TANZANIAN LOCAL ADMINISTRATION

A vehicle for democratic development?

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1. INTRODUCTION

What is the role that local administration has played in the history of rural development in Tanzania? What is the level of administrative power it has maintained and what kind of achievements has it generated? The history of local administration has been outlined in several government reports currently published as a part of the Local Government Reform Programme (LGRP). Many donors, including Finnida, have actively taken part in shaping the programme. In this paper I make yet another attempt to rewrite this history. Like the government reports, I emphasise the complex political setting of the reform. In contrast to the most technical government reports, I perceive donors as an active agency in the past encounters - a provider of solutions but also a part of the problem.

The theoretical approach rests on three sources: a realistic agency analysis (McNeill 1981), interface analysis (Long 1989) and the analysis of politics in the praxis of project aid (Ferguson 1994). The first source provides tools to locate the structural parameters of project aid, the second tools to analyse the concrete encounters where contradictions are addressed, while the third source provides tools for analysing the central issue of formalism as an attempt to conceal the political implications of aid.

A growing development literature discusses the capacity of a local government to provide services and function as a medium for democratic development. Several overviews (e.g. Smith 1995; Hofmeister and Scholz 1997) and case-studies (e.g. Ayee 1997; Bierschenk and de Sardan 1997; Venema 1997) paint a rather pessimistic view on the past record of the local governments in Africa. While the political explanations (i.e. colonial history, the predatory or weak state, the overall financial constraints) are sound explanations for this state of affairs, there is still need for a closer look.

In the following I take an empathic stance towards the local government administrators. Like Tendler (1997), I perceive the active role of administrators as a crucial one. If the administrators are well motivated, the administration is able to function properly, even when the resources are limited. If the administrators are not given incentives and recognition, their work is likely to develop towards a counterproductive direction.

Throughout the text I argue that the (donor and central government) developmental practice exhibits a certain kind of *instrumentalism* where lower administrative cadres are seen as a technical means for reaching some predetermined aims. The target group -oriented administrative and project planning methodologies tend to see local administrators as a necessary evil which need to be tolerated but not given any independent role. The administrators have been loaded with various demands and they have experienced this instrumental role as less than satisfactory. The history of local administration can thus be seen as a history of disillusionment in its own role.

This historical development is the unfortunate starting point for the current reform process - a process which aims to turn the tables and to empower the local administration as an active part of local political context. Under World Bank pressure, the Government of Tanzania started a Civil Service Reform Programme in 1991. The first major impact of the programme has been the retrenchment of 50,000 civil servants (the total number is currently around 300,000, the exact figures depending on what quasi-governmental organisations are included). As a part of the reform process, the reform of local administration was recently launched (URT 1996a and b). As a preliminary step, regional administration (which is a part of the central government structure) was pushed aside during 1997. However, the local administration reform - increasing independent executive power at district level - has been delayed until 1998. Currently a certain amount of confusion prevails at the regional and district levels on how to run the administration as the reforms are being incrementally implemented. In the future reformed system, the emphasis will be placed upon a technically competent and democratically controlled administration. This paper provides a case-study on the localised political context that the Local Government Reform Programme is about to enter.

1.1 The scene

This paper is constructed around a case-study of the history of local politics and donor interventions in the Mtwara and Lindi regions but many characteristics of the case emanate from national level politics and resemble similar debates elsewhere. The case-study concerns the districts in the two southern regions of Mtwara and Lindi. Mtwara and Lindi are two sister regions which earlier, during the colonial era, composed (together with the Tunduru district) the Southern Province. Currently the Mtwara region is divided into Mtwara rural, Mtwara urban, Newala, Tandahimba and Masasi districts and the Lindi region into Lindi urban, Lindi rural, Ruangwe, Kilwa, Nachingwea and Liwale districts. The total population is nearing two million people. Most of the areas are sparsely populated but some highland areas have a dense population. The regions are fairly similar in terms of economy, culture and ecology. In economic terms, both regions are among the poorest in Tanzania. Cashew nuts were the major cash crop providing increasing income to smallholders until 1975 when the production suddenly collapsed, after which the production was negligent until the 1990s when the cashew nut production (and prices) have recovered. Artisanal gold and gemstone mining have lately also produced extra income for some people. In ecological terms, the studied regions are highly variable but the dominating ecological form is a relatively dry upland area suitable for cassava and cashew nut cultivation. The most comprehensive analysis of the regions is presented in Seppälä and Koda (1998).

The case-study is a representative case in Tanzania in terms of continuous donor involvement and in terms of the development of major political structures. In economic terms the case is hardly representative. The poverty and the low educational levels prevalent in the studied regions have an impact on what a local administration may possibly achieve. The allocation of personnel to administration has not favoured the southern regions. The study of these regions can be defended by saying that what can be achieved in the field of local administration in Mtwara and Lindi should be achievable in other parts of the country as well.

1.2 The text

The order of the text is as follows: The second chapter analyses the history of political interfaces from the perspective of local administration. Thus, the total economic environment of local administration is studied. The third chapter takes up the contemporary situation and delineates changes within local administration and its environment. The chapter contextualises the current local government reform programme from the angle of political economy. The fourth chapter presents the economic resources available for the local government. The fifth chapter summarises and provides scenarios for future development.

2. THE POLITICAL HISTORY OF LOCAL ADMINISTRATION

2.1 Development discourse and the construction of legitimate actors

It is often argued that the development discourse creates its own actors. Thus the discursive practices of the development experts are influential in that they shape the understanding of the political scene, the level of actual organisational development and thus the very existence of actors as organised pressure groups (Ferguson 1994). Some two decades ago the development discourse was conducted in a totally different tone from the current discourse. At that time, *planning* was the key word and any defect in development could be tracked back to bad planning. The official political field was strictly controlled and, consequently, the number of legitimate actors presented in the analyses was small. It could be argued that the development discourse was instrumental to the preservation of the controlled and shallow political scene. In the contemporary situation, the development discourse has moved from planning to *partnership* where a large number of 'stakeholders' are seen to discuss not only concrete problems but also the manner of handling power. The number of legitimate actors has increased and the tags placed upon them have changed. In the current situation we have, in addition to the all old actors, 'private sector' and 'civil society' (constituted of 'non-governmental organisations') who are said to be taking part in negotiations. In the contemporary situation, the development discourse has moved from the position of a narrow analysis towards an open analysis and, in so doing, become instrumental in shaping the real political scene into a more complex and less hierarchical structure.

The shift in development discourse is dramatic. One could always argue that the changes in the official discourses are always more pronounced than the changes 'in the field'. Yet there is a grain of wisdom in the argument that development discourse moulds its own agencies. Even if some actors have existed throughout the past decades, their mode of action has been fundamentally shaped by the development discourse. Private entrepreneurs are an exemplary case in point. Entrepreneurs were seen some two decades ago as individuals who should be strictly controlled or they would create exploitation and anarchy in the society. Consequently, the entrepreneurs had to operate at a very low profile and depoliticise their own existence. In the contemporary situation, the entrepreneurs are seen as an active force creating exploitation but also wealth. They are expected, in the context of negotiation on resource distribution, to defend actively and openly their own role in the society.

Local administration has a long and colourful history in Tanzania. The manner of organising the local administration and the active 'voice' handed to administrators and councillors has varied over time. In the following we will look at the interfaces of local administration and, through the description of various interfaces, try to pin down the relationship of political environment (especially the development discourse) to its functioning.

The analysis of the political scene through a 'stakeholder' analysis has recently become popular among the donor agencies. Stakeholder analysis can be used to locate power positions between the major actors. However, one needs to be careful while naming the stakeholders. There is no guarantee that the named stakeholders exist as corporate groups (with a 'voice') or that the members of an alleged group share the same view on the subject matter. In this study the term 'actor' instead of stakeholder is used.

Local administration is a part of the state structures. In the political debate, the role of local administration is currently conceptualised as an item in the power contestation between the state and the civil society. The analysis of the political scene shows that both the state and the civil society include a variety of actors and, in some cases, it is difficult to place an actor (as a category) definitely on one side of the fence.

On this basis I construct a simplified scene of actors. The naming of actors is a tool for locating, within one frame, both formal/visible and informal/hidden tendencies in the politics of local administration. I have preliminarily located seven broad categories of actors:

The State

1. local administration
2. central government
3. political party
4. donors

The Civil Society

3. political parties
4. donors
5. businessmen
6. civic organisations
7. villagers.

In the following analysis, the local administration is placed in the center and its relations to each of the other actors is studied separately. Before entering this analysis, it is necessary to define the term *local administration*.

2.2. What is local administration?

In this article the term 'local administration' is used to refer to the administrative set-up from district level to village level. This term is rather open and it is necessary to highlight the variations in the administrative practices that the setting covers. The term covers administrators answerable to both the central government and the semi-independent elected district and village councils. Since this conceptualisation is exceptional, it needs to be justified. The main justification is that using such a technical definition we avoid importing the ideological elements of decentralisation into the concept.

The term 'local government' refers to a body which has definite decision-making power, and economic means to make use of this power. In the history of Tanzania, the term local government can be used only for certain periods, and even during those periods its use might need to be limited to the existence of certain formal and legal structures.

In the voluminous literature on local administration, much ink has been used to analyse the power structures of the lower level elected bodies. They are seen to represent a vehicle for decentralised, transparent, participatory and human political practise. It is, however, very questionable whether the Tanzanian district councils can be best analysed through such an *a priori* conceptualisation. Although local governments (in rural areas district councils and in urban areas municipalities) have existed as separate elected bodies until 1972 and after 1984, their independence has been severely curtailed during both periods. The difference between the three periods is better understood through an empirical analysis of the political structures and economic resources (i.e. 'local administration') rather than a legalistic framework.

A conventional history of Tanzanian political history argues that the throughout 1960s and 1970s, the central government, entangled with the ruling party, increased its own role. The statist orientation received active support from donors. During the process, the local administration was brought within the central government while villagers and businessmen were eliminated from the power struggle. The villagers responded towards the statist command policies by withdrawal into the informal sector. The informalisation of the economy further weakened the capacity of the central state to maintain its presence and legitimacy in rural areas. Consequently, the 1980s witnessed the weakening of administrative grip over the local development. The situation could be described as an organised anarchy since power existed in distinctive enclaves over distinctive resources. The economic crisis forced the government to liberalise the economy - a process which effectively meant the creation of new power centres outside the government realm. The businessmen were back on the scene.

The history of local administration follows the same lines. Local administration was brought under the control ('supremacy') of the political party. The reform conducted in 1972 placed emphasis on regional and district level committees which were supposed to follow the party guidelines and, simultaneously, include the local initiatives into

rational plans. When district councils as elected bodies were returned in the 1984 reform, the regional authorities were retained under the central government structure and given wide supervisory powers. Moreover, a large part of district council funding and staff remained to be allocated by the central government. In practical terms, the key administrators identified themselves as answerable to higher ministries rather than the elected district councils. The elected district councils were allocated a mandate to decide upon a small part of income sources and expenditure. Often the high-handed key administrators bent the allocative decisions, thus ignoring the district council decisions. The lower ranking administrators were allocated very limited decision-making power and an equally limited operational budget. The practise of political decision-making was far from the model of democratic decentralised structure.

The following figure shows the structure of local administration that existed after the 1984 administrative reform.

Figure 1: Administrative structures in Tanzania

The dotted lines in figure 1 show how the both the district councils and the district administration have had a diluted independence because of the close cooperation with other government and party agencies. Often the cooperation has been enforced legally so that the representatives of ministries, regions and the party have had stipulated participation in the decision-making processes.

A central qualitative feature of the development from the 1960s up to 1980s was the transfer of power to the central level and the attempt to eliminate open politics at the local level. The depolitisation of the local administration was a result of certain conventions that the other actors developed over time. In other words, they developed an instrumental relationship to local administration. Local administrators were almost denied of any of their own legitimate aims and policies and placed into a servant position - a means to the ends of the others. This instrumental attitude - and the numerous practical ways that it was accomplished - fully disillusioned the local administrators and councillors. They were not expected to do anything on their own. Thus, why do anything?

In the following, I study separately individual interfaces of local administration in southern regions from the eve of independence to the era of multi-party politics.

2.3 Central government - local administration interface

The relationship between the central and local administration has several twists and turns. The colonial administration showed sporadic interest in developing the southern province and its administrative structures. Still, at the time of independence, the southern province (now split into Mtwara and Lindi regions) had gained a reputation for being a hardship area where initiatives from above were received without any enthusiasm. The colonial administration had been run by a few foreign administrators and a number of mission-educated support staff. Liebenow (1971) in his excellent analysis of the local political history shows the arbitrary pattern of colonial administration. The African people did not, however, all keep a low political profile. Liebenow shows well the evolving split between 'modernists' and 'traditionalists' (and intermediate groups) among Africans during the late 1950s and the 1960s.

The later development of the central vs. local government interface follows the same pattern as elsewhere in Tanzania. The central government placed the political aim of equality above all other aims. Simultaneously, it started to strip all

the power bases outside the TANU/CCM hierarchy. District councils (with a potential for evoking ethnic/locational/parochial identities) were seen as a source of such independent power. Their operational independence was curtailed and they were placed under a politically controlled and heavily top-down oriented administrative hierarchy. Central government took the active role of formalising and standardising the fluid district councils. Thus circulars, guidelines and plans started to float out from Dar es Salaam.

Mtwara and Lindi were among the first districts to be taken into the villagisation programme in the early 1970s. The programme was implemented quickly and systematically because - according to the official policy - the scattered population was at risk due to the war in neighbouring Mozambique. The villagisation took place simultaneously with the termination of district councils in 1972.

During villagisation, the village councils were retained with a fundamental ideological task. They were supposed to generate plans and implement agreed policies. Don Hassett has written a case-study on the village-level administration with material from Lindi during 1980-81. Hassett shows how the village level administration was actually placed between two forces. On the one hand, it tried to please the views of fellow villagers and to play along the lines of the parochial politics. On the other, it was expected to fulfil the demands from above. The village authorities learned quickly to adapt their way of talking in various situations. The excessive demands from above were watered down and the strict regulations (e.g. the abolishing of private retail trade) were simple circumvented. (Hassett 1985)

The central government interpreted the lack of local initiatives as a matter of the lack of technical capacity to plan projects. Consequently, village managers were posted in the villages. The central government presence was not actually helpful, as the villagisation (plus the inefficiency of the crop marketing system) had shaken the basic livelihoods of the rural population. The people simply did not have time or other resources to implement additional village-level economic activities.

During the 1970s and early 1980s, the central government tried to penetrate the rural areas through establishing and strengthening regional administration and parastatals. The regional administration, guiding the village councils and being influenced by CCM, gained a supervisory administrative position. Many of the resources were also channelled through parastatals. One parastatal which was specifically important for southern Tanzania was the Cashewnut Authority of Tanzania. It tried to market the cashew nut, the main cash crop of the area, but failed to operate in an efficient manner. The Cashewnut Authority of Tanzania is an exemplary case of the operational difficulties that the centralised parastatals had during those years (Ellis 1980; Seppälä 1998).

The economic inefficiency of the sectoral top-down administration forced the government to start the district councils anew in 1984. While the new local governments were given a number of tasks, they were administratively controlled by regional authorities and ministries. Their finances and manpower were also allocated from above. The districts in southern Tanzania had a very poor record of tax collection (Therkildsen and Semboja 1992). Thus, their scope of manoeuvre was very limited.

Looked at from below, the reform of 1984 was a matter inside the central government structure. After the reform, a part of the central government was nominally called local administration. However, its manpower and finances were allocated from above. The administrators were circulated from one location to another to prevent the establishment of economic and political networks. Even the candidates for district councils were allocated or, at least, approved from above.

When central government resources were distributed, the local government staff and projects were among the least endowed. The southern regions have been particularly adversely affected by low staffing levels. The qualifications of staff posted in southern regions has also been below national average. One reason is the reluctance of the qualified people posted to the southern regions to accept the working place.

2.4 Political parties - local administration interface

After independence TANU appeared as a strong party. Before independence Southern Tanzania had some support of the United Tanganyika Party and it even hosted the Masasi African Democratic Union. However, it was soon noticed by TANU leaders that location/ethnic multi- party politics would harm the drive towards national cohesion. The opposition was banned. At the same time, the party structure of TANU was increasingly centralised. Other, more concealed strategies were used to create the same effect. For example, newspapers written in local languages (other than Kiswahili) were banned. The whole political culture evolved towards centralism. Soon southern Tanzania appeared as one of the areas with no other political arenas but the official TANU/CCM politics.

Much of the State vs. Local Government interface was mediated through the hierarchy of the party committees from the late 1960s to the early 1990s. The ruling political party was given ‘supremacy’ and the party representatives were

neatly inside the administrative structure. Party nominations were made from above, creating a patron-client relationship where a subservient politician was allocated some (mainly negative i.e. inhibiting and controlling) power above his area. (Mutahaba 1991)

Local government (before 1972 and after 1984) has accommodated an elected council. Councillors have tended to be people with wisdom accumulated through age and local experience rather than those with administrative expertise. The district councillors, representing one ward each, have had very little to discuss as the administrative and political guidelines from above have prevented their decision-making power. Especially in case of major budget lines of health and education, the central government has earmarked the money allocations for specific purposes. Many commentators call the district councillors rubber-stamps at the end of a decision-making process. There are, however, usually some experienced former administrators who also maintain a high profile as councillors.

2.5 Donor-local administration interface

Donors have a large number of reference groups to please and local administration is certainly not the most important of them. It is also simplifying to speak of a donor as a united entity with a single aim. A 'donor' is often composed of a controlling and financing agency and a private company with a task to implement a project. Individual persons attached to the implementing organisations identify themselves to a varying extent as either the servants of donor country taxpayers, the implementers of a donor agency policy, the implementing company employees or the helpers of the final target groups. Identification as a local administrator is the fifth and often the weakest form of self-identification.

Given this, how does the donor-local administration interface work? At the project level, the consultant/local administration interface has been overshadowed by a top-down organisation of project level decision making. Thus, the project steering committees tend to have heavy representation from the central government, the consultant and the financing donor agency but limited or no representation from the local authority because, rightly, local authority has been perceived as a (weak) arm of central government. (cf. Semboja 1995)

The major impact of donors on the local administration has been cultural. The donor agencies have enhanced the planning culture where plans are written as technical documents and where administrative personnel is seen as a technical input (treated as a tool if possible) for aims which are fully outside the administration (cf. Ferguson 1994). According to this view, administration does not have any internal aims, it only mediates a process aiming at action elsewhere.

The history of donor projects in the Mtwara and Lindi regions includes both long-term commitments and more sporadic interests. The regional level projects are well documented by Armstrong (1987) and Voipio (1998). Below a list of the major projects is given.

Regionwide non-sectoral projects:

Regional Master plans Finnida 1974-75

Regional projects (RIDEP) ODA 1975-85

Rural integrated (RIPS I) Finnida 1987-93

Rural integrated (RIPS II) Finnida 1993-

Sectoral projects:

Water project Finnida

Health project Unicef, GTZ

Cashew project WB

Agricultural project ODA

Vocational training Danida

Urban water supply EU

Road projects Finnida, JICA

The main donors have maintained a certain degree of continuity on the sectoral level. ODA has had a fairly consistent interest in agricultural production. The World Bank was behind the construction of the giant nonfunctional cashew factories starting from the 1970s and its later interest has concentrated on the recovery of cashew production. Finnida has been interested in the complex including administrative resources, physical infrastructure and rural production. Thus all of these donors have maintained a consistent interest in the regions for more than two decades.

The major aid projects influenced local administration mainly by marginalising them and placing emphasis on regional administration. The first Finnish RIDEP conceived its task as a regional planning task. Paradoxically, the planning team had just started its work on regional planning when the villagisation was implemented. In this fluid situation, the team became an observer and a technical enumerator of the centrally planned change. The subsequent British regional planning project had a strong emphasis on increasing agricultural projects. After a long analysis ODA started specific projects where individual foreign experts were running sub-projects within the government (regional and district) administration. The Finnish RIPS I programme inherited some of the British projects and initiated some others. Regional administration was perceived as the main administrative level responsible for implementing the planned projects. Finally, the RIPS II programme, after a long planning period, started to implement projects through a participatory framework. Although project coordination was maintained at a regional level, officers from different levels of administration were incorporated into ad hoc planning ventures some of which, after programme screening, developed into projects. Officers were provided also training in participatory methods. Thus less emphasis was given on the wide coverage of projects and more on the small experimental projects which aimed to change the attitude of selected officers away from the paternalistic top-down approach towards a facilitator status.

Throughout the history of donor interventions, the programmes have paid the salaries of selected counterpart officers, provided them training with good allowances and, last but not least, provided cars for the administration. One can even say that the regional level of administration has gained its legitimacy through the existence of donor resources. Simultaneously, the district level has remained as a modestly supported and resource-poor administrative level.

The results of the programmes have been relatively modest for many reasons. One obvious reason is the large geographical area which makes the effects of regional projects rather diluted. Another reason is the cumbersome programme administration including a two stage control mechanism where, in addition to programme layout, sub-projects have also been subjected to bureaucratic control from above. Thus legitimisation work towards higher authorities has turned the eyes of project workers away from the legitimisation among the beneficiaries.

The resource gap between the donor and the local administration can be illustrated through the following example. A single large project can have an annual budget which equals the amount of tax income of all district councils in a region. Given the below-subsistence salaries in local administration and the almost non-existent development budgets of local administration, a donor can buy a substantial amount of expertise from local governments using allowances as incentives. However, the activities then become the property of the donor programme. A dependency relationship is created where only the external inputs sustain the administrative input.

At the heart of the donor-local government interface is a continuous squabble over salaries and allowances. The backbone for this dispute is laid in donor policy which usually does not allow for the payment of the recurrent costs (i.e. the salaries of government employees) but allows the payment of allowances. The government of Tanzania has responded to this principle by keeping the salary levels low but stipulating a high level for allowances. Since the government has limited means to actually pay these allowances for its employees, the local administrators outside a donor project context are deprived of a decent income. In contrast, the officers working within a donor context are able to reap considerable income from allowances.

During the 1990s the politico-administrative climate for donor interventions has changed dramatically and there is experimentation with new types of interfaces based on partnership between administration, villagers and donors. These will be discussed in chapter 3 below.

2.6 Businessmen - local administration interface

Perhaps the most interesting and concealed linkage exists between businessmen and local administration. According to the official version, doing business was condemned as immoral in the 1960s and thus the linkages were severed. Certainly at least the operations of businessmen of Asian origin were made much more difficult at that time. Soon afterwards, however, a new pattern emerged whereby the administrators were personally involved in business

ventures. Instead of having administrators controlling businessmen, one could find a group of administrator-businessmen who used their administrative connections to secure transport and customers for their private enterprises. The reason for this development was the administrators' low salaries and their superior access to key resources like transport and telephones. In the 1980s, for example, there were hardly any other cars on the move but the government/donor vehicles and a few buses in the southern regions. It was not uncommon to see the government/donor vehicles packed with people and functioning as mini-buses. It is notable that although the Party Code of Conduct condemned the sideline activities, these were widespread and silently approved.

This intrinsic linkage had an effect on how business was to be conducted. A normal businessman had difficulties to compete purely by means of economic efficiency; one needed also politico-administrative competence. If a businessman did not have a position within the administration, he had to use various means to establish a positive linkage to the local administration.

2.7 Civic organisations - local administration interface

Civic organisations that were active during the socialist era were the party controlled youth and women's organisations, the religious organisations and the most harmless varieties of cultural associations. The civic organisations did not have a say in the local politics. In fact, the apolitical nature of an organisation was a precondition for its continued operation.

In the southern regions, some Christian churches were allowed to operate in their own manner within the surroundings of the mission stations. Thus the Catholic and Anglican churches managed to form very strong localised spheres of influence (within a radius of a half day's walking distance from a mission station) where they provided schooling and health services. They refrained from active participation in local administration and thus lost the forefront position that they had reached in the 1950s.

2.8 Villager - local administration interface

Administration has always had its line of command from region, through district, division and ward to village level. Although different levels of administration have been parts of varying ministries and local governments, they have been, from a villager's perspective, perceived as a single line of command. This line has been used for telling about new policies and for collecting taxes. A parallel party organisation line has been used for informing about party policies and collecting 'voluntary' contributions.

The southern districts have usually had less-motivated administrators and the administrators have come from other regions. The villagers have, through low educational levels and the relative isolation of area, developed a rather nonchalant (parochial) attitude towards the 'foreign' administrators. The pattern of keeping their distance has two sides. According to the administrators, the villagers are undeveloped and should start to be serious, first by abandoning their small (= ineffective) hoes. According to the villagers, the administrators have nothing to offer but words.

2.9 Coalitions and controls in local government politics

The above analysis concentrated on the dyadic relationships between positioned institutional stakeholders. The real power game was naturally more complicated. A central feature of the political structure was the emphasis on ideological clarity which, during the time of shifting policies, meant that the discursive practices were controlled and the political participation was narrowed by limiting the sphere of official actors and acts. When the economy collapsed, the political life reacted slowly, creating an increasing separation of the political rhetoric from actual practises. (Hyden and Karlström 1993; Tripp 1997. See also Hyden 1980 and 1983.)

One aspect of the local government politics was the silencing of district level politics as an arena of debate. If locational interests had to be interpreted, they would be preferably be interpreted at a village level. Whatever happened at the district level was not reported to the people living within the constituency. From the political perspective, the district disappeared as a playground for open politics.

Another aspect of the local government politics was the silencing of certain actors previously active in the political scene. The cooperatives, opposition parties, civic organisations and businessmen were not allowed to be represented

as interest groups. Naturally some businessmen and cooperative officers remained active but their way of doing politics became backstage politics.

For donor representatives, the hidden politics was extremely difficult to understand and almost impossible to participate in. The district level politics were run through party-controlled meetings where donors were not invited. The manner of organising the flows of information were such that the donors heard about local decisions when these were already made. At the national level, the donor agencies were provided with more plans in advance and thus they were given recognition. Perhaps one reason for the donor agencies to support the central government initiatives was the impenetrable nature of the district level politics.

3. LOCAL ADMINISTRATION AND POLITICS IN THE 1990S

3.1 New agendas

Written as it is above, the history of local administration appears as a history of a slave with several masters. From the one side, the donors have run their own policies above or through local administration. From the other side, the central government has pushed and pulled local administration in different directions. Now the situation is going to be changed but also complicated further. It is expected that even the common rural people should be able, through democratic participation, to make their voices heard to the administration. Political parties are entering district politics. And if one reads the documents carefully, the businessmen also should start to collaborate openly with administration. How can the administration possible cope with all these masters?

In chapter 3 I am drawing together some tendencies which deviate from the policies during previous decades. There appear, broadly speaking, five different sources which push towards a more active district level politics. These are new donor approaches, the administrative reform, the multi-party politics, market forces and civic organisations.

3.2 Donor initiatives

Donor agencies have started to approach the local governments hesitantly but with a degree of sincerity. Among the agencies working in southern Tanzania, UNICEF has been spearheading the new donor initiatives. It has organised its project on child nutrition through district authorities. After some problems of mismanagement and funding problems, the project has slowed down but there is still firm local commitment (under an impressive local coordinator) to it in the Newala district. The RIPS programme of Finnida has also moved towards facilitating work through district councils. It has recently allocated money for district councils for their own (although pre-screened) development projects. Many project-specific teams working under the RIPS programme also rely upon district administrators. In addition, RIPS has taken a step to promote the training of district councillors so that they would be prepared to shoulder their new financial responsibilities after the LGRP is implemented. Recently two big international NGOs, Action Aid and Concern, have entered into Lindi and Mtwara, respectively. Both NGOs have started to work in close collaboration with the district authorities.

The donors are currently a mixed lot in terms of relationship with local administration. It is still common for donors to organise activities as sectoral projects, administered in collaboration rather than through local administration. Interestingly, the multi-lateral, bilateral and NGO donors have a lot of overlap in their strategic emphasis on small-scale actors. This means involvement with a wide negotiation process with local administration, villagers, and local organisations. It is characteristic of the recent donor initiatives that the *division of roles* in the actual implementation of projects has become very flexible. Administrators, donor agency employees and other parties are invited to take part in projects and the division of tasks is decided case by case. The ‘ownership’ of the projects is divided between actors although, due to their financial muscle, the donor agencies still have a central position in allocative decision-making. In the current fluid situation it is difficult for donors not to be involved in intricate political debates.

3.3. Local Government Reform and local politics

The Local Government Reform Programme is a direct attack on the prevalent administrative practices and financial misery in local governments. The administrative reform will be a straightforward measure to politicise the local administration. The politically selected district council will be given great economic power and, according to current plans, the central government funding will be allocated as block funding to district councils. The district council will also be allowed to nominate its officers on the merit basis. The selection of personnel (alongside with retrenchments as a part of Civil Service Reform Programme) will mean that there will be fierce political battles over key administrative positions.

3.4 Multi-party politics in local government

During the 1990s, multi-party politics has entered the southern regions, although from above: the major parties had their roots in DSM. (One local plan for a national opposition party was initiated prior to the 1995 district council election but it never really gained momentum.) In the multi-party system the various parties need to establish, in order to convince the electorate, a grassroots organisational structure. In the southern regions, NCCR-Mageuzi, Chadema and CUF have managed to establish several offices in towns. So far, the opposition parties keep a low profile between the elections in the southern regions.

The multi-party politics are slowly entering the local governments. The election of the district councils in 1994 was conducted as party elections and only political parties were allowed to offer candidates. This eliminated the 'free' candidates, with charisma and competence but without party support, from entrance to the councils. The election was basically a show of the organisational strength of CCM. While other parties had rallies in southern regions (with offices in major towns), they did not manage to bring forward candidates in rural areas. (Mmuya 1994; Seppälä 1995)

In elections the old division between traditionalists and modernists seems to be alive. According to some modernists, the bulk of the electorate likes to elect a candidate of their own kind: a person who knows the local religious, ethnic and age-based power structures and who thus relates to his fellow villagers in an intrinsic way. Such a traditionalism-minded candidate is preferable to a more educated, wealthier and less controllable person. The low educational level of most of the district councillors has meant that a strong district executive leadership has been able to use quarterly district council meetings as a rubber stamp for its own plans. Although district councillors complain about the use of all resources in administration (instead of distribution to the wards of the councillors), they have limited means of supervising the financial flows. Nevertheless, the excessive misuse of funds has recently led to the replacement of some district executives and council chairmen.

The administrators repeatedly claim that they need to keep a distance from all parties, including CCM, in their daily work. It is difficult to say, how closely the top officers (nominated by the president’s office) still follow the CCM policies. Although district councils are fully governed by CCM members, some administrators are tired of centrally controlled administration and welcome more open politics.

In the parliamentary and presidential elections of 1995, CCM won overwhelmingly in southern Tanzania. It gained over 85 percent of the votes.

3.5 Businessmen with a voice

The business world is creating new political agendas and issues which need to be dealt with. Businessmen are a major source of self-generated income for local governments because they pay license fees and crop levies. The local governments have some scope to determine their own tax bases and thus influence the profits of businessmen. When private marketing expands and business organisations become more coherent, the demands on local administration will increase.

In southern Tanzania, the business scene has lately become active because trading with cashew nut and gemstones has created new opportunities for businessmen. The impact of these high-profit tradables is most evident in the towns of Masasi and Mtwara. Wealthy traders, originating mainly from Dar es Salaam and India, flock the towns during the buying seasons. While the visiting traders have very transient interests in the region, they have brought a number of local businessmen within the sphere of big business. These local businessmen have started to make some investments in hotels, shops and transport. Many administrators have also strengthened and formalised their business ventures. In comparative terms, the towns in the southern regions are a lucrative location for retiring civil-servants-cum-businessmen because urban plots are available and agricultural land has low prices, even in the vicinity of towns.

The local business community is clearly divided into African and Asian sections. For example, the Chamber of Commerce is divided into two separate organisations along racial lines. The small-scale African entrepreneurs have established their own organisation and manage (under donor support) to organise a local trade fair. In relation to local administration, the local business community is still making very limited demands. The visiting large-scale businessmen also operate at a low profile while in the southern regions but it is interesting that both cashew buyers and gemstone buyers have managed to establish an organisation (in Dar es Salaam) to voice their own interests in the national policy forums.

Businessmen also have another relationship with the local government. They are competing for tenders over (increasingly) privatised service provisioning and infrastructure construction. Currently the district councils do organise tender competitions but several businessmen have noted that the district councils fail to pay for the

commissioned work. The obvious reason is the negligent capacity of the district councils to fund meaningful projects. In the future, when the district councils start to manage their block grants, the tenders will be floated and the hot debates on the validity of selection are likely to emerge. Given the level of debate that the current small tenders have generated, we shall face a lot of both founded and unfounded accusations.

Businessmen have supported their own candidates for parliamentary seats during the last election. Generally speaking, the most influential local businessmen have avoided open participation in local government politics. Their active interface with local government is the competition for construction work on local government projects and the securing of titles for agricultural land.

3.6. Civic organisations - an amorphous category

A major characteristic of the one-party rule was the condemnation of other civic organisations, with the exception of religious organs. Even the latter maintained active relations with the party and administration. Civic activism was encouraged at the village level. However, the villagers seldom shared common interests to the extent of joining village-wide activities. Even these had the government stigma.

Non-governmental organisations became a catchword of development during the 1980s. When the number of organisations increased, the discussion started to refer to civil society as an independent force. In the southern regions, the collapse of party-based women's and youth organisations left behind a vacuum. Some small initiatives (e.g. environmental groups, women's economic groups and religious/cultural groups) have emerged but usually these have been established to attract donor involvement.

During the 1990s a new phase in the interface started when district-wide civic organisations with developmental aims started to appear. The new district-wide organisations had the agenda of bringing developmental inputs like secondary schools, vocational training centres and health clinics into the district. The leaders of the organisations were national level figures with their roots in the district. Often the groups also had economic projects and also appeared as the fronts of business interests. An imaginative example of these organisations is the Newala Development Foundation. It has started the construction of several secondary schools and it also runs buses. Its major source of revenue is a levy collected on cashews - a levy which would normally have been collected totally by the district council. (Kiondo 1995)

3.7. New coalitions

In the current situation the scene for local politics is changing. Instead of hidden politics, the various parties are expected to be organised into ‘stakeholders’ with an active voice. The constellations that emerge when three or more parties take part in a negotiation are complex and it is not always easy to predict the outcome of the process.

During the socialist era, the coalition politics was confined within the nomenclature of political and administrative leadership. Even during the second half of 1980s, the era of *mageuzi*, that coalition kept control over central power but the emerging new partners in this coalition were large-scale businessmen. During the 1990s the businessmen have entered the coalition and started, for example, to openly fund political activities (especially after parties were facing the costly multi-party competition) to guarantee an 'enabling' business environment. While this is a normal part of democratic power sharing, it has meant that the villagers have had less access to play power politics. The villagers have still been subjected to power intrusions but currently the power has been divided between private market actors and administration. Although this big power game has been played at the national level, it has also effected the understanding of politics at the district level. The case of Newala (below) is exemplary in this respect.

In the current situation it is possible to delineate multi-actor coalitions where local administration is siding with another agency and simultaneously competing with a third one. The district authorities have managed to develop power coalitions with donors on specific issues. The donors have been very interested in pulling the civic organisations also within the power coalitions but find it very difficult to put this idea in practice. The main reason is the lack of civic organisations with a viable membership base. The option that is available for donors is functioning as a mid-wife for new civic organisations. The Finnish RIPS has lately made tentative trials to foster civic organisations which aim at more sustainable use of natural resources. So far, the experience has shown that the organisational capacity of the independent civic organisations is too low to create other than donor-driven initiative.

In other regions, the bilateral donors (especially Dutch and Irish) have actively sought to allocate resources through local administration, thus bypassing the central government. They have also extended the coalitions to civic organisations and sought collaboration the with private sector. Thus the similar trend towards new coalitions can be located in many quarters.

Interestingly, some radical top officers at the regional and district levels have lately shown keen interest in forming new partnership arrangements. A good example is the plan for a large-scale water scheme in the Newala district. Water is a major problem in Newala as the Makonde Water Scheme (constructed during the 1950s) has become inoperative. The top officers decided to attack this problem and initiated a plan for the major 'people's' organisations in Newala (Newala Development Foundation, cooperative union and district council) to unite forces and rehabilitate the Makonde Water Scheme. The leaders further proposed that the scheme would be run independently on a commercial basis. The well-thought out project plan become, however, subject to an intense controversy after a local politician attempted to hijack the whole project under the sole control of the Newala Development Foundation. Only after a year of political squabbles, the coup was put down and the projects could start with a new board and new commitment. Currently the top administrators use all possible ways to generate government and donor funding for this important cause.

While the new coalitions are able to break out of old conventions, they also have one major drawback. The new coalitions tend to be based on special funds which tend to divert resources from the local administration. In the southern regions, the administration has established Agricultural Input Funds in collaboration with cooperatives. In practise this means that a part of tax income from cashew nut sales is diverted to a fund which is supposed to provide pesticides for cashew nut cultivators. Although the cause is important, the problem is that the actual functioning of the fund is effectively beyond democratic control.

4. THE ECONOMICS OF ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM

There are many expectations riding on the local government reform. Their fulfilment depends on the political culture and political will but also - and this we have not yet discussed - the financial capacities of district and village councils to promote development.

4.1 District council finances

The district council receives income from two sources: central government allocations and its own taxes and levies. The central government allocation covers the salaries of the majority of officers. This allocation is tied into predetermined uses as the following citation shows:

> In general district councils appear to have normal {tied} recurrent budgets which equal to the amount of money they are allocated. On the basis of these statistics it seems that there is no guarantee that there would be resources left for any other salaries or expenses. Thus it is an open secret that many council are allocated very little money for other activities.
>
> (Mtwara region budget 1993/94, p. 7)

The central government has also financed from its budget some development projects but during the last years development expenditure (while planned) has not actually materialised. This is evident from Table 1 which presents the planned and actual expenditure of the Mtwara region.

Table 1: Central government funding for the Mtwara region from 1994/95 to 1997/98.

	Recurrent planned	*Recurent actual*	*Development planned*	*Development actual*	*Total planned*	*Total actual*
1994/95	2.8	3.4	1.1	0.2	3.9	3.6
1995/96	2.9	3.0	1.3	0.0	4.2	3.0
1996/97	3.7		0.6		4.3	
1997/98	3.7		0.2		3.9	

(billion shillings.)

1994/95 1995/96

planned actual planned actual

Recurrent 2.8 3.4 2.9 3.0

Development 1.1 0.2 1.3 0.0

Total 3.9 3.6 4.2 3.0

1996/97 1997/98

planned actual planned actual

Recurrent 3.7 3.7

Development 0.6 0.2

Total 4.3 3.9

As Table 1 shows, the central government funded district level development projects (outside the donor funded schemes) have virtually ceased to exist. Earlier, the centrally funded projects were at least planned on paper but lately even the tradition of planning has been abandoned.

The district councils have their own tax base. Since the poll tax has been very unpopular and generated only a little income, district councils have concentrated on other forms of taxation. In southern Tanzania, the crop levy collected on cashew production has recently generated a sizeable income, especially for the Newala and Masasi districts. The wealthier districts have recently been able to initiate some of their own development projects. The poorer districts use practically all their own income for recurrent costs. For example, the development budget of the Lindi district (with 300,000 inhabitants) had the following development budget (1993/94):

Table 2: The development budget of the Lindi district in 1993/94

Planning	3.3
Education	6
Health	2
Rural roads	5
Water	10
Lands	-
Environment	-
Industry	-
Total	*26 million shillings*

(Source: Budget of Lindi 1993/94)

The budget gives an impression that at least some development activities can be carried out. The problem is still that the leading administrators may transfer resources from development activities to recurrent activities during the budget year. Thus, the actual allocation to development projects tends to be much smaller than what was planned. In all districts, the priority is given to salaries and the mobility of the top administrators. Below the top level the normal operational resources (i.e. transport, tools, office facilities) have been minimal: the officers are largely office-bound and rightfully frustrated at the underutilisation of their skills.

From the operative perspective, the district administration appears as a tool for tax collection, an information channel

for political and administrative orders, and a arena for a number of small projects (road maintenance, youth groups etc.). District administrations have played a part in land allocation and registration as well as the utilisation of other natural resources. The role of district council in service provision is nominally wide but in practise directed from above. District councils have even been bypassed as a channel for paying salaries to their major employee groups, namely teachers and health workers. All this has been planned to change as the Local Government Reform Programme is being implemented.

4.2 The resources of local administrators

The developmental role of the local level administrators is largely determined by the financial resources that they command. The salary levels of the administrators declined some 80 percent in real terms during the 1970s and 1980s. Although some salary increases have lately been implemented, the normal salaries are still far below the level of the 1960s and below subsistence level. This forces many administrators to look for supplementary sources of income. An administrator comments: "Some people in this office rely on their salary only. I don't know how they can manage. They are paid five percent extra for housing. That is nothing. Five percent out of 50,000, what is it? I cannot pay even the electricity bills from my salary. But I am luckier - I have the government house." In the southern regions the per capita annual income is about shs. 30,000. If we count an average size of a household at six persons, we see that the basic income of an officer is roughly 3-4 times the income of an average peasant household. While it is considerably higher, it still does not provide money for luxurious living standards. The officers commonly live in crowded two-room apartments and either use a bicycle or walk to get to work. They are officially entitled to holiday allowances and moving allocation (when transferred) but in practise these funds are not available.

Compared with salaries, the rates of night allowances are considerable. Currently an officer visiting district or regional headquarters is paid shs. 10,000 while a visit to a village provides a non-taxed income of shs. 7,500. It is no wonder that the work tasks providing allowances are sought for. The shortage of funds at the district level means, however, that the council can provide very limited opportunities for employees to gather allowances. Also, the opportunities are heavily biased in favour of the senior administrators.

The donor agencies have much more scope to pay the daily allowances. Thus they have means to employ administrators temporarily for their project work. The requests for administrative support follow the work-plans of donor agencies and tend to be less thoroughly communicated to the officers. This means that the local administrators are in a stand-by position waiting for donor assignments. Since donors tend to establish personal relationships with a few selected officers (usually those commanding good English), the situation creates envy among the less successful administrators.

The operational resources of the local administrators are very scarce indeed. For example, some regional planning officers are unable to make phone calls because they do not have money for telephone bills. Papers are difficult to file because of the lack of good quality folders and shelves. All administrators working in a district rely on one or two cars. One officer said that he had made only two trips to ward centres during the past year.

4.3. Reforming the finances of the local governments

The Tanzanian government is really facing a formidable challenge. On the one hand, it should allocate revenue to the district councils in order to make their independent decision making into a meaningful exercise. For this purpose it should also allocate manpower from ministries and regional offices. It should also enforce reasonable salary scales which allow full-time work in the office. On the other hand, the central government has to keep the tax burden of citizens within bearable limits. It should reduce manpower on the payroll of any public agency.

Considering the running of the reformed local governments, a crucial variable is financial accountability. Several local governments have economic difficulties not only because of poverty but because of the mismanagement of funds. One can hypothesise that the vicious circle of poverty and unaccountability can be broken because the link between the level of operations, the accountability of local governments and the democratic control works also the other way: if local governments are allowed to decide upon large sums of money the district councillors have an *interest* in keeping a closer eye on the district council funds (and more competent/educated district councillors are elected) and, consequently, a greater degree of accountability may follow. Only after the misuse of funds is curtailed, is there the possibility for the common administrators to deliver the services in a proper way.

The donor agencies have made some progress during recent years in terms of understanding (or, more actually, acknowledging openly) the contradiction in the local political setting, and advancing proposals for the solving of the problems related to financial and political accountability. There is still much to be done by donor agencies, when they increase the transparency and accountability of the use of their own economic resources. On this issue both the local administration and the local citizen have good grounds to demand more openness. Since donor funds tend to be large, it is vital for the donors to show an example in making the money distribution transparent and accountable.

I would like to further emphasise one aspect of administration (which also forms a core hypothesis of this paper): the dilemma of motivating the administrators. The administrative reform can change the framework of district administration towards a financially more efficient and politically more democratic direction. Nevertheless, the capacity of the administration to 'deliver the goods' depends on a closer, and more humans if you like, touch on the working conditions of the lower level administrators. In other words, the framework is null and void if the practical concerns of salary, information and transport are not fully addressed. (Cf. Tendler 1997)

5. CONCLUSIONS and possible future trends

After decades of patronising attacks from above, the local government system has developed into a shadow of its potential strength. There are a number of reasons for this state of affairs. In most simple terms we could say that the central government has weakened the district councils through the withdrawal (or lack of) resources. Nevertheless, keeping the local government within its hierarchical system the central government has maintained the authority and formal position of district authorities at a reasonable high level. However, the intrusion of donors with large resources and short-term projects has shaken the self-respect of local governments. It is apparent to both officers and villagers that the district council can develop new initiatives only with donor assistance. The frustrating culture of dependency has emerged and the local government officers are disillusioned.

In this situation, the reform of the local government system, as it is planned, is most welcome. The aims of the reform are consistent and address the central question of independent power. The question is still whether the resources are enough to make a real impact. A change in power structures is rather meaningless if the authorities have no material scope for reorientation. Given the high number of interested parties making their claims, the reform process is likely to be a long and winding road, with many potholes and side-tracks. I delineate four possible scenarios for the political development of local governance in the future. Each scenario depicts a highly distinctive road ahead:

a) democratisation of local government

b) patronage politics

c) competitive politics

d) enclave politics.

The democratisation of local government is the official rhetorical aim of the reform process. If the reform is accepted by all agencies and implemented with vigour, the end result will be a democratically governed, economically and politically accountable form of local administration. The second option of patronage politics is the best known alternative for the democratisation option. Patronage politics means that the key administrators are allocated increased powers to collect revenue and channel it onwards. If district councils remain puppet governments, the leading administrators can develop their networks of patronage. The possibility is enhanced by the decreased rate of circulating top officers from one district to another.

The last two options can be placed between the previous two extremes. Competitive politics implies a struggle over resources by a wide array of actors. Competition is institutionalised but due to the openness of the political field, different actors can make challenges which enlarge and further open the political scene. The political parties do not have a determining role in the political field but, instead, actors and sections of interest groups may gain ground by means of actively making demands upon resources and backing the demands with coalition politics. A version of competitive politics is the emergence of competition between villages, or wards or districts, along the lines similar to the Kenyan model in the 1970s (cf. Holmquist 1984). The existence of government resources is a precondition for such competition. Semboja (1995) has visualised the competitive politics option which takes place through demand-based competition over donor inputs: only those local governments which prove to be efficient and accountable will win the access to aid.

Finally, enclave politics is basically a term which could be used for the current situation and which forms the last option for the future development. According to this alternative, the level of resources actually allocated through the district administration will stay low. The scarcity of resources generates a tendency to monopolise the existing resource bases and the information about these resources. Since resources are derived from various sources (donors, villagers, businessmen, central government) and relate to specific sectors (cashew cultivation, gemstones, social services etc.), the actual resource flows develop into separate enclaves. Each enclave maintains its own logic and distributional patterns. The local government structure is too weak to unite the different enclaves and to orchestrate the resource distribution into an open and generally acceptable form.

The future will show what is the outcome of this reform. The optimistic scenario is a development of independent and democratically controlled local governments which adapt activities to the local needs. The pessimistic scenario is that the leading district executives establish patronage networks and then squander the resources. The likely future is most probably between these two extremes. One can also hypothesise that individual districts may follow distinctive paths. A comparison of the Newala and Mtwara districts shows that there are major differences even in adjacent districts. The Newala district has managed to collect many more taxes than the Mtwara district. Thus it has scope for generating projects which then encourage villagers and businessmen towards active participation in politics. The civic organisations have already shown the capacity to organise and make claims on public resources. Mtwara has very limited resources and the politicians have practically nothing to offer to the villagers and businessmen. The civic organisations are also relatively weak.

The donor agencies can advance the process through showing accountability and transparency in their own decision making - and through demanding it from the others.

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