

J99-35

Workshop on the Workshop 2

**WOW**

Bloomington, Indiana, June 9-13, 1999

6/16/99  
WORKSHOP IN POLITICAL THEORY  
AND POLICY ANALYSIS  
513 NORTH PARK  
INDIANA UNIVERSITY  
BLOOMINGTON, INDIANA 47405-3186  
REPRINT FILES

PANEL 2-2  
FR, JUNE 11

**TOWARD A POLITICAL-ECONOMY OF LOCAL GOVERNANCE  
IN AFRICA: POLICIES, INSTITUTIONS, INTERESTS, AND CONSEQUENCES**

by

**James S. Wunsch**  
*Creighton University*

© 1999 by author



---

**Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis**  
Indiana University • 513 North Park • Bloomington, IN 47408-3895  
phone 812 855 0441 • fax 812 855 3150  
workshop@indiana.edu • www.indiana.edu/~workshop

---

## I. Introduction

This paper is an attempt to develop and explore a model of what might be called the "political economy" of local governance in Africa, and how it affects several of the policies and institutions used to organize key aspects of decentralization and local governance. It explores how the various institutions and policies developed by the center affect, impede, and sometimes destroy nascent local governance. The paper's thesis is that these key functional and structural issues have not yet been resolved in a way which works to encourage and sustain effective local governance. It is also that these failures are caused, by at least in part, by the political economy that in Africa seems to grow up around local governance in Africa.<sup>1</sup>

## II. Developing a Theory of Local Governance

To analyze why local governance often does not succeed, one must start with a "theory" or model of how successful local governance might look and work under conditions typical of the developing world: here, of Africa. In other words, how can we diagnose "dysfunction" unless we define "function"? This paper proposes a relatively simple such model, one drawn inductively from field work, and one that can also be deduced from some basic Simonian assumptions about human nature and human organization.

The field research referred to is a comparative analysis of local governance in Southern Africa: one province of post-apartheid Republic of South Africa; Swaziland; and Botswana. In that work, the author of this paper found that: (1) adequacy of local authority to initiate and implement policies and programs; (2) adequacy of human and fiscal resources to sustain such policies and programs; and (3) existence of a broadly based, informed, attentive, and effective local public political life, were required for local governance to operate effectively. This is defined as the ability to deliver locally desired services effectively; to operate internally efficiently; and to manage local social conflict effectively. Authority was needed to permit, legitimize and structure action; resources were needed to sustain the action and reward participants; and a broadly based political process was needed to steer the decisions and actions. When any of these three were weak or absent, the quality of local governance eroded. Variations in the deficiencies among the three preconditions were followed by logically comprehensible variations in the nature of governmental performance (see Wunsch, 1998). The author's work in Nigeria can also be explained through the same framework (Olowu and Wunsch, 1995; Wunsch and Olowu, 1996). Other authors have suggested much the same general model (Manor, 1995; Olowu and Smoke, 1992; Teune, 1995; Smith, 1996).

---

<sup>1</sup> The question the paper pursues is how do national policies and procedures regarding a number of key organizational issues affect "local governance," which is defined in Section II. "Decentralization" is of course important in this but it is in fact only of significance as a tool to achieve effective local governance. The paper is not by definition about "democratic decentralization" or any other form. The logic of the paper's theory does indeed point toward what some call "democratic decentralization" and "devolution" as ingredients for local governance to succeed, but that is as a result of theory and evidence, not by definition.

Basic Simonian assumptions about human nature lead to similar conclusions regarding the prerequisites of effective local governance. Assume human beings are rational, goal-oriented actors, who have limited resources and therefore seek to make careful choices about those resources, even if they seek only goal satisfaction rather than maximization. They will seek to make decisions that, over time, emerge as successful strategies to reach their goals. If they are not successful, rational actors will seek alternate strategies. Over time, individual and collective learning will tend to converge on rational strategies, given local conditions (Ostrom, 1980).

Now, if governance is the process by which humans make collective choices and then implement them, it requires people to expend some of those finite personal resources to sustain it: time, energy, money, influence, opportunities foregone, attention to details, developing skills of persuasion, organization and management, and the like. It would not be rational to invest these resources in governance institutions that are legally disabled from making decisions in areas of concern (lack of authority), nor in ones that could not effect decisions once made (lack of resources). Nor would it be rational to invest resources in institutions accountable to others (absent an effective local political process) rather than to the prospective actors. Thus, Simon's work on rational behavior and complex organizations brings us to the same conclusions as our inductive reasoning from the field: one needs all three to have sustained, viable local governance. Perhaps not incidentally, Tocqueville came to much the same conclusions, absent the formal language, regarding American local government in 1831 (1966).<sup>2</sup>

Institutional analysis, which is more or less what this paper is attempting, can never be isolated from the context in which a given set of rules ("institution") establish a patterned behavior, or "organization" (these terms are used in the sense developed by Douglass North, 1986). The LDC context, Africa in particular, is well known to readers of this paper, and need only be touched on briefly to refresh our minds. Three factors are particularly worth noting.

The salient factors include, first severe scarcity in money, skilled human resources, political legitimacy, equipment, vehicles, electricity, fuel, and often in information and reliable "theory" regarding pressing development problems as well. Redundancy in any of these things is rare to unheard of, and breakage or exhaustion of supply or actors usually means simply doing without (Wunsch, 1988). Scarcity also is characterized by intense competition among people for what resources are available. Life is often perceived as a zero-sum rather than positive-sum game, particularly in the political realm (Esman, 1992). And of course, frequently it is exactly that. A second salient factor is a harsh environment, where travel and communications are always difficult and sometimes impossible; where vehicles wear out quickly; staff is stretched thin dealing with the labor intensive challenge of managing personal lives in the midst of poverty, underemployment and family

---

<sup>2</sup> This paper will not "test" this theory. This is used as an analytical framework to discern what is important about the voluminous information reported on decentralization and local governance in Africa. It guides our attention to these key areas: authority, resources, and local political

demands; where nearly everything seems to take longer; and people are nearly defenseless against many natural disasters. Perhaps the third and final key contextual factor is turbulence, particularly in the economic and political realms. Governments and grand policies come and go quickly and unexpectedly, and the economic context can be almost instantaneously turned upside down by a currency crisis, a collapse in a commodity price, or a structural adjustment program, against which there are no defenses. Social turbulence, often in ethnic, religious or other conflict can also be a serious problem, itself accentuated by scarcity and political and economic turbulence.

### III. The Political Economy of Local Governance in Africa

An unavoidable conclusion from reviewing the literature on and local governance in Africa (and throughout much of the developing world), is that central governments are loath to surrender the authority and resources necessary for local governance to thrive. There are a host of reasons for this. They include the often inherited former-colonial state structure, and the inertia and interests associated with it; the residual statist-rationalist-elitist ideology of planned development; and the neo-patrimonial dimensions of elite strategies to stay in power atop poor and fragmented societies. They also include the undeniable shortage in fiscal and human resources that make genuine devolution in effect a zero-sum game (and therefore one to be fiercely resisted by prospective losers), and the reality that the more educated and influential members of these societies have "learned" how to survive - indeed often prosper - in the centralized context. Serious redistribution in authority or resources clearly threatens most of the "players" in the existing polity (Kasfir, 1993; Manor, 1995).

Thus, when local governance is pursued by leaders who can actually push authority and resources downward, it is tenaciously resisted. As we will discuss in Part IV of this paper, planning, budgeting, revenue and personnel systems developed to organize and structure local governance seem nearly always to have features that allow key players in the center to retain some control (Achempong, 1995). This could be called the "central political economy" of local governance, and it accounts for much of the resistance to decentralization policies that erodes their achievements (Olowu, 1990). But, this observation is not really new in any important sense.

What the author of this paper has seen in the field, and increasingly recently in research reported by other scholars, is another problem. This is the difficulty in developing and sustaining an effective, broadly based political process even when authority and resources have been redistributed to local institutions: when the central political economy has had to "give way" to at least some reform. Initially, local politics looks promising: commendable electoral turnouts elect counselors who, at times, advocate vigorously for their constituencies. But over time, apathy and resignation set in. The improved services and expanded capital investment do not appear, and counselors' enthusiasm (real or apparent) seems to flag. This dynamic seems associated with the combination

of high local expectations of these new units of governance, severe local resource constraints, and a tendency of local expenditures to benefit predominantly only a few: professional staff, local commercial interests, local elected officials, and a few lucky constituents. This process works in effect to make the development of that broadly based political process less likely. This outcome is a bitter irony, as it often is caused, at least in part, by genuine attempts to reform and strengthen local governance. How does this work?

Logically enough, the serious builder of local governance seems generally to begin with some expansion of authority for local governments. After all, without local authority, there is no local government, nor is it rational for people with serious needs and limited resources to invest in formal local governments. As we have argued, however even authority alone, once granted, is not sufficient to make much of anyone invest their personal resources into local (or any other level of) governance until that level has the resources to do something: to hire and pay personnel, purchase goods, supply services, build facilities, etc. Africa, of course, is characterized by severe scarcity, and most of its taxation systems are, in effect, in the form of severance taxes on agriculture or minerals collected by the center. Rarely have these resources reached the periphery. To boot, histories of corrupt, passive or non-existent local government means there are very weak or no patterns of fund-raising at the grass roots, at least not by governmental organization (Akpan, 1990; Crook, 1994). So, naturally enough, serious decentralization efforts begin by distributing some significant resources downward from the center to newly empowered localities: to "jump-start," as it were, local government by giving it some resources to go with some authority. Others at least expand the tax authority of local units, give them some share of national funds, and transfer personnel to them to perform these tasks.

By now remedying at least in a preliminary fashion, the problems of authority and resources, it might seem likely this would lead to that last element of local governance: an effective, broadly based political process to guide and keep accountable local decisions and actions and set local governance into a "virtuous circle" of performance, legitimacy and development. But it seems the empirical evidence suggests that it does not, and collective action theory helps explain why.

In Ghana and Kenya, for example, the vast majority of the enhanced local government budgets goes into administrative overhead, salaries, facilities, vehicles and the like. Crook's study of Ghanaian district government showed little was left over to respond to grass-roots dweller's requests: roads, schools, sanitary facilities and the like. As rank and file local residents were paying taxes to the district governments, but received only denials or suggestions to raise more money and do communal labor for their projects, cynicism and apathy set in. Meanwhile because of nationally mandated staff reductions, local services in such areas as sanitation eroded seriously. Local elected counselors were caught in this conflict, and were unable to redirect funds to other needs (Crook and Manor, 1995). In two districts Crook surveyed, more than 58% of the local elected counselors intended not to stand for reelection. A local political process that started out with over a 50% voter turnout in

initial election in 1988 and 1989, had decayed so that a few years later (1992) only 22% felt the elected assemblies were an improvement over the old unelected district council. 70% felt their assembly was incapable of addressing their development needs (Crook, 1994: 354-355). Ayee found similar problems in local government in Ghana with recurrent expenditures consuming 85 to 87% of local budgets, and even more negative public opinion regarding the elected councils (1994, 1996, 1997). Smoke finds similar patterns of expenditure in local government in Kenya (Smoke, 1994).

Koehn's study of Nigerian local government in Bauchi and Kaduna showed much the same pattern, at least in expenditures (1989). A vastly disproportionate share of resources went to urban dwellers; was spent in capital-intensive (rather than labor intensive) projects; and benefited primarily the staffs of the local governments and other local elite groups rather than the average person. Popular participation did not appear to change this. Wunsch and Olowu found similar patterns in their Nigerian research in 1992-1994 (Olowu and Wunsch, 1995; Wunsch and Olowu, 1996). There, public members of health advisory boards quite clearly analyzed the cost/benefit calculus of their participation (travel, lost work time) versus their perception that local professional officials utterly ignored them. Their decision: cease participation. In a parallel study of local government in Northern Nigeria, O'Donovan found that localities which wanted development projects were encouraged to pursue "self-help" projects, but had minimal support from local government budgets that were focused primarily on staff support and other "overhead" expenditures (1992, p 360-361). Crook and Manor found parallel patterns of elite capture of local government resources in Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana (1995, 1998), as did Livingstone and Charlton in Uganda at the district level (1998). Paterson noticed a similar dynamic in rural Senegal civil society, where state resources were used to co-opt leaders and preempt local challenges to state actions (1998). Mutizwe-Mangiza found in Zimbabwe that elected representatives were frequently overruled by the technical specialists posted there by the national government, who "battle(d) for resources ... to guard their individual department's interests jealously" (1990, p. 431). O'Donovan felt that the local electoral dynamics in Nigeria were encouraging a fragmented local political process likely to lead to elected counselors who would pursue either narrow vested interests, or simply their own interests (363-364). Crook and Manor also suggest this in their comparative study of Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, India and Bangladesh (1998).

The case literature on local governance, and the decentralization process that is usually pursued to support it in, Africa and elsewhere, is replete with this pattern: local elites, bureaucratic, traditional and economic ("notables"), capture the resources, spend most of the them on salaries, buildings, vehicles, electric generators and other perquisites for officials. The rest they expend on contracts and jobs for the locally well-connected, and on a few services (Ayee, 1994, 1996, 1997; Smoke, 1994; Cohen, 1993; Olowu and Wunsch, 1995; Wunsch and Olowu, 1996, 1998; Davis et. al, 1994; Crook, 1994; Koehn, 1989; Mead, 1996; Manor 1995; Blair, 1998). Local social and economic networks at times reinforce this pattern, and block effective oversight by elected officials

(Crook and Manor, 1998 p. 246). In some cases, as in Nigeria, local elected officials appear to run primarily to develop business opportunities (Mead, 1996), and the more resources and authority localities seem to have, the larger the portion siphoned off seems to become. Segal's study of decentralized schools in New York City suggests this may be a universal dynamic (1997). In the subsequent resource allocation "game," broadly based participation remains a non-rational option for most local people. The locality may indeed now have some authority and some resources, but the way in which local governments actually operate soon engender cynicism and apathy among the general population (Crook, 1994; Ayee, 1996; Wunsch and Olowu, 1997).<sup>3</sup> Even were that resignation not the case, the local elite frequently can and does use some of those resources to co-opt, corrupt or intimidate possible opponents, and in patron-clientage to preempt any disturbance of this game (Berman, 1998; Chambers, 1983). All this means that trying to begin a broadly based political process is not rational for most people; and that even when one is begun, it soon decays, as it did in Ghana. Leaders and supporters who try eventually give up in discouragement, sometimes after what Crook and Manor describe as strenuous and conscientious efforts to participate in policy-making and to monitor policy implementation and expenditures (1998). Lacking an effective, broadly based process to hold local professional and often elected officials, accountable, local government performance remains poor and costly (both inefficient in operation and ineffective in delivering services), and local people have no incentive to raise additional funds for it. Thus, it tends to stagnate. Ghana's high level of participation in local elections in 1988 was replaced by general apathy in the second election cycle in 1994 (Crook and Manor, 1998, p. 268).

One could call this the "political economy" of local governance in Africa, and probably elsewhere in the developing world. It is difficult to escape, because, as Olson demonstrated, organization costs can be very steep, and the larger and more diverse a potential-group (or potential-coalition) is, the higher the costs rise. In conditions of severe scarcity, often those groups/coalitions never form, as they face these high costs with very few resources. Indeed, the very ethnic fragmentation typical of Africa seems to engender "big-man" based patronage that sustains local fragmentation (Berman, 1998). Smaller, more resourced and often already mutually cooperating local elites, are "cheaper" to organize, "cost less" to manage, and have more resources to pay these costs (Olson, 1966). They also get a larger share of the "pie," the smaller they keep the local political arena (Riker, 1962). One might hypothesize, then, that the more resources available to local elites the harder they will work to keep control of them. Crook and Manor's comparative work in India and Bangladesh suggests this might be true (Crook and Manor, 1998).<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> In a few African cases, primarily in large cities characterized by unusually rich associational life, well-resourced and highly mobilized citizens, and extensive revenue bases, Smoke and Olowu find instances where this dynamic seems to have been broken. However, the infrequency of this and the substantial contextual differences seem to validate rather than erode this model. See Olowu and Smoke, 1993.

<sup>4</sup> Crook and Manor's fine comparative study of decentralization in South Asia and West Africa does find more "corruption" of elected officials in South Asia than West Africa. In South Asia there are far larger "stakes" at hand as local governments in India and Bangladesh spend larger sums than typical of West African local governments. However there are also many differences, so the inferences should be tentative (Crook and

At times, the political economies of local and central governance seem, in effect, to merge. In so far as decentralization does occur, with personnel formerly employed by central ministries now nominally "subject" to locally elected authorities, the "central political economy" is relocated to the locality (Manor, 1995). They, and their superiors in the capital, share in interest in retaining control over local decisions and resources. The new "local players" are usually more bureaucratically sophisticated, better resourced, and well protected by residual central authority (see Crook and Manor, 1998, pp. 240-247). They easily co-opt, or if needed, displace and defeat local leaders in the competition for local resources (Crook, 1994; Werlin, 1992; Achempong, 1995; Mead, 1996; Ayee, 1996, 1997). Central controls over development of partisan politics at the local level may intensify this tendency (O'Donovan, 1992; Manor, 1995).

Crook and Manor find local governance in Cote d'Ivoire to demonstrate similar patterns. Local units, (communes) are substantially smaller than local governments in such countries as Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya and Botswana, and therefore one might expect a closer relationship between the public and elected officials. However, the combination of a list-electoral system where one party wins all the seats on the council; selection of candidates by a small, closed group of local notables; few council meetings per year (average of four); a weak sub-committee system on the council; the high social status of the mayor; and strong dominance of the council by the mayor and his "Executive" committee (three or four "assistants" to the mayor selected from the council), made the council a very weak body, and led to little public influence over commune affairs. This was reinforced by the strong "tutelle" role played by the Ministry of the Interior, and the generally strong political role played by mayors in Abidjan, where they influenced national programs and grants which affected their localities.

Crook and Manor do find local administration in Cote d'Ivoire relatively free of corruption, but hardly responsive to grass-roots priorities. Rather than the roads, water, and "social" needs people wanted (youth centers, sports facilities, etc.), communes built municipal buildings and secondary schools. The first directly benefited only the local political and administrative elite, while the second might have a broader benefit, but was far down on the population's priorities. These problems were accentuated by Cote d'Ivoire's fiscal crisis in the 1980s-90s. Together they led to rather low ratings in public opinion surveys for commune government. The one commune under opposition party control had similar patterns of governance and public disconnection (Crook and Manor 1998).

With this less than encouraging introduction, we turn to the remainder of the paper. Given these dynamics, can one explain the recurrent problems for local governance that are associated with some key institutional designs and national policies regarding local government in Africa? The following discussion will

---

Manor, 1998). Elected officials in Nigerian local government also appear more corrupt than these in Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire, and more funds are also sent by local governments in Nigeria than these other two West African states (Mead, 1996; Ikhide, et. al., 1993). Again, however, there are many other differences, including the extreme political and economic turbulence experienced by Nigerian over the last three decades.

briefly speculate on standard (and the occasional not-so-standard) approaches to planning, budgeting, personnel, and raising revenue for local governments in Africa. Two questions are paramount: how do the systems employed in these functions affect local governance? How do they sustain, and are sustained by the central and local political economies? What alternatives might there be that work instead to empower local governance in Africa? Primary cases used are Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Swaziland and Botswana. Other countries such as Cote d'Ivoire are briefly brought into the discussion. Some less well known material on Uganda and Chad will also be briefly reviewed.

#### IV. Policies, Institutions and Consequences

We will now turn to and review several key policies and institutions used to manage and organize local governance. We will try to explain how the various strategies pursued affect local governance and the process of decentralization, how they relate to the dual political economies, and what might be done instead.

##### A. Planning and Capital Investment

Nearly all African states still engage in "planning." And in several states among our cases, nationally ordered, locally based "planning" efforts have been touted as part of the decentralization reform, intended to strengthen local governance, enhance local voice in national decisions, and empower the people. Instead they have consumed local governments' resources, eroded their credibility, demonstrated their lack of authority, and sustained both the local and national political economies of disempowerment. This pattern can be seen, for example, in Kenya, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Ghana. The typical system, with some variations, is for district governments to be assigned to develop a local capital investment plan for the localities, encompassing such investments as health posts, road improvements, elementary schools, wells/standpipes, community halls, markets and the like. Local development planning officers are designated and assigned to localities, some sort of "district development committee" is established, some sort of "grass-roots/citizen involvement" is required, and a lengthy process of choosing investments, setting priorities and establishing a "plan" is begun. At the end, the plans are passed upward to be integrated into regional plans, and finally into a national plan that supposedly "integrates" the local/regional plans into a comprehensive whole.

However, the reality is that the local effort was always for naught, and there is instead a top-down process through which national ministries select their priorities, and determine what will be done at localities. Those priorities grow from doctrines, convenience, and personal and political interests at of the center. And as long as the capital investment budget is controlled by national ministries, it is hard to see why those in the center would be forced to substitute the priorities of the localities for their judgements and interests. This erodes local

authority, their access to resources appropriate to their needs, and the credibility of a local "political process." Over time, entropy seems to catch up to most of these planning efforts, and they decay into merely going through the motions. But, they are never replaced by any real process to develop or sustain local problem identification, information gathering, priority setting, budgeting capacity, or action (Mutizwa-Mangiza, 1990; Cohen and Hook, 1985; Wunsch, 1998; Oyugi, 1990; Crook and Manor, 1998; Wallis, 1990; Cohen, 1993; Tordoff, 1994).

The national/local "planning game" can be seen to support the existing anti-decentralization political economy at both levels. The center retains its historic control over resources flowing to the periphery. In environments of severe scarcity, harsh environments, and turbulence, these facilitate patron-clientage and balance-of-power arrangements that sustain central control in general, and the influence of central ministries in particular. At the very least, such control can be used to neutralize and divide potential local opponents (Bates, 1981). Barkin and Cheege feel these sorts of motivations lay behind much of the redirection of control of planning achieved by Kenya's "District Focus" program started by the Moi government in the early 1980s (1989).

In the periphery, this sort of planning means local political life is discouraged by the absence of real decisions, local administrators are able to distribute capital resources for their comfort and convenience, and manage their local work lives with little external disturbance. Their exchanges with the center which determine their careers also continue undisturbed. Meanwhile, local political elites can use what resources and influence they have in exchanges with the center and with local bureaucrats to manipulate the distribution of local benefits to their own ends. Non-local, "local planning" is thus an excellent device to maintain the dual, parallel, closed political-economies which are the antitheses of viable, open, local political process. The fact that many technocrats sincerely support it for technocratic reasons does not alleviate its negative effects (Mawhood, 1993). It is suggestive, perhaps, that in Nigerian's recent ill-fated decentralization effort this did not occur. For all of Nigeria's problems, and there were many, there was no top-down capital planning by 1990 in roads, health or education. The central government abandoned its direction of localities at the same time that it severely starved the states of the money and personnel they needed replace the center and direct much of anything at the localities. The central (or state-level) dimension of the political-economy thus ended, but the absence of a viable and broadly based local political process opened the door for local notables to capture most available resources (Olowu and Wunsch, 1995; Wunsch and Olowu, 1996; Koehn, 1989). The upshot was that local planning was not much better in Nigeria, at least in the few short years local government existed in the 1990s, than anywhere else. Still, the national players were out of the process, and the optimistic call is that a local political process simply had not yet had time to develop. However, our theory is not sanguine as to whether that would have emerged in any foreseeable future.

## **B. Budgeting and Fiscal Management**

A serious problem for localities is managing their affairs effectively through budgeting. There are three problems: insufficient local technical personnel resources to perform the technical tasks of budgeting; the complexity and confusion of the budget process at the local level for elected officials; and dealing with central strategies to "recapture" authority and resources nominally "transferred" to local governments by manipulating and interfering with local budgeting and spending.

Shortfalls in technical personnel, and often as well in the leadership and knowledge of elected personnel, are found in budgeting (and expenditure control) virtually throughout African local governments. Smoke, Crook, Ayee, Crook and Manor, Olowu and Wunsch, and Wunsch found such patterns, for example, in Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Cote' d'Ivoire and Swaziland. Scarcity of trained personnel and a lax public political process are associated with these patterns. So, particularly in Kenya, are complex procedures and delays in processing approvals by the national Ministry of Local Government which additionally burden already undertrained and overloaded personnel (Smoke, 1994). Regardless of the issues of central control to be discussed below, the scarcity of personnel able to make and manage competent budgets and the erratic resource flows associated with the scarcity and turbulence of the African context would be formidable problems for local budgeting and management.

Secondly, and as Crook and Manor point out, the "...often chaotic state" of local budgeting and accounting procedures made effective local priority setting, choices and management nearly impossible (1998, p. 241). Local elected personnel cannot effectively supervise local administration, and in some cases have essentially accepted, though reluctantly, this diminished role (Crook, 1994; Crook and Manor, 1998).

There is, of course also the overarching third problem of continued central control over local choices and resources (Wallis, 1990). In Ghana and Kenya, for example, budgets are still subject to arbitrary oversight by central government officials. In both of these states, central ministries as well simply refused to disaggregate their budgets on a district-by-district base, thereby retaining their control (Tordoff, 1994; Ayee, 1997). Even in countries where this has been relaxed, there are other methods by which central control is maintained. One of the most difficult of these strategies to deal with is what some have called the "repetitive budgeting game." Well explained by Aaron Wildavsky in his classic 1975 article this strategy is nearly everywhere pursued by the national "Ministry of Finance" (or "Treasury") in LDCs in order to keep control of spending (Wildavsky, 1975). This was primarily (or at least originally) pursued vis-à-vis other central ministries, but has carried down to local governments where they have gotten control of some resources. As Wildavsky explains it, the economic turbulence and shortage of hard currency facing most LDCs means the Treasury does all it can to hold on to all funds as long as it is able: running short of bills it must pay (the military, key political supportees, international creditors or institutions) is the one thing to be avoided above all else! One strategy to this end is to require agencies to keep all funds at the central bank, and to return repeatedly to it to get any funds released, even ones

long-since authorized to them. Requiring repeated approvals of expenditures, arbitrary denial of access to already authorized and approved funds, circuitous requirements for re-authorization, delays in releasing funds, nit-picking re: forms, timing, amounts, etc, are all elements of this. While useful for the center (at least for the finance ministry), it erodes the time, personnel resources, capacity to act, and authority of local governments. Officials regularly report they spend more time "chasing their funds" in the capital, than completing their work in the districts.

Kenya, Ghana, Botswana and Swaziland, among others, have such problems. It seems clear that the incentives of the ministry of finance (squeezing this flow of resources) are inconsistent with those of local government and impede the development of effective budgeting and management systems at the local level.

Regardless of the macro-economic management issues involved here, it is clear to the author from interviews in several different countries (including Bangladesh and the Philippines) that this was also a simple issue of power by the ministries of finance or treasury vis-à-vis the rest of the central government, as well as along center-periphery lines. Having the ability to intervene to turn off and on funds already legally others to spend offers senior finance officials (who have their own political interests) great power in the domestic political economy. It is not a resource they seem likely to give up, in spite of any constitutional or statutory requirements, or national leadership commitments to decentralization. Certainly, it strongly sustains the centralist dimension of the political economy hostile to decentralization. It substitutes the personalistic politics of the cabinet for the statutory attempts to bring authority and resources to the periphery. Not incidentally, it also reinforces the local political economy discussed here, as influence at the center by notables rather than law is what gets your resources released.

Again, Nigeria is a somewhat interesting variation. National micro-management of cash flows did not appear to be a problem in the periphery there in the early to mid-1990s, as it was in such cases as Ghana, Botswana and Swaziland. The relative enormity of Nigeria plus the policy of large grants being released directly to localities probably explains this. However, those grants were often delayed, erratic and not reliable in size or timing because of macro-economic problems. So, the problem was not entirely eliminated. Scarcity and turbulence replaced a political economic game, but localities were still greatly weakened, as their cash flows were erratic and unreliable. Regardless of the cause, it was still probably irrational for the grass roots people to invest much in local politics in such an erratic and unreliable system.

Similar in its effects to local budgeting, though somewhat different in operation, are national mandates by the various service ministries to provide certain services, at certain staffing levels, at certain sites. Botswana has pursued a fairly serious decentralization policy since the 1970s. In Botswana, local governments had substantial technical capacity and, through national grants, substantial fiscal resources. Botswana's Ministry of Finance kept a tight control on capital budgets, but operating budgets were well under local control. At least they appeared to

be.

Several cycles of competitive elections meant there was the beginnings of a local political life in the localities. Many were governed by the political party in opposition at the center, and local governments were generating their own priorities within and among the various sectors: health, roads, education, economic development activities and the like. Local budgeting there, while still with room for improvement, was conspicuously better than the author of this paper has found in Nigeria, or than is reported in Kenya or Ghana (Olowu and Wunsch, 1995; Wunsch and Olowu, 1996; Smoke, 1994; Crook, 1994). Nonetheless, local political and administrative personnel found that national service ministry policy/program mandates in health, education and roads largely devoured their resources. "What decisions are actually left to us," several asked? They suggested that their development as decision-making institutions as well as their success in building constituent interest in and support for local government were challenged in part by their inability to act independently of central direction, or to respond to constituents wants and needs. A better person to appeal to, several local actors suggested to us, was the local MP who could use his contacts in Gaborone to try to alter central edicts.

National mandates reflect some serious and genuinely felt national concerns and needs. Equity among regions, comprehensive responses to national concerns such as health and drought, general development strategies such as elementary education for all and the like, are certainly among them. Since in Botswana these appear not easily manipulatable in the way that capital investments via top-down "planning" are, it is not clear that adhering to them substantially furthers the local, anti-decentralization political-economy discussed above. Still, their effect is simultaneously to preempt authority and resources supposedly earlier passed to localities, and in that process to render local government and a broadly based political life less meaningful. In so far as they preempt local elites who may have misused earlier top-down grants, they are helpful. But they do not do a lot beyond that. Local political life is made more passive by them. One does better to tend ones farm, if one is a local dweller.

Nigeria is again an interesting case to consider. It did not require any set amount of funds to be spent in any specific area. And, absent these national mandates, a seriously competitive process developed at the local level over who got these funds. But this process was primarily among local notables: business, political and bureaucratic. Local services fared differently according to which among these actors was stronger, and what they pursued. But nowhere was there evidence of a broadly based political life developing when our research was terminated in 1995 by the military coups that ended that particular local governance experiment (Olowu and Wunsch, 1995; Wunsch and Olowu, 1996). So, one could say, considering Nigeria and Botswana, that national mandates have a mixed impact on decentralization. They may restrict local corruption and capture by bureaucratic and popular notables which would erode the credibility of local government. But they also reduce the rationality of public involvement since so little is discretionary to local officials. However, since local

notables seem poised to capture these resources once made available, the Gordian knot still appears tight: one seems unable to have a local political process without resources to make it worth investing in, but distributing such resources seems to stimulate a "notables" game that preempts such a local process.

### C. Personnel Systems and Management

The status of former civil servants, particularly those with technical qualifications, is a third key policy area. It affects profoundly both the authority of local officials as well the personal and professional prospects of the civil servants. It also affects the resources available to ministries at the center, resources they need both to maintain their role in government (it is hard to be a senior manager with no one, or no budget, to manage...), and resources to use in political exchanges within and among ministries at the center: personnel assignments, promotions, training, overseas plums, policy priorities, programs chosen, contracts to let, etc. (Manor, 1995).

In all this several issues are critical:

- Do administrative personnel retain a civil service status?
- Are they members of a national civil service, a special, "unified," "local"-government civil service, or simply civil servants in the employ of various districts?
- What salary, leave, professional development and retirement/pension rights and terms do they retain?
- In systems where they retain either a national or a unified "local" civil service membership, who evaluates, promotes, transfers, etc., them: national, regional or local officials? Elected or other career administrative personnel?
- In systems where they retain some national or unified "local" civil service membership, who directs them in their daily work: a local political official, or a professional/civil service person; if there is a distinction between "technical" and "policy" issues, who is in charge of which, and how is that line drawn?
- In situations where local officials are in charge, what relationship, if any, is continued with the former parent ministry regarding such questions as maintaining and assessing professional and technical competence, in-service training, advanced training is the capital or overseas, setting and maintaining technical SOPs and standards, continued technical support, etc.?

A variety of answers to these questions can be seen among the cases reviewed (Tordoff, 1994). With one partial exception, though, none seemed to have resolved the issue in a way that local government officials believed they had committed, technically competent civil service personnel working for them and responsive to their leadership. In most cases, local elected officials felt they had inadequate managerial authority over such personnel. In one, local officials had authority, but the quality of administrative personnel deteriorated seriously.

In this function, both the authority and resource dimensions of the three-part model were compromised.

In Ghana, technical personnel remain employees of a central ministry, but are supposed to be responsible and accountable to local government officials. However, research by Ayee finds such local government personnel generally quite frustrated with their lack of effective authority over the civil service personnel (Ayee, 1997; Achempong, 1995). The latter frequently ignored local government policies and priorities, refused to attend personal or cabinet meetings with local elected officials, and generally did a fairly good job of maintaining the status quo ante. This approach on their part, of course, is personally convenient, but also helps maintain the influence of the center over the periphery. It does not appear particularly likely to shift influence toward local notables, though, who might themselves prefer more control over these personnel. In any case, it does little to give the public an incentive to invest in a local political process for obvious reasons. Ayee found little evidence that such a process was developing. These problems were compounded by the failure of the central government to write or introduce any legislation that reorganized central ministries' operations to fit this new arrangement. In fact, it seemed the nominally decentralized twenty-two ministries remained unchanged (Ayee, 1997). Crook found similar patterns in his research in Ghana (1994).

Nigeria's approach to this issue was again rather different. Nonetheless, it too seems to have failed in dealing with these personnel issues so that the three keys to local governments, resources, authority and a broad political process, were strengthened.

In 1992, as part of Nigeria's decentralization program, all personnel in the former national "Local Government Service Commission" were reassigned to political officers at the local governments. While they nominally retained pay, retirement and tenure status, their actual pay, evaluation, promotion and assignment were largely at local discretion. While this may have been an attempt to resolve the problems Ghana experienced (of continued central dominance over local policies and district personnel who could not command the attention of their employees it led to a spate of complaints and was received six months later. Meanwhile, senior health personnel at the local level were reassigned from the national ministry to local governments over the 1990-1992 period. However central leadership and priority-setting, for the most part, was not replaced by local initiative and skillful management. The outcome in the Nigerian health sector was a personnel cadre that appeared to drift and gradually erode in technical skill and performance. With rare exceptions, such as where an unusually dynamic senior technical office was supported by a proportionally committed and informed district chair, professional decay seemed to be the result.

Lack of local fiscal support reinforced these problems. The local political economy of notables in Nigeria did not seem particularly concerned with the health sector, and its budget generally fell well behind road construction and maintenance in particular, and capital projects in general (Ikhide, et. al., 1993). The later were expenditures which provided more benefit to notables' interests, usually business related (Mead, 1996). Perhaps

not surprisingly, at least given the theoretical framework used here, this neglect and decay seemed to engender no organized or general public political protest in any of the sites we visited and researched. Cynicism, resigned anger, and disappointment could be found, but nothing beyond (Ikhide, et. al., 1993) As noted above, Crook found a similar pattern in Ghana (1994; Crook and Manor, 1998).

Nigeria suggests that simply separating the civil service from the center is an incomplete solution to the problem of putting local officials in charge of service/technical personnel. Local leadership was weak, the health personnel were undertrained for the responsibilities quickly thrust on them, and there was no broad local political process to push for improvement from either of these. The Nigerian strategy certainly seemed to end a political economy that sustained central influence at local expense. But, declining technical performance, budgetary neglect, and local public passivity seemed the result rather than improved services and a broadly based local political dynamic. Public ignorance of the local budgetary process, the reality of very few resources to compete over in any case, preemption of the process by local elites, plus the always high costs of organization, may explain the budgetary outcomes and the local public passivity. The weak personnel in the health sector (training, professionalization, coherence, and morale) explain much of its rapid decay. Absent such professionalization, local leadership and/or a local political process, the center may well need to play a strong role or key services will collapse. While states were supposed to play this role in Nigeria, in 1995 they had still not yet begun to do so. State leaders said inadequate funds and personnel caused this shortfall. In any case, The collapse we saw in Nigeria's health sector was so serious that we believe some serious on-going technical support role by the center will remain imperative, at least for any technically complex service area. Of course, that places at risk the authority the model suggests is necessary for local government to be a rational endeavor for the grass-roots.

In Cote d'Ivoire, non-professional personnel work at the pleasure of the mayor and council. Professional personnel retain their employment and career line in their respective national ministries. However, Crook and Manor find that the political pattern in Cote d'Ivoire, where mayors are of relatively high social status, and are usually nationally based (Abdijan) professional or political leaders, has meant they have enough influence to manage effectively the professional personnel, though not always without friction. The close "tuttele" from the Ministry of the Interior, while greatly slowing and circumscribing the decisions of the communes, may also explain an apparent absence (or very low level) of corruption in local governance. The price of this is, of course, a local government with little discretion, and evidence that many local dwellers find it largely irrelevant to their lives (Crook and Manor 1998, p. 187).

The Botswana strategy is yet again another variation. In Botswana, as seen during field research in 1995, all local government civil service personnel were members of a national "local government civil service" which controlled their terms of employment, assignments, promotion and retirement (Tordoff, 1994; Wunsch, 1998). They had rights of tenure within that organization, which was managed by the Ministry of Local Government and

Lands. However, they were also employees of the various units of local government which were responsible for their salaries, and to which they were to report for policy guidance, supervision, daily assignments, evaluation, discipline and the like.

In spite of the tension inherent in this somewhat ambiguous dual status, most local elected officials interviewed indicated this balancing act worked relatively well in the routine business of local government. With the exception of the district medical officers (apparently a problem everywhere...), political leaders were satisfied that the civil servants regarded them as their "bosses," and were loyal to and committed to local priorities. Civil servants, for their part, were satisfied that the local leaders both listened to them appropriately regarding "technical" issues, and gave good leadership in general district development issues and in setting priorities. While there was some dissatisfaction, it dealt with the center, whose approach to assignment and reassignment was regarded by both local civil servants and political leaders as frequently arbitrary and disruptive: of personal lives (the civil servants) and of district programs which depended on continuity in key technical personnel. Of course, as noted earlier regarding budgeting, central ministry "mandates" placed clear parameters on the discretion of localities, and may have preempted technically related tensions between political and civil servant personnel. Perhaps oddly enough, civil servant personnel seemed as frustrated with central mandates as did their political leaders. Central mandates, as locally implemented, seemed fairly consistent with national standards, and not particularly manipulable by "games" played by local notables. It is possible some local technical personnel in Botswana were ready and able to begin tackling local development problems, and felt stifled by central micro-management.

The explanation for Botswana's relative "success" in this area may be in the relative vitality of its local political process. Civil society organizations are sometimes active in local affairs, several elections have been held since independence, power has turned-over at many localities over the years, and in the several sites we visited, there were active oppositions in place in the local councils. Exactly how Botswana reached this "happy" state is an interesting question, as the political-economic theory heretofore developed and utilized would suggest that the perverse cycles of local passivity, notables' capture of resources, local cynicism, etc., are hard to break. However, the relative political stability and continuity in Botswana, and the steady evolution of a democracy at the center may well have spun-off a political life in the periphery that seems absent in our other examples (see Doan, 1995). Botswana's local governments have some authority, resources (albeit ones transferred from the center) and relatively more active local political processes, though one with a lot of growing yet to do, according to our interviewees. Also, the center has sustained its commitment to local governance for more than twenty years, and been able, because of the diamond industry, to offer localities very generous grants for many years. Reports of the early years of decentralization in Botswana are replete with instances of corruption, non-performance and the like. However, most observers give it higher marks recently (though with room to improve

nonetheless...)(Tordoff, 1988). So, a national democratic context, central commitment, substantial resources, and time may be key ingredients in breaking from the two political economies discussed in this paper, which seem to have eroded local government elsewhere in Africa. In doing these things, Botswana has altered two of the key contextual factors: severe scarcity and political turbulence (Wunsch, 1998).

**D. Finance and Revenue:**

Clearly a key ingredient for effective local governance is an adequate and stable source of revenue for local operations. There are three problematic aspects to this issue which affect local governance and the political economies that underlie it:

- Scale, role, and stability of national grants and transfers;
- Extent and source of local authority to raise own revenues; and,
- Lateral relations between local governments and local units of national agencies.

National Grants and Transfers: In several of the case countries discussed, national grants and transfers are the primary and critical source of funding for local government: Nigeria, Swaziland, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, and no doubt others not reviewed here. (Ghana and Kenya received national grants, but these cover only a minority of local expenses.) The scale and basis for these grants varies substantially, but regardless of that variation, this system works in several ways to erode local political authority, decrease the incentive and opportunity to engage in a local political process by the grass-roots, and, overtime, to inhibit development of a stable resource base for local governments. It also, perhaps rather obviously, works to sustain central control and the central political economy tied around that. It has, in several of these countries, had negative consequences regarding the local political-economy as well.

A central-grants system for local revenue reflects the dominance of the center in taxation. Based on "severance" taxes (as noted above) in commodity dominated economies, the center controls the lion's share of public revenues. The severe scarcity reviewed earlier leaves the localities with little obvious tax base to work with. Revenue sharing seems a natural policy in this context, if one is concerned with strengthening local governance. Revenue sharing systems vary, but are all based on some portion of the national accounts being transferred to local governments. Problems associated with this system include:

1. Gross amount and its adequacy given local needs and responsibilities
2. Criteria for determining the size and allocations among local units;
3. Reliability of timing and predictability of the amount of grant;
4. Conditionalities of grant regarding required local services, local revenues, local cost recovery for services, etc.; and
5. Provisions for audit at the local level.

Briefly, these are problems because the size of the grants are generally far less than are local needs; criteria to allocate funds among the districts tend to be arbitrary, opaque and rigid (Ayee, 1995); grants are highly unreliable in timing and in amount; grants lack "strings" regarding local revenue and cost recovery and this acts as a disincentive to raise local revenues (Wunsch and Olowu, 1996); their lack of strings regarding technical standards act as disincentives for quality local performance; and they are rarely followed up by any effective audit systems, which leads to sloppy, and at times corrupt performance at localities.

The inadequacy and unreliability of the grants diminish effective local authority and, obviously, disrupt the local resource base. Also, the economic and political turbulence of the African context accentuates this unpredictability. Local government leaders may have been given nominal authority over certain services, but that authority is meaningless when their decisions are undercut by inability to act. Plans and programs are rendered fictional by chronic resource shortages, and erratic resource flows. Buildings are built but never staffed; staffs are hired but can never work because they have no supplies (Olowu and Wunsch, 1995; Wunsch and Olowu, 1996). These alone would reduce the public incentive to invest in a local political process.

That funds are allocated from the top-down in an opaque process further reduces the incentive for grass-roots persons to follow local politics. The capture, expansion, and direction of these sorts of funds respond to "insider" political resources and games largely played at the center, rather than to a public political process at the locality. In Nigeria, at least, they represent an expansion of the "neo-patrimonial" politics of the center to local government (Guyer, 1992; Berman, 1998). The generally non-existent or ineffective audit provisions raise the local attractiveness of these grants for those who have the resources to capture them, once they are allocated to local governments. All these add to the incentive of notables to keep the local political game closed or very shrunken, and reduce the opportunities for the grass-roots to get involved.

The absence of requirements for local fund raising or cost return also decreases the vitality of local governance. To begin with, lacking such requirements, little money is raised or recovered locally, so the resource base of local government is proportionately reduced. With fewer resources, the effective authority local governments have remains small as does its impact on people's lives.

Perhaps more importantly, local dwellers have much less incentive to involve themselves in local affairs. If local governments give them little, they ask even less. There are no, or virtually no, taxes, nor are there fees for what few services there might be. If local people have historically experienced local government as an incompetent and/or corrupt entity, they probably find passive and undemanding local governments a lot less threatening than ones that propose to tax them or charge them for formerly free, if erratic, services. Thus leaders are unlikely to push the issue of increased revenue (and thereby increased resources and effective authority), and local politics remains by default a small, closed circle (O'Donovan, 1992; Guyer, 1992; Crook and Manor, 1998).

Conversely, a local government that proposes to tax all, to charge for formerly free services, and to

expand its activities has changed the calculus of local involvement. Now, resources flowing to notables are not coming from a distant "common pool," in which a few lucky locals might pick-up some cost-free services or income. Instead, the resources extracted represent a draw on the local dweller's own resources, and "breaking-even" requires him/her to get involved in local affairs to influence how resources are expended. In so far as taxes are levied generally, they are also more likely to stimulate a public political life (Slater, 1997). The broadened impact of governmental decisions on the community will compete with a private political process where only individuals scramble for their share of the "cost-free" pie. Interestingly, enough, even though cynicism and apathy were the eventual result in Ghana, where local governments raise an majority of their revenues through local taxes, initially there were much higher levels of participation at the local level than in Nigeria.

While it is still a long distance to an active local political process, absent these to motivate people to get involved, it is hard to see how the process would ever start. Issues of notable manipulation, co-optation, intimidation will still remain, but now they are a more general concern, as they affect what are seen as local resources, and not just national windfalls.

Extent and Source of Local Authority to Raise Own Revenues: The power to tax may be the power to destroy, but it is also a key ingredient in the power to build: institutions, programs, and a public political process. Dependent only on erratic and inadequate national grants, local government units remain resource-starved, hamstrung in ability to exercise authority, and facing local dwellers who are largely passive, cynical, or scrambling for resources as individual entrepreneurs. However, even raising local revenues is only one step toward viable local governance.

Local government in Kenya, where they receive little in national transfers (beyond funds for teachers' salaries), is hampered by arbitrary and delayed decisions by the Ministry of Local government on what levies individual localities might raise, and at what levels that they can tax. While the revenue sources available to local governments in general are fairly diverse and some are rather generous, Smoke finds no rationale as to which local governments receive which authority: some may collect a lot, others little. Furthermore, approvals for requests for taxes or rates are frequently delayed well beyond the time they are to start, as well as are arbitrarily changed. Thus local governments cannot plan revenues, and often must delay collections or later make refunds. Kenya's local tax collections are also hampered by the shortfalls in numbers and competency of revenue collection personnel, and the difficulty of assuring all revenues collected reach government coffers (Smoke, 1994). Ghana's problems were already reviewed, above.

Most revenues authorized local governments in Africa (and among LDCs generally) raise only pennies. They are market fees, minor business taxes, and the like (Bird, 1990). While property rates and agricultural cesses may be authorized, the infrastructure needed to organize and raise them is well beyond most local governments, the political price to exact them seems to intimidate most officials from it, and corruption often

renders them moot in any case (Smoke 1994; Wunsch, 1998). Whether or not they actually fear losing their jobs, give up in the face of the conflict it engenders, or fear more stimulating a public that would follow more closely how the money was spent, local officials rarely push the "envelope" on taxation for long (Crook, 1994). They have been content to continue on a national grants system, or a few local taxes, limited in size as they might be. Of course, national control over the lion's share of revenue retains national dominance of the peripheral areas in the national-political economy, and helps maintain what Cohen called "crony statism" (1993). All in all, the current system of weak local taxes, weakly pursued, has left local officials and other notables well in charge. But it has also left localities weak in resources, authority and political process. Crook and Manor find similar patterns and dynamics operating in Cote d'Ivoire (1998).

Legal Status of Local Governments: In Kenya, where Smoke finds a number of urban local governments beginning to function fairly effectively, their status vis-à-vis locally based offices of the national government has become an important fiscal issue. Local governments there are responsible for providing several key utilities on a fee basis: water and electricity in particular. Local units of national government are to pay the localities for these services. However, while local governments do provide the services to such entities as hospitals, police barracks and stations, and the like, the central ministries simply ignore the billings. Feeling unable to shut-off these services, which are not inconsiderable, the local units are stuck for the cost. They have no legal status nor arena where they can sue for the funds due them. Furthermore, as noted above regarding the arbitrary and usually delayed approval they face for various local revenue sources and rates, their fate is in the hands of a distant and slow Ministry of Local Government, staffed with what are usually regarded as undertrained personnel. Local governments have no legal status to compel action or receive redress for arbitrary, incompetent or non-existent actions by the Ministry (Smoke, 1994).

The fiscal implications of this are obvious. But there is a broader legal implication that should be noted. Local governments are, in effect, still bureaucratic dependencies of the national government. Rather than possessing juridical standing (the ability to sue other units of government in courts of law able to make binding decisions) they are reduced to working through administrative channels and begging for what by law should be theirs. When that is not in the interest of central politics, they loose.

Ayee's research on reforms in civil service procedures and regulations needed to effect decentralization in Ghana underscores this problem. While proclamations had been issued and statutes passed, the old, top-down civil service rules and regulations remained unchanged (1997). And local governments had no recourse when they ran up against them. Botswana's local officials reported much the same problem (Wunsch, 1998). The situation is, of course, supportive of the top-down, political-economy of the center, just as it erodes local authority and dissipates local resources.

## V. Outlier cases: Uganda and Chad

So far the paper has not had much optimistic to offer regarding the decentralization process and local governance in Africa. With the possible exception of Botswana, a small and temporarily relatively rich country with exceptional democratic stability at the center, our case examples have not gotten very far in developing any of the three prerequisites of local governance. And in so far as they have pursued the easier of them, authority and resources, a dynamic appears to develop at the local level where a politics of notables squeezes out a broadly based political process. Typical approaches to the organizational structure of local governments, in such areas as planning, budgeting, personnel systems, and revenue, all seem to reinforce continued central and/or local notable influence, at least in the usual African context of severe scarcity, a harsh environment and political/economic/social turbulence.

Uganda and Chad are saved for last because their experience in local governance followed a rather different path from our other cases, and with some signs of different outcomes for local governance. These pathways started for each of them with the effective collapse of central governance, at least in sizable portions of each country. Localities in each were thus forced to find their way in providing a few, keenly desired local services, and did so in ways that seemed to lead to the beginnings of real local governance in each. The case of Chad is instructive.

During several years of fieldwork, which took him to nearly 100 villages across both southern and northern Chad, Simon Fass discovered a viable, locally funded, and locally managed "system" of elementary schools. These developed, he explains because of the confluence of several events. These included the gradual erosion of the capacity of the government of Chad to provide services in the 1970s, the spread of civil war fighting to the capital in 1979-80 which drove many literate urban dwellers back to the rural areas, and the establishment of local "self-managed markets" by "Cotonchad," the parastatal that promoted cotton production. These "self-managed markets" in the localities were offered rebates if they performed certain production and marketing functions. However, they were restricted to villages that organized cotton associations and had personnel who were literate in French. Finally, during this time and given these events, many local dwellers realized that illiteracy in French had cost them in the past when cotton buyers had cheated them (Fass, 1999).

The combination of an eroding state and collapsing services, the influx of persons from urban areas with some education, and a new demand for education in the rural areas, Fass found, initiated a process where many villages founded schools, hired teachers, and raised money via local fees and taxes to pay the teachers. They went on very successfully to manage the schools through locally elected committees, even through times of great economic and political turmoil.

The school management committees are composed entirely of "grass-roots" persons, selected via traditional methods: usually male heads of households which have students select a small group to manage the

school. These groups, Fass reports, organize themselves into such roles as treasurer, secretary, and president, while teachers serve as a secretariat. The committee raises money through tuition and general levies on all households regardless of whether or not they contain students. Fass reports the collection rates are very high, as the community at large seems to see the collective benefit of education, and trusts the honesty and efficiency of the school committee. The committees even adjust local assessments to reflect the households' ability to pay. Similar allowances are made for tuition for children of poor families. Teachers often continue teaching when times are difficult and fees/taxes run short. Then they are paid in kind or in labor on farms they maintain. Fass reports many villages have begun similarly organized and managed efforts in water supply, self-managed markets, health, forestry and agriculture.

Here, then, we find all the key attributes of functioning local government: a broadly based community effort raises funds, engages service personnel, builds and maintains structures, and delivers a locally desired service. Interestingly enough, local committees have begun developing several lateral associations through which various villages in an area exchange information, and pursue help with curriculum from the Ministry of Education. The latter they see in a supporting role, and they welcome help and contact from it. Nonetheless, the reality to local dwellers is that the services will not be forthcoming from the center. To Fass, this was critical in getting them started. They are not in any sense they express "rebellious" against the center. They are providing a collective good they desire that, in their experience, the center cannot provide. In terms of our three-part model, authority was theirs de facto, and a broad political process existed before any resources were raised. Indeed, it was how the resources were raised, and was also the source of an at least rudimentary local management capacity. Satisfactory performance led to growing local support and, even in a harsh environment of severe scarcity and great turbulence, led to growing resources for what is, in effect, a local government in Chad.

Dan Ottemoeller describes a somewhat similar dynamic and process in Uganda at the local level, though many details are nonetheless different from Chad's. Here, the collapse of the central government in Uganda in the 1980s left local dwellers without any services customarily expected from the state. Indeed, the turmoil of the Obote, Amin, and Obote regimes left them fearful for their very security (Ottemoeller, 1999).

During the revolutionary process that led to the Museveni government, large areas of central, southern and western Uganda were organized at the village level by local "resistance councils" to support the National Resistance Movement. When Museveni won power, these were reestablished as "Local Councils," and structured into several tiers of governance that culminated with a national parliamentary body. Several legislative reforms later, elected Local Councils still are the primary governing body at the village level. They have taken on, quite successfully Ottemoeller reports, providing local security, settling basic civil cases in local "courts," and general problem solving for the community.

Ottemoeller reports both qualitative and quantitative (poll) data that finds that these local councils are

well known to local dwellers, trusted, and regarded as their key problem solving and security providing institutions. Indeed, one Ugandan analyst reports the local council security personnel (essentially deputized local citizens) are effective enough that the army no longer has a "free hand" at the localities. The local "courts" are successful enough that Uganda's lawyers have begun complaining as they are competing successfully with them for "business."

This level, so far, does not provide any conventional money-intensive services: education, health, roads, etc. These are still provided by the traditional district unit of governance in Uganda. That level, in fact, raises a substantial portion of its own revenue, as Livingstone and Charlton report (1998). However, that level, much more distant from the functioning "social capital" of the villages and the LCs, is not much trusted and has had difficulty collecting those taxes.

Much is different between Chad and Uganda, but there are interesting parallels. Each has, at the village-level, functioning institutions that perform some of the key functions of local government: they identify problems, develop solutions, are accountable to the populace, make collective decisions that are in effect binding, raise and allocate resources, and operate transparently. The activities they perform are different to be sure, and Chad has gone further in raising and administering money at this level. Nonetheless, much remains similar: in each case, the collapse of central authority and services precipitated needs at the most basic community level, the village. In each, local processes were followed to select individuals to fulfill these needs absent any direction or resources from higher levels of government. Resources were broadly based and came from the local community. The functions that they took on were ones they felt were needed and were able to provide. They were, from the start, broadly accountable. There was no vast influx of resources from elsewhere to be captured by a few advantaged, and then to be used to build and sustain asymmetries of political and economic power. Nor was there a central political economy being played (though at times the center made some unsuccessful efforts to retain control in Chad, and certainly the local councils were part of the nationally led grass-roots revolutionary process in Uganda), because the center had essentially collapsed. At least these two cases suggest that one way to evade the parallel central and local political economies that seem to block decentralization, is to start at the grass-roots and build upward, rather than downward from a center that controls most resources and authority.

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This paper has explored the operation of several key organizational arrangements used in African states to facilitate decentralization and structure local governance. It has suggested that none of these work particularly well in building genuine local-level authority, resources or broadly based political process. This seems to be because they are captured by either (or both) central or local actors who have resources and interests in preventing one or all of these three components from reaching local government. At times it also seems because

of the difficulty of building working local institutions, particularly ones with public goods characteristics, and of providing complex and technically demanding services in Africa's context of frequent severe scarcity, harsh environments and general turbulence.

With the exception of Botswana, where a very unusual political environment may have overcome turbulence and allowed a more broadly based political life to displace "the local political economy," and whose relative wealth (diamonds) may have temporarily altered the intense competition characteristic of severe scarcity, a top-down, district-focused local governance strategy seems not particularly successful. Everywhere else this paper reviewed such a strategy seemed primarily to preempt or suffocate a local political life, and to maintain the control of resources and authority by local notables, often with national connections. As an alternative, in Uganda and Chad, some important local services are being provided by entities that function much as local governments. There, by default, a thoroughly bottom-up and village-centered process was followed. Local abandonment by central political entities also meant some level of local isolation from central political turbulence. In that context, local social capital and problem-solving skills appear to have allowed political institutions to develop accountable to local dwellers. The absence of "free" resources flowing from the center that local elites might capture meant, perhaps, that a local political process was not suffocated by elite preemption. Complex, top-down systems of personnel, planning, revenue raising, and budgeting, were all obviated by the problem-solving skills of local dwellers.

These circumstances are certainly unique to these cases, and certainly no one would hope for such collapse and desperation elsewhere. And while they are active in only a few low-cost services (education, security, civil disputes and general problem solving), nonetheless these are complex and important tasks. While one must not idealize the village as an area of harmony (Bierschenk and deSarden, 1997), it appears shared self-interests can overcome even substantial local conflict. These patterns in Chad and Uganda may suggest the germs of new strategies to build effective local government in Africa.

Hd/jsw/jubilee paperv3msw

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Achempong, Eric (1995). "Tug of War in Ghana: The Centralizing Features of Decentralization." Africa Insight 25 (3): 186-194.

Akpan, P.A. (1990). "Local Government Structure as a Spatial Framework for Rural Development in Nigeria." Public Administration and Development 10 (3): 263-276.

Ayee, Joseph (1995). "Financing Sub National Governments in Ghana: The District Assemblies' Common Fund." Regional and Federal Studies 5 (3): 292-306.

\_\_\_\_\_ (1992). "Decentralization and Effective Government: The Case of Ghana's District Assemblies." Africa Insight. 22 (1): 49-56.

Ayee, Joseph (1996). "The Measurement of Decentralization: The Ghanaian Experience, 1988-1992." African Affairs 95: 31-50.

Ayee, Joseph (1997). "The Adjustment of Central Bodies to Decentralization: The Case of the Ghanaian Bureaucracy." African Studies Review 40 (2): 37-58.

Berman, Bruce (1998). "Ethnicity, Patronage and The African State: The Politics of Uncivil Nationalism." African Affairs 97: 305-341.

Bierschenk, Thomas and Jean-Pierre Oliver de Sardan (1997). "Local Powers and a Distant State in Rural Central African Republic." The Journal of Modern African Studies 35 (3): 441-468.

Bird, R.M. (1990). "Intergovernmental Finance and Local Taxation in Developing Countries: Same Basic Considerations for Reformers." Public Administration and Development 10 (3): 277-288.

Blair, Harry (1998) Spreading Power to the Periphery: An Assessment of Democratic Local Governance. USAID Program and Operations Assessment Report No. 21: Washington, D.C.

Cohen, John (1993). "Importance of Public Service Reform: The Case of Kenya." The Journal of Modern African Studies 31 (3): 449-476.

Crook, R. A. (1994). "Four Years of the Ghana District Assemblies in Operation: Decentralization, Democratization and Administrative Performance." Public Administration and Development 14 (4): 339-364.

Crook, Richard and James Manor (1995). "Democratic Decentralization and Institutional Reforms: Four Asian and African Experiences Compared." Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics 33 (3): 309-334.

(1998). Democracy and Decentralization in South Asia and West Africa. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, U.K.

Davis, D. and D. Hulme and P. Woodhouse (1994). "Decentralization by Default: Local Governance and the View from the Village in The Gambia." Public Administration and Development 14 (3): 253-270.

Doan, Peter L. (1995). "The Context of Decentralization in African Development Plans." Journal of Developing Societies XI (1): 123-137.

Esman, M.R. (1988). "The Maturing of Development Administration." Public Administration and Development 8 (2): 125-135.

Fass, Simon (1999). "Polycentric Governance in Practice: The Case of Local Services in Chad." In Olowu, Dele and James Wunsch (editors). Consolidating Democracy in Africa: The Challenge of Creating Polycentric Structures Amidst Scarcity. Forthcoming.

Gilson, L., P. Kilima and M. Tanner (1994). "Local Government Decentralization and the Health Sector in Tanzania." Public Administration and Development 14 (5): 451-478.

Guyer, Jane (1992). "Representation Without Taxation: An Essay on Democracy in Rural Nigeria, 1952-1990." African Studies Review 35 (1): 41-80.

Ikhide, Sylvanus and Dele Olowu and James Wunsch (1993). USAID Health and Governance Initiatives in Nigeria: A Strategic Assessment. Associates in Rural Development: Burlington, VA.

Koehn, P. (1989). "Local Government Involvement in National Development Planning Guidelines for Project Selection Based Upon Nigeria's Fourth Plan Experience." Public Administration and Development 9 (4): 417-436.

Livingstone, Ian and Roger Charlton (1998). "Raising Local Authority Revenues Through Direct Taxation in a Low-income Developing Country: Evaluating Uganda's GPT." Public Administration and Development 18 (5): 499-517.

Manor, James (1995). "Democratic Decentralization in Africa and Asia." IDS Bulletin 26 (2): 81-88.

Mead, Timothy (1996). "Barriers to Local-Government Capacity in Nigeria." American Review of Public Administration 26 (2): 159-173.

Mutizwa-Mangiza, N.D., (1990). "Decentralization and District Development Planning in Zimbabwe." Public Administration and Development 10 (4): 423-435.

- O'Donovan, I. (1992). "Management and Change in Northern Nigerian Local Government." Public Administration and Development 12 (4): 355-372.
- Olowu, Dele (1990). "The Failure of Current Decentralization Programs in Africa." In James Wunsch and Dele Olowu, editors, The Failure of the Centralized State: Institutions and Self-Governance in Africa Westview Press: Boulder, CO.
- Olowu, Dele and James Wunsch (1995). "Decentralization, Local Government and Primary Health Care in Nigeria: An Analytical Study." Journal of African Policy Studies 1 (93): 1-22.
- Olowu, Dele and Paul Smoke, editors (1992). Special Issue: Successful African Local Government: Public Administration and Development 12 (1): 1-122.
- Olson, Mancur (1965). The Logic of Collective Action. Harvard: Cambridge, Mass.
- Ostrom, Vincent (1980). "Artisanship and Artifact." Public Administration Review 40 (4): 309-317.
- Ottoemoeller, Dan (1999). "Decentralization: The Lessons from the Local Councils of Uganda." In Olowu, Dele and James Wunsch (editors). Consolidating Democracy in Africa. Forthcoming.
- Oyugi, W.O. (1990). Decentralized Development Planning and Management in Kenya: An Assessment. Washington, D.C.: The World Bank.
- Patterson, Amy (1998). "A Reappraisal of Democracy in Civil Society: Evidence from Rural Senegal." The Journal of Modern African Studies 36 (3): 423-441.
- Riker, William (1962). The Theory of Political Coalitions. Yale: New Haven, Conn.
- Segal, Lydia (1997). "The Pitfalls of Political Decentralization and Proposals for Reform: The Case of New York City Public Schools." Public Administration Review 57 (2): 141-149.
- Slater, Richard (1997) "Approaches to Strengthening Local Government: Lessons from Sierra Leone." Public Administration and Development 17 (3): 251-265.
- Slater, Richard (1997). "Approaches to Strengthening Local Government: Lessons from Sri Lanka." Public Administration and Development 17 (3): 251-265.
- Smith, B.C. (1996). "Sustainable Local Democracy." Public Administration and Development 16 (2): 163-178.
- Smoke, P. and D. Olowu (1993). "Successful African Local Government: Methodological and Conceptual Issues Reconsidered." Public Administration and Development 13 (5): 507-514.

Smoke, Paul (1994). Local Government Finance in Developing Countries. Oxford: Nairobi.

Teune, Henry (1995). "Local Government and Democratic Political Development." Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences 540: 11-23.

Tocqueville, Alexis (1966). Democracy in America (J.P. Mayer edition). Doubleday & Co.: Garden City, N.J.

Tordoff, W. (1988). "Local Administration in Botswana." Public Administration and Development 8 (2): 183-202.

Tordoff, William (1994). "Decentralization: Comparative Experience in Commonwealth Africa." The Journal of Modern African Studies 32 (4): 555-580.

Wallis, M. (1990). "District Planning and Local Government in Kenya." Public Administration and Development 10 (4): 437-452.

Werlin, H. (1992). "Linking Decentralization and Centralization: A Critique of the New Development Administration." Public Administration and Development 12 (3): 223-236.

Wunsch, James (1998). "Decentralization, Local Governance and the Democratic Transition in Southern Africa: A Comparative Analysis." African Studies Quarterly (2):1.

Wunsch, James (1998b). "Primary Health Care and Local Government in Nigeria: What are the Lessons of Experience?" A paper presented at the WHO Conference on Local Government and Health Care, The Hague, November, 1998.

Wunsch, James and Dele Olowu (1990). The Failure of the Centralized State. Westview Press: Boulder, CO

Wunsch, James and Dele Olowu (1996). "Regime Transformation From Below: Decentralization, Local Governance, and Democratic Reform in Nigeria." Studies in Comparative International Development 31 (4): 66-82.