. This does not necessarily mean that the district planning is sensitive to local popular needs. Segodi argues that the districts are more responsible to the central state than to the local communities, and that devolution should therefore be developed further.

Sterkenburg, J.: Rural Development and the Evolution of Regional Planning in Botswana: the Implementation of National Policy in Ngamiland District, in *Journal of Rural Studies*, vol. 6, no. 2, 1990, pp. 217-229.

The author examines an example of successful district planning in Ngamiland, a district in Botswana. The main concern is to assess the conditions for this successfully performing district planning. He argues that in this particular case, the success depended on: (1) An effective coordinating unit for line agencies in the district; (2) the needs for district planning raised by national programs; (3) qualified personnel specially dedicated to planning tasks; (4) strict guidelines for planning procedures; (5) ministerial support and provision of funds; (6) limited ministerial interference in the planning details; (7) some amount of locally generated revenues; (8) collection and processing of necessary information; (9) high quality staff; (10) an established and formalised management and monitoring system; (11) staff continuity; (12) funding of concrete projects; (13) a viable district center; (14) posting of staff near the target populations; and (15) support from the political leadership. Problems encountered were low participation and local elite resistance to regulations. Ministerial support had in some cases failed, and delays created problems. Interference from ministerial headquarters were reduced, but still happened too often.

Tordoff, W.: Ghana, in D.C. Rowat (ed.): *International Handbook on Local Government Reorganization*. London, 1980.

Tordoff describes how the local council system of British origin in Ghana failed to perform adequately. It remained dependent on the central state, and was corrupted and paralysed by local strife throughout the 1960s. Ghana responded with a unification of government and abolished elected councils. The new structure resembled the French prefectorial model. A unified, hierarchical four-tier structure was to provide an effective national and local development administration. Decentralisation took the form of administrative deconcentration.

The problems of the resulting four-tier structure have been that it is complex with large coordination problems. However, the prefectorial system promises an improvement of administrative performance. Tordoff argues that even if the new structure will also have its weaknesses, it is important not to reorganise again too soon, but to let this system work for a while, and then improve it gradually. The British model has been tried out, and it worked so badly that abolishing it must clearly be justified. A main criticism of the deconcentrated model is that it abolished elected councils, and replaced them with committees with appointed members. Tordoff recognises this weakness, but argues that deconcentration also

improves participation by moving decision making closer to the people. Participation may take place even if there are no elected councils.

Tordoff, W.: Local Administration in Botswana, in *Public Administration and Development*, vol. 8, no. 2, 1988, pp. 183-202.

The aim of this article is to give a general review of the performance of the sub-national governmental structure of Botswana, and to point out weaknesses in its present structure.

In contrast to other African countries, Botswana has had more continuity in local government, avoiding drastic changes. One reason is the stable and legitimate power position of the regime. In a two-tier structure, local government consists of Land Boards, Tribal Administration, District Administration (led by a prefect) and elected District Councils, all under the control of the Ministry of Local Government and Lands. The system is characterised by a power balance among these four main organs. This balance has changed slowly in favour of the District Administration. The tribal administration has had its functions scaled down. However, the chiefs continue to play a more prominent part than what formal rules would predict.

All these organs experience problems due to lack of manpower and resources, lack of adequate support from the central level and lack of control with personnel. Performance rates for the District Councils have improved, but is still inadequate, partly due to inadequate relations to MLGL, which tends to interfere and does not adjust procedures to local government needs. The transfer of responsibilities to the local authorities has been slow due to inadequate capabilities. Dependence on central level decisions on personnel and funding constrains local autonomy. Tordoff argues that the present system is generally adequate. It should be maintained, steadily strengthened and gradually allowed greater autonomy.

de Valk, P.: State, Decentralization and Participation, in P. de Valk and K.H. Wekwete (eds.): *Decentralizing for Participatory Planning*. Aldershot/Brookfield: Avebury, 1990A.

Local governments are the creations of the post-colonial state, and the main traits of this state determine the development of local government. The state is dependent, but it has some autonomy. This autonomy is used by the regime to pursue its factional interests. The need for decentralisation comes from both the need for regime legitimacy and from the needs of development administration. Devolution, i.e. sharing actual decision-making and resource allocation power with

the local communities reduces the regime's autonomy. Most regimes thus prefer to maintain legitimacy by means of delivering welfare services. It is mainly when these services become too expensive that some measure of controlled decentralisation is sought as a substitute. Both the centralised welfare state and the cautiously decentralising state maintain autonomy as the masses are not given much influence on public policy making.

Including the people in the decision making and allocation process depends on either a mass-controlled party, or on a strong mass-oriented ideology in the regime leadership. If these conditions are present, true devolution is an option. However, this is seldom the case, and decentralisation reforms consequently are not open to real popular participation in policy making. The regime in Zimbabwe is an example. It has dropped its mass-oriented socialist ideology and the party is not mass-controlled. Consequently, devolution is not allowed.

de Valk, P.: An Analysis of Planning Policy with Reference to Zimbabwe, in P. de Valk and K.H. Wekwete (eds.): *Decentralizing for Participatory Planning*. Aldershot/Brookfield: Avebury, 1990B.

The planning system of Zimbabwe is analysed as to what extent it promotes decentralised decision making and participation. Organisations at the state level, the provincial level and the district level all play a role in the planning process. Organisations at each level are controlled by different central-level ministries, and the system is marked by conflict between these ministries.

Some measure of decentralisation can be found. The implementation of the plans at the district and local levels is open to local influence, and the districts and provinces give inputs to the final national plan. Still, the extent of decentralisation is restricted. Moreover, de Valk argues that decentralisation does not necessarily promote participation. Decentralising functions to the province level may mean transfer to a level where the administration dominates more than it does in the capital. If a functional ministry transfers tasks to the sub-national elected bodies, it may in effect be a transfer to the Ministry of Local Government (MLGRUD) and not to the local communities. Local organs are not by definition sensitive to local needs. Local elites may capture local government, and the elected councillors cannot be assumed to be capable of countering the administration.

Participatory structures are themselves the creation of the centre, and alien to local communities. Local organisational forms of collective action are often dismissed by these structures. Furthermore, top-down participatory structures may become the centre's control channel. de Valk concludes that the state's needs for control and the periphery's need for access are difficult to reconcile, and that these two needs should be met by more separate structures.

de Valk, P.: Who Sets the Rules for Decentralization? Who Wants to Play the Game? in P. de Valk and K.H. Wekwete (eds.): *Decentralizing for Participatory Planning*. Aldershot/Brookfield: Avebury, 1990C.

All countries have decentralised structures of some kind. In LDCs, these sub-national structures represent the central state's penetration of the periphery. The general experiences have been: (1) Most people perceive local governments as the state's creation and expression. (2) Most decentralisation reforms have aimed at improved administrative efficiency which has not materialised because the resources and decision-making autonomy have not been provided. (3) Traditional and legitimate institutions have been built down and by-passed. (4) In all countries, the centre is strongly represented by a prefectorial branch of the central administration. (5) In all countries, participation and mobilisation have failed, because local organs have not been allowed to deal with people's felt problems regarding production, marketing, employment and prices. Local governments have implemented welfare services which do not render themselves to local influence. (6) In all cases, the limited competence given to local governments has been further reduced by a variety of approval and fund-release procedures, guidelines and standards.

There is a tendency to analyse decentralisation either as administrative problems or as political problems. But these problems are intertwined. Improving sub-national administration depends on political decisions and solving political problems require corresponding administrative apparatuses. Decentralisation must be analysed as both administrative and political issues. Furthermore, administrative arrangements have political implications. Who is served by them? Who controls an apparatus with improved efficiency? Political structures are often hidden in the administrative arrangements and combined analyses are needed.

Werlin, H.: Decentralization and Culture: the Case of Monrovia, Liberia, in *Public Administration and Development*, vol. 10, no. 2, 1990, pp. 251-261.

Werlin analyses a project where the World Bank funded a project in Liberia. The Bank pressed for a strengthening of the local government as a part of the project. The idea was to enable it to take over recurrent costs and maintenance tasks of the project. This effort failed as it was not consistent with political power structures and approaches to local government among power holders. Werlin uses this case to suggest the idea that power will only be spread through decentralisation if it contributes to increasing the state's power. He contends that as long as it is guaranteed that local government activities remain within a common framework of values, goals, priorities and procedural principles, and the central state is allowed to define this framework, the central state will decentralise.

Decentralisation in conditions like these will enhance the state's power and penetration, and increase its capacity.

Wunsch, J. and D. Olowu (eds.): *The Failure of the Centralized State. Institutions and Self-Governance in Africa.* Boulder/Oxford: Westview Press, 1990.

In this book, the authors present a general analysis which will be briefly outlined here. In addition, it contains case studies by other authors. Africa's severe economic and social problems cannot be explained only by external constraints and natural disasters. Internal factors are also important and the centralisation of decision making, implementation and evaluation has prevented African societies from realising their potential.

Centralisation functions well if the means — ends knowledge is good, if the general knowledge about society and its variation is good, and if the infrastructure, resources and feed-back mechanisms for stable centralised bureaucratic control are present. This is not the case in African societies. Centralisation has therefore led to failed policies, corruption, exploitation, poor planning, resource waste, maladministration in the periphery because these areas are not well understood, to weak administration because the resources do not exist and in some cases, to oppression. Centralisation has its basis in the colonial legacy, in the fragility of the independent regimes, in the search for national unity, and in development paradigms at the time of independence.

Development requires complex, flexible, innovative, learning, adaptive and integrated processes. The centralised African states do not have the resources and power to organise these processes. The key to development and progress is therefore to allow and facilitate such processes at the local level, in the hands of the local people. This implies that real responsibility and decision making powers must be devolved to local communities, that the state reduces its hold on the economy, that participation is allowed, that people are allowed to organise themselves outside the state in order to make participation meaningful, and that government officers restrict their role to serving the local communities' wishes.

Locally integrated and flexible problem-solving networks must be allowed to develop. If granted autonomy, local communities do not automatically develop progressive, problem solving networks. This ability has to be facilitated and supported. It depends on the establishment of basic rules and principles for organisation and decision-making. It also depends on basic rules about what is the proper role for state and communities. These rules about collective action must be based on indigenous traditions and culture, in order to be legitimate and shared by all. National political leadership is not for deciding on public policy, it is to

facilitate local self-help, and to maintain and develop basic rules for collective action. It is also to provide general policy guidelines and priorities where such are needed. If the state shares power, state power will ultimately increase, as the influence over the local communities will in the long run be larger than the control exercised by an inefficient centralised state.

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