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DECENTRALIZATION AND THE POLITICS OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT IN WEST AFRICA

Edited by
Dickson Eyoh and Richard Stren

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2007 Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, D.C.
www.wilsoncenter.org

ISBN 1-933549-05-X

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are grateful to the Urban Programs Team of the Office of Poverty Reduction in the Bureau of Economic Growth, Agriculture, and Trade, U.S. Agency for International Development and the African Institute for Urban Management (IAGU) for making the Dakar workshop and this publication possible. We would also like to thank Claude Stren for translating the papers written in French, Leah Florence for copyediting the chapters and Laura Richards for proofreading the manuscript. We would also like to thank Lisa Hanley, Karen Towers, Mejgan Massoumi and Allison Garland for their superb assistance with the crucial organizational and editorial work that led up to the publication of this book.

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I. INTRODUCTION

DECENTRALIZATION AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT IN WEST AFRICA: AN INTRODUCTION

RICHARD STREN AND DICKSON EYOH

THE CITIES OF WEST AFRICA

Urbanization is one of the most powerful, and insistent, emerging realities of the early twenty-first century. Although the developed countries have been largely urbanized for many years, developing regions are quickly narrowing the gap. Africa, one of the least urbanized continents, is urbanizing rapidly. In 2003, Africa's total population (estimated at 851 million) was 38.7 percent urbanized—the lowest of any major continental region. During the next five years, however, the United Nations projects an annual average growth rate for urban Africa of 3.35 percent, the highest in the world by a substantial margin for the same period. Dividing Africa according to its five subregions (Eastern, Middle, Northern, Southern, and Western Africa), Middle Africa will grow at the highest rate, followed in order by Eastern, Western, Northern, and Southern Africa. This order is the inverse of the current levels at which these subregions are urban.

West Africa—or Western Africa in the demographic tables—is conventionally made up of 17 countries. In 2003, the subregion had an aggregate population of 244,381,000, with an overall urban population of 42.2 percent of that total. (Sometime between 2015 and 2020, the subregion will have over half of its population living in urban centers.) The seven largest countries in the West African group are (in order) Nigeria, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, and Senegal. The first two are Anglophone; the last five are Francophone countries. In these major countries in the subregion, levels of urbanization vary from a high of 49.6 percent in Senegal to a low of 22.2 percent in Niger (United Nations 2004, Table A1).

Unlike the pattern in most developed countries, urban growth in individual African countries has not always been accompanied by parallel economic growth for the country as a whole. And for the continent in the aggregate, over the last two decades, total factor productivity, labor productivity, and agricultural productivity per worker have been either declining or stagnant,

while real GDP growth in per-capita terms has been only marginally positive (Kessides 2005, 1–2). There have been some positive stories (which include Ghana, Senegal, Benin, and Burkina Faso), although most countries "are mired in place" economically (ibid., 1). As is well known, civil strife, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, natural disasters, and adverse terms of trade have not helped. At the same time, to the extent that growth is taking place, it is mainly urban based (ibid., 11). In Ghana, for example, where 45.4 percent of the population lived in cities and towns in 2003, the average GDP growth per capita from 1990 to 2003 was 1.9 percent, of which 71.3 percent was explained by growth in the (largely) urban sectors of industry and services. For Senegal, another country that showed net growth during the same period, 86.8 percent of its 1 percent yearly growth can be explained by urban sectors (ibid., 71). In order to be more precise, one could calculate the proportion of the total population represented by a particular city, and compare this with an estimate of the proportion of the GNP for that city. The figures so calculated would invariably show that large cities contribute disproportionately to national income, although this does not "prove" that the cities alone are responsible for that income. Nevertheless, it is legitimate to argue that, at the very least, cities are a necessary condition for innovation, social change, and economic growth (Freire and Polèse 2003). How this happens in each case is a complex story.

As cities have become a more prominent part of the social and economic landscape in West Africa, as in other parts of the developing world, the changes they have ushered in have—at least in part—contributed to and interacted with a number of other major trends. One of these trends, decentralization, is the subject of this volume. This collection is a selection of papers that were presented and discussed at a two-day workshop in Dakar, Senegal, on 8 and 9 December 2003. The workshop was entitled, *Decentralisation et politique de développement urbain en Afrique de l'Ouest* (Decentralization and the Politics of Urban Development in West Africa). Supported generously by USAID, the workshop was organized jointly by the Comparative Urban Studies Program of the Woodrow Wilson Center, Washington, DC, and the African Institute for Urban Management (IAGU), based in Dakar. Over the two days of the workshop, attended by 64 participants (most of them local), there was constructive and vigorous discussion of the issues of decentralization as they affect West African cities. The high level of interest in this seminar is partly a function of the fact that, although the theme of decentralization has been part of the development discourse for

some time, its application to local and, especially, urban policy issues has been largely unexplored—both in the scholarly literature and in terms of more practical implications.

There is no doubt that decentralization has made an impression on African countries, and on their cities. Although there is general agreement among scholars that, following James Manor, decentralization "has quietly become a fashion of our time" (Manor 1999, 1), the dynamics and application of this apparently straightforward policy initiative are by no means straightforward or self-evident. Like other major tendencies of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, such as globalization, democratization, and the growth of major international movements such as environmentalism and human rights, decentralization has operated at many different levels and in different ways in particular local contextual situations.

We can argue that, from the perspective of African countries, there have been different "waves" or periods of decentralization beginning almost a century ago. Here, we define decentralization as the transfer of significant powers and functions, along with the fiscal responsibility to carry out these powers and functions, from the national to the local level of government. (Some writers distinguish among political, administrative, and fiscal decentralization, but for us the three aspects relate in an interconnected fashion.) Understood in this way, there have been three historical periods of decentralization—at least since the beginning of colonization.

Three Waves of Decentralization

The whole colonization period in Africa, from the late nineteenth century until the mid-twentieth century, was an almost uninterrupted period of centralized administrative rule for Africans. *The first decentralization period (or "wave") consolidated itself just before and at the point of independence* (from the late 1940s through the early 1960s), when local (and state) authorities were being established by mutual agreement between the nationalists and the departing colonial authorities. These local authorities were attempts at formalizing existing understandings about the democratic delivery of local services in the form of institutions that closely resembled local governments and communes in the metropole. To the British, local government was a "school for democracy," while for the French the commune was the arena for the exercise of rational civic rights on the part of both urban and rural citizens. In the

waning years of colonialism, the colonizing powers attempted to develop both the spirit and the effective administrative capacity of these local bodies, in rural and urban areas, as multipurpose governments with responsibility for a variety of local functions. Another purpose of establishing these local institutions in some countries was to blunt the appeal of anticolonial nationalist leaders. Notwithstanding, many important nationalist leaders—who later became powerful politicians as ministers or presidents after the attainment of independence—had their first useful political experience in these local bodies.

After independence, the various pressures of the one-party state, military regimes, and the ideology of central planning began to deprive local governments of many of their powers and much of their original autonomy. In some countries, strengthening local authorities was viewed by national political leaders as tantamount to reinforcing regional sentiments, when these differences might produce opposition to the central government. But as a result of increasing restrictions on local government, failures throughout the system were more and more attributed to the center alone. This period can be considered—at least in sub-Saharan Africa—one characterized by "the removal of decentralized government" (Kasfir 1993). Central government came to be the focus of almost all political and administrative initiative, and the ideology of development stressed central planning and national integration. Eventually, there was a reaction.

The reaction came in the late 1970s and early 1980s. *We may call this a second moment—or wave—of decentralization*, when in a response to overcentralization and problems with local project implementation, central governments throughout the developing world looked for administrative means of relocating development committees, technical ministries, and even large projects at the district level "closer to the people." Perhaps typical of the reasoning behind this second attempt to "rescue" local institutions was the argument by President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania (1972, 1), who stated that the developmental goals of the country were being compromised:

> [I]t has gradually become obvious that, in order to make a reality of our policies of socialism and self-reliance, the planning and control of development in this country must be exercised at the local level to a much greater extent than at present. Our nation is too large for the people at the center in Dar es Salaam always to understand local problems or to sense their urgency. When all the power remains at the center, therefore,

local problems can remain, and fester, while local people who are aware of them are prevented from using their initiative in finding solutions.

Following Nyerere's guidance, Tanzania's solution was to abolish existing local government institutions in both the rural and urban areas, and to replace them with councils that combined both central government officials and local political representatives. Tanzania also took the decision in 1973 to move its capital and accompanying central government agencies to the town of Dodoma, away from the coast and close to the physical center of the country. Commentators soon noted that the official side dominated the proceedings of the new decentralized councils. And in spite of the extensive planning and building that took place in Dodoma, most civil servants stayed in Dar es Salaam, which also remained the commercial capital of the country. A centralizing trend also obtained in local arrangements in Ghana, Kenya, Uganda, Zambia, and Botswana in that little power—let alone finance and skilled professional staff—were given to representative local authorities for their own unrestricted use (Tordoff 1994). In Africa, this second "moment" dissipated its initial promise in the failures of large projects and the absence of finance. The end of this phase of the decentralization story coincides with the beginning of the structural adjustment period of the mid-1980s.

During this period, theoretical and academic discussions on the meaning of decentralization were frequent. One writer pointed out, with justification, that there are two basic principles according to which an administrative system can be structured: *area* and *function*. Area involves the descending order of physical jurisdictions, such as provinces, states, or municipalities; these units normally are invested with a wide range of general functions and powers to serve the needs of their populations. Functional specialization, on the other hand, is invested in ministries or specialized agencies, whether public, private, or a combination of both, which focus on certain technical issues, whether they are national or local. Since decentralization usually involves strengthening some function at a local or intermediate level, when that function is administered by an area jurisdiction, there are bound to be conflicts and tensions (Fesler 1965). Other writers considering the period of the 1960s and 1970s examined decentralization initiatives in terms of the effectiveness of government implementation, a major focus of analysis at the time. In looking at decentralizing initiatives in complex federal systems, Jeffrey Pressman and Aaron Wildavsky (1973) long ago pointed out the virtual inevitability of

planned outcomes at the local level becoming extremely problematic, often straying from the original intention, and taking a great deal of time to be implemented fully. Many other studies, particularly in American situations, showed the complexity and challenges of administrative implementation.

Other analysts who considered decentralization and local government in developing countries were concerned with the degree to which already poorly equipped central governments could effectively deconcentrate functions and even programs to lower levels of the central government, given the few resources and lack of experience available at the state/province and local government levels (Grindle 1980). This concern gave rise to an important conclusion: only governments that were strong at the center, both politically and administratively, could take the risk and find the resources to decentralize important programs or functions. Thus decentralization, in the opinion of many, had to be accompanied by centralization—the two functions needed to be in balance for either to operate effectively. Since this was a period when virtually all decentralization initiatives originated from the center, and were sponsored by the state in the absence of significant pressures from society or political sponsors elsewhere in the system, discussion of effective or ineffective decentralization tended to focus on outcomes that could be evaluated and/or measured. But it was ironic that many countries were encouraged to decentralize, or themselves wished to do so, in order to *strengthen* their ability to respond to demands and needs at the local level. If they were poor and their administrative capacity was weak in the first place, decentralizing initiatives would require additional energy and resources.

Other very important insights that were made during this period of essentially administrative, top-down decentralization programs included the point that there was a large continuum in meaning (from strong and successful to weak and unsuccessful) for both centralization and decentralization; and that for any decentralization program to work successfully, a process of continual review and incremental adjustment, involving good communication between the center and the locality, had to be in place. A major textbook on development administration, written in the early 1980s, contains a lengthy and comprehensive chapter on "decentralization and coordination." In this chapter, based on published literature and the considerable consulting and research experience of its two American writers, the authors concentrate on the proper approaches that central governments must use to improve the effectiveness of development projects and programs. Although they recognize that decentralization "works" more effectively if there is some local political support, they cite various cases of suc-

cess and failure from the point of view of initiatives that are based on administrative rather than political or social logic. Most of the cases cited are of failure rather than success (Bryant and White 1982, chap. 8).

If the prospects for decentralization were dim for many countries as late as the early 1980s, *by the late 1980s and early 1990s the situation had dramatically changed. Not only had a great number of states—both large and medium sized—opted to undertake measures of decentralization from the center to local governments, but there was also support within civil society for these measures. This period, which has continued until the present, may be considered the third "wave" of decentralization.* Support for decentralization during this period can be, for the sake of convenience, discussed under two aspects: the growth of civil society (particularly in urban areas), and the concurrent "wave" of democratization and re-democratization that began to take place in the 1980s. Both of these trends have, in different ways, reinforced decentralization, but they are in most respects independent of decentralization and have, in a wide variety of countries, taken their own shape and dynamic. Since these trends have become a part of the experience of so many countries, decentralization initiatives have received substantially more social and political support in recent years than was the case with the earlier "moment" (the "second decentralization") during the 1970s and early 1980s. But the support from civil society for decentralization during this recent period is one of the important reasons why, in spite of some instances to the contrary, decentralization has been largely of endogenous rather than externally induced origins in Africa.

Urban Civil Society in Africa

As we have already noted, Africa is one of the least urbanized parts of the developing world. In a predominantly rural continent, the voices and influence of urban civil society have been less influential on policy than in other more urbanized areas of the world. Nevertheless, in the period leading up to and just following independence in the 1960s, trade unions, women's groups, and ethnic and regional associations played an active role in the establishment of new national and local government institutions. Many were active in the nationalist movements that brought independence, and continued to represent the positions of their members throughout the 1960s. The influence and spread of these (often) urban groups was to be curtailed, however, as municipal and other local government institutions were either limited in their powers after independence, or were absorbed into one-party or no-party regimes.

(This was the "second wave" of decentralization on the continent.) Except in South Africa, which followed a different historical trajectory, the years of the 1960s and 1970s were a period of central government ascendancy and local government decline in much of Africa, both Anglophone and Francophone. As in other parts of the developing world, political initiatives came from the center, and a discourse of development planning—supported by international assistance—concentrated on large-scale formal projects, extensive state and parastatal employment, and widespread regulation of the economy.

Beginning in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the system began to break down economically, as formal employment through government and import substitution-led industrialization reached its limits. The informal sector, in both urban and rural areas, grew dramatically in importance. If by the late 1970s, some 60 percent of the African urban population was operating in the informal sector (ILO 1985), the figure was much higher in the 1980s. A sociologist from Côte d'Ivoire estimated that between 1976 and 1985, the number of people working on the street in a variety of informal activities had risen from 25,000 to 53,850 in Abidjan alone. During the same period, the central government complement in Abidjan rose from 31,840 to 56,940. "Given the negligible difference between the two," he sardonically observed, "one could conclude that the street offers as much employment and provides a living to as many people as the public service" (Touré 1985, 18). A major trend in the last two decades has been the supplementation of formal-sector jobs with informal activities on the part of a large proportion of public-sector employees. In the cities, publicly provided urban services such as public transport, water supply, and garbage disposal, began seriously to deteriorate in the face of massive urban population expansion, on the one hand, and tightened local budgets, on the other. As a result, growing numbers of low-income citizens were buying their water from private water vendors; paying more for private, but more accessible, mass transport; and increasingly obtaining unserviced land and housing through the small-scale unregulated private market (Stren 1988).

The growth of informal sector employment, on the one hand, and the decline in urban services, on the other, created new pathways for the development of civil society at the local level, at least in many of Africa's largest cities. According to an authoritative overview of the situation in African cities, the "onset of the urban crisis in the mid-1980s…seems to have had a dramatic impact on the number and nature of associations….Their role increasingly became centered on providing urban services that the state could not deliver

(such as housing, water, and sanitation) and catering for the more immediate needs of the expanding urban informal settlements through associations ranging from community security societies to religious and other spiritual associations" (Tostensen, Tvedtenn and Vaa 2001, 22). Women have been particularly active in forming these associations, perhaps because their economic importance, through an expanded informal sector, has been enhanced. Swazi women in the city, for example, have organized savings groups, burial societies, wedding groups, and land and housing acquisition groups (Miles 2001, 66). A study of women's participation in informal economic activities in Dar es Salaam from the late 1980s through the early 1990s shows how, on a personal level, women confronted state harassment, networked with each other for support, and generally engaged in "everyday forms of resistance" in order to provide for their families during difficult times. The result of this spontaneous action was to effect a number of important local and national government policies (Tripp 1997). By the turn of the century, when Africa's urban population is estimated to have grown to some 37.9 percent of the total, informal associations and civil society were playing an increasing role in urban life. A French writer, commenting on the imagination and organizational innovation that has resulted from survival challenges among urban Africans, talks of the emergence of "social energy" among the poor (Le Pape 1997).

The Democratization Factor

Reinforcing the tendency, in many countries, toward an increasingly active urban civil society has been another trend: democratization. Since the 1970s, we have witnessed a worldwide "wave" of democratization according, at least, to Samuel Huntington's definition of democracy as a system in which the "most powerful collective decision makers are selected through fair, honest, and periodic elections in which candidates freely compete for votes and in which virtually all the adult population is eligible to vote" (Huntington 1991, 7). As such, democracy implies the concurrent existence of freedoms to speak, publish, assemble, and organize and of the active functioning of more than one major political party in order to give voters a choice of alternative leadership groups. Beginning in 1974 in Portugal, and eventually spreading outward, democratic reforms swept over more than 30 countries in both industrial and developing areas. This overall trend was particularly marked during the 1970s and early 1980s in Latin America, where democratic transitions

took place in many major countries, and in the late 1980s and early 1990s in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. The process continued during the 1990s, to the point where the well-known NGO, Freedom House, estimated that by 1999, 88 of the world's 191 sovereign states could be considered democratic by their definition. But even more countries—117—could be considered valid *electoral democracies* "based on a stringent standard requiring that all elected national authority must be the product of free and fair electoral processes" (Karatyncky 1999, 3). In Africa, of 48 countries documented, 19 were considered "electoral democracies," and 11 were considered fully "free" in 2004 (Piano and Puddington 2005). These trends were visible in West Africa, where, of the seven largest countries mentioned earlier, four were assessed as fully "free" (Benin, Ghana, Senegal, and Mali), two were assessed as "partly free" (Nigeria and Burkina Faso), and one—Côte d'Ivoire—was placed in the "not free" category because of the ongoing civil war there. Cameroon, another one of the countries included in this volume, is normally considered part of "Middle Africa," although it shares many characteristics of West African countries. Cameroon—as the paper by Charles Nach Mback amply explains—finds itself among the majority of African countries that are still "not free" by Freedom House standards.

As democratic forms and practices have spread across many regions of the developing world, local governance has been carried along by the tide of change. In Eastern Europe and Latin America in particular, elected municipal councils have proliferated over the political landscape, bringing new forms and styles of governance to a large segment of the population. According to one estimate, democratically chosen executive and legislative officials are now found in more than 14,000 units of subnational government in Latin America (Campbell 2003, 4). All Latin American countries with the exception of Cuba now have elected mayors, for example. So far, few African mayors are directly elected, although in most Francophone countries with local elections (including the majority of Francophone countries selected for this volume), local councillors are elected on a party list system, the top of the list becomes the mayor of the commune or municipality.

To sum up: the current, or "third" wave of decentralization appears to be stronger and more deeply entrenched than the initiatives in the early 1960s, the 1970s, and the early 1980s. This is as true in West Africa as it is elsewhere. Contrary to the often-stated pessimistic view that Africa is trapped in an undemocratic morass, evidence both from case studies and

aggregate evaluative work indicates that, by the early years of the twenty-first century, Africa—and West Africa as well—is firmly set in a politically pluralistic and rights-based culture, even if there are derogations from this pattern from time to time (Chege 2005). There are at least three reasons for this: greater experience with the reasons for failure in the earlier attempts; the increased interest of civil society groups in decentralized institutions, especially at the local level; and the spread of a culture of democracy. The individual papers in this volume explore these issues in the particular contextual settings of West Africa.

Until now, in spite of a very well-documented analysis of the political economy of Africa from a variety of points of view (Bratton and van de Walle 1997; Lewis 1998; Chabal and Daloz 1999; Joseph 1999; Herbst 2000; Sandbrook 2000; Schraeder 2000; Villalón and VonDoepp 2005; Hyden 2006), overviews of African politics rarely make any mention of local politics, let alone urban governance. And although there are a number of good recent studies that focus on decentralization and local governance in Africa (Crook and Manor 1998; Parnell, Pieterse, Swilling, and Wooldridge 2002; Totté, Dahou and Billaz 2003; Olowu and Wunsch 2004), the attention given to *urban* governance has tended to be minimal. Although there are some outstanding exceptions to the facile generalization that excellent urban governance studies are lacking for Africa (Jaglin and Dubresson 1993; Cameron 1999; Simone 2004), few are done by political economists, and none is regional in scope. But as the participation in our workshop indicated, the subject matter of local urban development evokes considerable interest and attention in Africa. We hope that this volume will help to generate even more attention to a subject—urban governance in a context of decentralization—that has become a central issue of development today.

Organization of the Volume

The articles in this volume—all which were originally presented at the Dakar workshop—are organized in four sections. The first section looks at the current challenges of decentralization in West Africa. There are three chapters in this section: one dealing with urban governance in West Africa by Dele Olowu, one on the history of municipal government in Cameroon by Charles Nach Mback, and a chapter on the financial aspects of decentralization in Senegal by Abdoul Wahab Ba.

In chapter 1, Dele Olowu, a senior official with the African Development Bank, considers the broad sweep of decentralizating policies and ideas as they have affected West Africa. He points out that, as a result of the paradox of decentralized programs producing local institutions that lack legitimacy, a form of recentralization is actually taking place in some countries. He gives detailed examples of the local politics of decentralization in Ghana, Nigeria, and Chad. He argues that a form of asymmetric decentralization—whereby different national policies are applied to different types of regions and local communities—is likely to be more successful than conventional approaches. In his analysis, Olowu uses many illustrations from his own extensive previous research and from the literature on fiscal decentralization, a field that cannot be ignored in the practical world of administrative politics. To take advantage of their strengths and potential as a result of decentralization, West African cities will have to find better local financial resources for development.

In chapter 2, we are given a detailed history of the implantation of communal and municipal institutions in Cameroon by Charles Nach Mback, a specialist in public law. Because the present Cameroon is made up of portions that fell under both British and French colonial rule, the present local government system incorporates elements from both systems. However, the largest cities of Yaoundé and Douala are in the former French areas, so that their local history is strongly bound up with trends that were taking place in other parts of Francophone West Africa. Attempts to harmonize the British and French local government systems after independence did not succeed, according to the author, with the result that "urban democracy" declined after 1974. Later, in 1996, a major constitutional reform recognized the principle of free, or autonomous, administration for local governments, although the English and French translation of the same legal text subtly diverged. When the municipal elections of 1996 then produced opposition party victories in the country's large cities, many judicial questions arose about local representation. New decentralization in 2004 limits the autonomy of local governments. On the other hand, a senate, created by the 1996 reforms, is meant to represent local governments in the system of national governance. According to Nach Mback, the legitimacy of the senate has yet to be settled in Cameroon.

The third chapter in the first section, by Abdoul Wahab Ba (a decentralization advisor to USAID), looks in detail at the implementation—from a fiscal and financial point of view—of the 1996 and 1997 laws of decentralization in

Senegal. Senegal has a long history of decentralization, going back as for as 1848, according to the author, when the coastal towns of Saint-Louis and Gorée were communes. A number of other laws followed after independence in 1960, but the 1996 legislation was a major accomplishment. Still, more than eight years after the promulgation of these laws, the administrative system of local taxation is still strongly centralized. The chapter concludes by considering some principles that might change this situation; but at the very least more experience with the process is probably needed.

The second section of this collection looks at citizenship, identity, and participation in urban West Africa. The opening chapter by Mamadou Diouf begins by interrogating the idea of African cities in crisis. But how have West African cities developed their own histories and their own particular geographies? A key group in the development of a specific African urban identity is youth, who have burst on the political scene in recent years. Active urban youth are a very large demographic group, all having been born in the years since independence. But they are seeking new ways to express their political objectives in urban public space. Since the state has been discredited in West African societies, the youth are only one of a number of other social movements contending for influence. Here we must take account of the popular local economies of cities and their intersection with urban planning (if it actually exists) and the segmentation of the urban population in economic and spatial terms. Here, the *Mourides* are a good example of an effective local response to economic opportunities, based on cultural and religious markings. As the cities grow in size, so also does the scope of urban poverty grow, as local societies use identities and memories to deal with crisis.

Chapter five, by Dickson Eyoh, also deals with the role of identities in urban politics—in this case in Anglophone West Africa—and shares many premises with the chapter by Diouf. According to Eyoh, the politics of urban identity can best be understood in terms of the ways in which the complex and shifting repertoires of identification that are the basis of African conceptions of individual and collective selves gird overlapping and oftentimes conflicting notions of local citizenship and rights to political participation. The very heterogeneity of urban populations makes cities ideal sites for the production of new types of citizenship claims. Eyoh uses two axes of identity—ethnicity and youth—to elaborate this argument. Factors that reinforce the emergence of these local identity-driven processes include the extension of decentralization and political party competition, the hold of local economic informal

economies, and the disengagement of many from the state. Eyoh concludes that institutions that are intended to foster democratic local governance, which are inattentive to the intertwined and competing notions of citizenship prevalent in urban society, are likely to suffer from a lack of legitimacy.

The final chapter in this section, by Michèle Leclerc-Olive, addresses the critical issue of the legitimacy of local governments from the perspective of their relationship with traditional authorities within current (modern) jurisdictions. Contrary to the assumption that they are mainly a rural phenomenon, traditional collectivities with their own modes of legitimating power and authority remain vibrant in West African towns and cities. Decentralization procedures, which reconfigure sociopolitical relations, often result in traditional authorities playing unanticipated roles through reinventions of traditional modes of political legitimacy. When international agencies (including international NGOs) support decentralization, they claim their main goal is to enhance local autonomy. But two examples—an unplanned neighborhood in the periphery of Bamako, Mali, and a densely-settled old district of Porto-Novo in Benin—illustrate how traditional local groups, given power by the top-down decentralization process, took a position contrary to the more "modern" decentralized policies, to the dismay of central authorities. The author concludes that promoting legitimate local government systems requires the rejection of top-down approaches, with their predetermined institutional preferences and political procedures, in favor of transitional institutions that are responsive to continuities and transformations in traditional systems of political organization and legitimacy.

The first two sections of the book deal with major issues of decentralization as illustrated by cases from West Africa. But decentralization has long been important in other regions of the world as well. To contribute to our understanding of the possibilities for, and potential constraints on, decentralization and urban development in West Africa, a comparative perspective has been added to further insight. We have chosen two cases for a third section: the United States and cities in Asia. Both offer insights on the decentralization process that are valuable for the study of West African societies at the current time. Comparative studies like these help to deepen our understanding of how decentralization operates generically, but they also help to raise questions about future trajectories that we may have otherwise ignored.

Chapter 7, on the United States, is written by Ronald Vogel, an expert on metropolitan and local politics in that country. Vogel begins with a discussion

of the relationship between a worldwide trend toward decentralization and the increasing importance of urban politics. In federal systems, like the United States (or Brazil, Nigeria, South Africa, Canada, and Germany, for example) local government has a certain amount of autonomy from the central government. But this autonomy may vary over time and with the nature of the federal system. In the United States, which many feel has strong and autonomous local governments, states have decentralized (or devolved) power from the national government, but local governments have only *delegated* power from the states. While ultimately states can exert a great deal of power over cities and local governments, in practice this rarely happens, for at least two reasons. First, local governments have a considerable amount of leeway in the revenue sources they cultivate. And second, there is a strong regard for localism in the American system. This second point is reinforced by a decentralized party system, and by "home rule" laws in the various state constitutions that give major cities power over their internal structures and political systems. Vogel documents different approaches to federalism in the United States as it has affected cities over the years, based on these principles. Currently, he argues, the national government has been going through a period of centralizing policy-making as a result of the way in which national policies and entitlement programs aid *people* as individuals, rather than *places* as horizontal collectivities. Putting the US case in comparative perspective, Vogel shows how it is viewed differently in different contexts; how successful decentralization rests on a well-developed system of local governance; and how the success of local governments in responding to decentralization measures is contingent on the health of the economy.

In the second part of this section, chapter 8, Aprodicio Laquian surveys the past and recent histories of decentralization and urban politics in Asia, in order to note some lessons of the Asian experiences for Western African cities. Although the history of this region is long and complex, the dynastic origins of many Asian states show a legacy of centralized authoritarian rule. In the postwar period, new elites placed a premium on national unity under the aegis of strong central governments, and adoption of a communist ideology in some case, making states the dominant actors in society. The second part of the chapter elaborates on the relationship among three factors—urbanization, economic development, and the spread of liberal democracy—that have had the most significant influence on recent experiments in decentralization. Laquian argues that the dualism of Asian societies has led to two types of decentraliza-

tion: in countries with low levels of urbanization it has led to nonsustainable decentralized development; but in more urbanized countries, such as Thailand and the Philippines, rapid urbanization has led to a more sustainable decentralization because urban areas to which power and authority were devolved have had the financial, managerial, and institutional capabilities to manage new responsibilities. These two patterns confirm that in Asia, as across the world, the degree of autonomy exercised by local government units tends to be greater in countries with higher levels of economic development. Although decentralization has enhanced liberal democracy in some countries, in others it has resulted in the replacement of central government control with the tyrannical rule of local despots and family dynasties. Laquian's conclusions suggest three lessons for West African states. First, countries with low levels of urbanization need to be careful about how far they promote decentralization. Second, urban civil society groups have a critical role in pressuring government for better services and political representation. And third, local governments need to cooperate among themselves to solve common problems, as towns grow into cities and cities grow into metropolitan areas.

Until this point, the papers edited for this volume have been largely academic in tone and origin—with the exception of the paper by Abdoul Wahab Ba, a policy adviser in Senegal. Even his paper, however, is written in a classic academic form—consisting of a general argument, illustrative case study material, and a discussion of wider implications of the analysis. But the discussion of decentralization in West Africa at which we were privileged to be present included many local activists and government representatives who both expressed, and were directly involved in, the everyday practice of decentralization. To give some flavor to this discussion, we have translated and included two documents: one written by the former Mayor of Dakar, and the second written by a local NGO activist. The first, chapter 9, by Mamadou Diop, the current mayor of Yoff (a suburb of Dakar) and the former mayor of metropolitan Dakar, explains the position of the mayor in the process of decentralization in Senegal. A reading of this document will yield a precise understanding of the legal and institutional basis for local authority in Senegal. We learn of the mayor's dual functions as executive agent of the municipality and as agent of the state; and we learn of his (or her) duties regarding municipal functions, the police, and other state responsibilities. As a decorated French academic in the field of jurisprudence, Mayor Diop has great authority to speak on these matters.

The second document (and the last chapter in the volume) was written for the workshop by El Housseynou Ly, a "specialist in participation" who worked with our co-host organization, IAGU. Ly's point of departure in this analysis is the question of how local associations (read: community-based groups (CBOs) and NGOs) should operate in order to best achieve their development objectives. One of the problems many of these organizations have, in the writer's opinion, is that they come under the influence of groups living on the periphery and not in the center of the cities in which they are working. They also have problems of equity in terms of how they operate internally. Internal questions may often disturb their cohesion, which in turn fractures their stability. When to this is added the undue influence of local religious leaders, they can easily lose their independence. Other elements in this structural analysis of the problems of local associations include their capacity vis-à-vis outside organizations and the state, their economic viability, and their ability to fend off takeover by militants in favor of more responsible leadership groups. In general, they can benefit from principles of empowerment, which involve participation, communication, a critical collective, social and political conscience, and the development of capacity. Because local associations are so much a part of the developmental experience in West African cities, these observations by an experienced organizer illustrate many of the issues such groups are facing. Since decentralization ultimately involves local people working to solve their own problems, internal organizational issues need to be taken into account.

Decentralization in West Africa, as in other major world regions, is a work in progress. These papers illustrate some of the key parameters of the current process. But in the dynamic interaction of urbanization and public policy, we can be sure of surprises in the future.

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Toronto
6 August 2006.

II. CHALLENGES OF DECENTRALIZATION IN WEST AFRICA

DECENTRALIZATION AND URBAN GOVERNANCE IN WEST AFRICA

Dele Olowu

Culture matters. And to understand culture, we must understand both the present and the past. History matters.

—Ismail Serageldin, *Culture and Development in Africa*

Overview

West Africa has always been a center of great urban civilizations—the coastal cities of Abomey, Dakar, Lagos, and Freetown have played roles in more recent history similar to but of much less prominence compared to the cities of the Sahel—Kano, Bamako, Timbuktu, Jenne, and Sokoto. Today, cities in the region are regarded as part of the problem of governance and development rather than as part of the possible solutions to the problems that citizens of these countries face in these twin areas. In this chapter, I try to provide an alternative view: cities could become the center of economic growth, development, and better governance. This will require fundamental changes in the approach to decentralization in the region.

The chapter is developed in four parts:

- The current wave of democratic decentralization and urbanization,
- The major problems of democratic decentralization (DD)—fact and fiction;
- The challenge of financing democratic decentralization; and
- Toward a new approach to urban governance and democratic decentralization—the critical importance of urban property taxation.

Most of the material for this chapter is taken from two recent research projects in which I have been involved. One is an assessment of decentralization in the 1990s in seven African countries—including Chad, Ghana,

and Nigeria (Olowu and Wunsch 2003). The other is a study of property taxation in Nigeria and a few developing Commonwealth countries.

The Current Wave of Democratic Decentralization: Interface with Urbanization

Whether measured by expenditure or employee size, local governments in developing countries are weaker than their counterparts in industrialized countries. And among the developing countries, African countries are the weakest. Available data show that central governments in industrialized (OECD) countries engage twice the number of employees as the developing countries of Asia and Latin America but they engage four times the number of local government employees. The difference is similarly reflected in total government expenditures as a ratio of local government expenditures.[1]

Political leaders in Africa (as in many other developing countries) inherited and preferred highly centralized modes of governance. This mode is reinforced by a culture of the politics of patrimonialism in which all powers and resources flow from the ruler ('the father of the nation') to clients who shore up the regime. This pattern of unequal power and resource distribution was strongly supported by both domestic and external actors until the late 1970s. Reasons for favoring this approach included rapid economic and social development actualized through centralized planning, unity and national integration, containment of corruption, and political stability. This *monocentric* governance model affected the manner in which decentralization was approached—administrative decentralization or deconcentration rather than political or democratic decentralization (Riggs 1964; Wunsch and Olowu 1990).

In contrast, the underlying theory of governance in industrialized countries is a reflection of the long struggle for the accountable use of power. This has led to deliberate checks and balances on central power most evident in the simultaneous exercise of power by autonomous entities: the church, municipalities, universities, trade unions, and so on (Bates 2001). This *polycentric* model of governance is regarded as a crucial attribute of democracy (V. Ostrom

1. Of the available statistics, local governments in industrialized countries are responsible for an average of 20–35 percent of total government expenditures, while the average for less developed countries is less than 15 percent—but only 8 percent for most African countries, although there are wide intercountry variations (UNDP 1993, 69).

1987; E. Ostrom 1990). Different patterns of polycentricity are observable among Western countries, with variations in form reflecting peculiar national cultures (Andrew and Goldsmith 1998).

What makes this difference paradoxical is that governance in African countries is organized primarily in the communities of trust whose boundaries coincide with the informal structures of village, ethnic group, or sect. On the other hand, formal (modern) governance systems, inherited from colonial times, are organized on the basis of top-down notions of governance that assume universality of values and interests that are crystallized around political parties, interest groups, and public services organized around a virtual nation state. The outcomes of this contradiction between small, face-to-face community governance and national modes of governance have been largely negative. Some of its worst manifestations include political instability and marginalization, systemic and grand corruption, and political institutions—legislative, executive, judiciary, and indeed civic institutions—that lack legitimacy. This is the groundswell for the flashpoints of perennial conflict in the West Africa subregion (Liberia, Sierra Leone, Côte d' Ivoire) as elsewhere in the continent (Sudan, Rwanda, Congo, Angola, etc.).

In the last decade, however, many developing countries have changed course dramatically. They have abandoned the monocentric political model and sought to replace it with its exact opposite—a polycentric structure of governance, the idea of multiple centers of power within a state—which was denied by the monocentric state.

The evidence of a paradigm shift can be found in the increasing emphasis on local governance as a part of policies and programs of democratic governance reform in several countries (Dillinger 1993; UNDP 2002; Ndegwa 2002). The extent of change has been more massive and sustained over time than witnessed in the past. In fact, some of these countries have defied the 'pendulum model' (Mawhood 1983, 8) by which a decade of democratic decentralization is followed by another decade of centralization. Responsibilities and financial resources—revenue sourcing and transfers, powers to borrow—as well as human resources and accountability arrangements have been transferred from central governments to local communities in many countries (Crook and Manor 1998; Fiszbein 1997; Olowu and Wunsch 2004).

These decentralization programs of the late 1980s and 1990s are substantially different from past efforts in at least three important respects.

First, there is an attempt to explore a greater diversity of institutional options other than deconcentration, which was the preferred mode up to the 1970s (Wunsch and Olowu 1990). The objective of democratic decentralization (DD) is to build local self-governing capacities in communities (Olowu and Wunsch 2004). The ultimate objective is to increase the 'decision space'[2] or discretionary authority of local actors in the delivery of services in a variety of areas—finance, service organization, human resources management, policy, and governance—or what some others have referred to as 'self-governance' (Ostrom 1990).

A second difference is that decentralization policies of the 1980s and 1990s create or sustain local governments that interact with other institutional actors within the local community—governmental as well as non-governmental—and in many cases, this now includes donor agencies working in local communities (Helmsing 2000).

Third and finally, DD programs were designed not only to simply promote participation but also to empower local peoples and especially the marginalized communities and groups—hence, in some countries (e.g., Uganda, Ghana) special quotas have been reserved for women in local government legislatures.

DD programs of the 1980s and 1990s have been the results of two sets of factors—internal and external. Among the external factors are the third wave of democratization, structural adjustment, and donor conditionalities, especially as countries in the region have become more dependent on donor funds for development expenditures. Local level governance became a part of global democratization as an attempt was sought to apply and deepen democratization locally by governments as well as civic groups. Structural adjustment made the devolution of basic social service responsibilities, which the national state could no longer bear, attractive to national governments in many countries. In the meantime, donors made participatory governance (OECD) or decentralized cooperation (EU) a critical aspect of conditionalities to recipient countries (see Eriksen, Naustdalslid, and Schou 1999; OECD 2004).

Domestically, economic crisis, urbanization, and conflict have been the factors that predispose countries to favor DD. The African economic cri-

2. This refers to the range of choice that is exercisable by local agents of the central government in various spheres—policy, management, finance, and governance. The central government is the principal, and the local governments the agents (Bossert et. al 2000).

sis provided a formidable platform for civil society organs to mount a credible challenge to centralized but effete governance. Retrenchment and war produced a large number of displaced persons who sought refuge and a living in the urban informal sector. And autonomy for warring groups had become an important conflict resolution mechanism in bargaining for peace between them (Rakodi 1998; Olowu and Wunsch 2004).

Urbanization has thus been a major contributor to DD in several ways. First, as more people move into cities (Table 1) the ability of heavily indebted central governments to provide infrastructure centrally has been impaired. That this is the case is well documented in the literature on the African urban crisis (Stren and White 1989; Stren 1994). Second, the cities have become the focus of oppositional politics and civil society forces opposed to the status quo (Little 1966; Rakodi 1997). Besides, especially in West Africa, cities had always been the fort of modern politics and the fact that they had distinguished themselves in the past in delivering basic services across the region made the case for effective devolution to the cities a compelling one. Cities like Lagos, Dakar, Kumasi, Freetown, Monrovia, and Douala had demonstrated great effectiveness in local self-governance in the late and early postcolonial period, not to mention much earlier historical times (Davidson 1959; Connah 1987). Although West Africa is not the most urbanized part of Africa, its major cities have played roles out of proportion to their size in terms of politics, economy, and society (Proud'homme 1995). Their decay, set against a huge migration of people into them, constitutes one of the most serious challenges to governance in the region (Wekwete 1997; Devas et al. 2001). It is also important to note that DD programs have encouraged and stimulated secondary and tertiary urban settlements as they have led to a diversion of public and private resources away from primate cities that once dominated the region (Attahi 1994; Onibokun 1994).

Major Problems of African DD Programs—Fact and Fiction

DD programs have not always been successful. Conventional explanations highlight three major types of problems: politics, capacity, and finance. First, the problems associated with politics are primarily about "recentralization" of decentralized powers by central governments and secondarily about local elites capturing decentralized power (Crook and Manor 1998;

Wunsch 2001; Eaton 2001). Second, weak capacity—in terms of skilled human resources—of local governments (LGs) and, more often, of the central governments to manage decentralization is also a frequently cited issue. Third, inadequate financing is expressed in terms of the gap between devolved responsibilities and fiscal resources available to local governments.

Although these problems are not unimportant, they are not peculiar to Africa. Moreover, they are generated by another set of the more fundamental problems of *legitimacy, culture,* and *strategy*: decentralized programs produce local institutions that lack legitimacy and are out of step with prevailing governance culture, which is the result of a defective decentralization program strategy.

That this is the case can be inferred from the experience of the three West African countries included in the seven-case study of African decentralization programs of the 1980s and 1990s (Olowu and Wunsch 2003). Both Ghana and Nigeria have had ambitious global decentralization programs that transferred substantial responsibilities and resources to local governments, but neither has an effective system of local governance. In contrast, Chad has a robust and resilient system of local governance in spite of the absence of a formal decentralization program.

Ghana

Ghana's new military rulers pursued visions of participatory governance since they came to power on 31 December 1981. After a few desultory experiments with some populist structures of local governance, they came up with a law that created District Assemblies (DAs) for each of Ghana's 110 districts in 1989. The DAs were the sole development and taxing authority and were empowered to prepare and approve budgets and make by-laws (that become effective after approval by the Minister of Local Government); they were recognized as corporate bodies that could sue and be sued. DAs were empowered to deliver 86 functions, 22 of these being erstwhile national government responsibilities.

Perhaps the most important provision of the reform was with respect to finance. First, the central government ceded some of its revenue-raising rights to local governments, although these were mostly revenues that yielded only modest returns—entertainment, casino gambling, betting, advertising taxes, registration fees, commercial transport levies, and informal taxes paid by persons in the informal sector. These monies are normally collected by the

national government and distributed among the 110 local governments as a form of revenue sharing. DAs enjoyed also enjoyed a major influx of funds from the constitutional provision of the District Assembly Common Fund (DACF) of at least 5 percent of nationally collected revenues. In 1994, this meant that local governments had access to an additional US$19 million; this rose rapidly in 1997 to US$45 million, or almost 27 percent of the total domestic development budget for the country.

This huge influx of resources transformed local government in Ghana in terms of building up its capacity to deliver services. But it also increased the dominant role of the central government over local government (Ayee 2004, 152).

Detailed control by the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Local Government has not been transient, as promised at the inception of the DACF arrangements; it has become permanent and ever more detailed. Decisions on how to allocate these revenues are made by central government agencies—effectively reducing the DAs to 'talking shops' without finances to implement their decisions.

Such controls have also not prevented embezzlement by central government officials deployed to the DAs as District Chief Executives (DCEs). In April 1997, 25 DCEs were dismissed on corruption charges. Reports of the auditor general for 1995–97 paints disturbing pictures of malfeasance, with some local governments mortgaging forward payments for many future years. Moreover, the introduction of DACF seems to have made DAs over-reliant on these transfers and this has led to considerable decline in locally raised revenues (Ayee 2004).

Nigeria

Nigeria's ambitious wholesale reform of its local government is less well known than others in the continent—possibly because of its relative antiquity: 1976. But it has been remarkable in several ways. First, it was comprehensive—it covered all aspects of governance, and was universal—implemented in all parts of Nigeria's now 36 states. Moreover, the process of reform involved extensive consultation between government and the people—researchers, community leaders, civil society groups, and so on. Of all its important areas of reform (transfer of specified responsibilities to local governments, protecting them with constitutional provisions, extensive devolution of human resource management backed up with training at three desig-

nated universities, and restructuring of local governments nationally on the basis of population, etc.), the most critical was with respect to finance. Before the reform, local governments' contribution to total government expenditure had declined to only 3 percent. The reform identified revenue sources for local governments but its most critical provision was the progressive increase of LG share in nationally collected revenues (federation account revenue) to its present level of 20 percent. The 774 local governments (there were only 299 when the reform was launched in 1976) were also entitled to 35 percent of Value Added Tax (International Monetary Fund 2001). This made Nigerian local governments responsible for 12 percent of total government expenditure and 5 percent of the country's GDP (Olowu and Wunsch 2004).

The result of such massive inputs into the local government system has been remarkable—especially in terms of transforming the caliber of the staff and politicians that serve in local governments. There were also significant achievements made with respect to social and economic infrastructures. However, over time, these reforms have led to a local government system that has become heavily dependent on central government transfers and a bastion of mischief, greed, and corruption, as there exists no effective system of accountability either from the top—through central government supervision and monitoring—or from below, by the local public or other social organs. Ordinary people are ignorant of the huge amount of monies that come from the national government—which provides some 94 percent of local government revenues.

Unfortunately, the state governments with responsibilities of oversight over the local governments have failed, with only a few exceptions, to provide supervision and support (see chapter on Nigeria in Olowu and Wunsch 2004). Detailed data on public sector (and local government) financing also reveal an important implication of high central transfers, and the tendency for local governments to spend a huge proportion of available resources on recurrent and especially personnel expenditures with little left over for development expenditure—a pattern that exists at all levels of governance.

Chad

Chad was included in this study as an outlier—the only French-speaking case, a country ravaged by several years of fighting and one without a national DD program. Yet, it scored higher than the other countries with formal DD programs (see Table 2).

Decentralization in Chad has been by default rather than by formal top-down public policy. The result has been a shift of public services from the state to ordinary citizens through local governance institutions that organize to pay for such services:

> Chad, with a central government apparatus too weakened by three decades of recurrent fighting to provide much in the way of services…built Africa's most decentralized systems of health, water supply, and other public services. In education, for instance, indigenous local associations have financed the increase of more than 835,000 school seats during the last 25 years. Government, in contrast, supplied less than 45,000 places. Communities now contribute more than 3.6 billion Communaute Financiere Africaine (CFA) francs per year to schools and pay salaries between CFA 5,000 to 15,000 per month to nearly 60 percent of the country's 15,000 teachers. (Olowu and Wunsch 2004, 156)

This development has led not only to an increase in school places but also to better quality schools. The directors of these community schools—currently more than 25 percent of all schools—are accountable to parents, and this results in much better discipline and effective quality control compared to state schools. Even the fact that parents now have a choice has led to improvements in state schools. This also led to a general marginalization of the role of central government in public services delivery as it is effectively replaced by "thousands of village and other associations that...empirically operate as local governments" (ibid., 157).

The Chad experience has been documented in other parts of Africa—especially in West Africa but also in Zaire and other states (Little 1966; Barkan 1994; McGaffey 1992; Dia 1996; Olowu and Erero 1997). These community-based organs of governance are unfortunately not recognized as a component of local government in most African countries. Most are based on administrative districts rather than community units to which most of the citizens of the locality can relate. But the people even in some of the largest cities organize themselves around these communities of subjective interests (Olowu and Erero 1997). However, since these local governments are dependent on financial resources from the national government or, as is increasingly the case, from donor organizations (see Doe 1998), their accountability to the

community is weakened by the absence of an effective fiduciary contract.[3] This is further reinforced by systems of accountability that are focused primarily upwards to the national government (or donors) with little or no accountability to citizens. The supposed institutions of local accountability, such as elections and legislatures, are not effective compared to local executives who represent central government interest (Ghana) or their own private interests (Nigeria). This not only undermines the legitimacy of these institutions but also their performance, as is evident from the Nigerian and Ghanaian cases reviewed above. Local government is thus no different qualitatively from higher government and their officials are just as corrupt and unresponsive as those in the national government and many times worse.

These problems arise because of the absence of a carefully articulated decentralization strategy that takes into consideration the local reality and the capacity limits of the national governments to implement global or comprehensive decentralization policies. Other countries have settled for a more asymmetric approach to decentralization—one that takes the reality of local communities into account and therefore fashions differing systems of local governance for different parts of the same country. This is widely practiced in Eastern and Southern Africa and may explain why the systems of local governance in these countries are far more advanced than those in West Africa.

One important element of this approach to decentralization is to make a distinction between urban and rural areas in terms of the structure, responsibilities, financing of human resources, and accountability arrangements. At the heart of this differentiation is the financing mode. Urban communities have greater possibilities for self-financing their services compared to rural communities. Only a few countries—Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire—have articulated separate structures of governance for their rural and urban communities in the West African subregion.

The Challenge of Financing Democratic Local Governments

Conventional literature on fiscal decentralization—developed originally in industrialized countries to analyze multilevel governance systems—assumes that poverty condemns developing countries to highly centralized systems

3. Moore (1998) argues that revenue types and mobilization strategies have implications for the development of democratic values—capacity, equity, and accountability.

of local financing. The argument is supported on two grounds. First, the preponderant population in developing countries is poor and therefore services must be provided for them by central agencies. Moreover and more importantly, the distributive function—which is at the heart of poverty alleviation—is a central rather than local government function (Proud'homme 1995, 202; for a rebuttal see Smoke 1994).

A World Bank (1998) report on the subject noted that transfers constitute the largest source of revenue for local governments and suggested ways in which this can be improved. The preference for transfers is based on a number of other factors, which include the relative ease with which national governments can collect personal and nonpersonal taxes, the perception that there exists no taxable capacity within local communities, and the difficulties traditionally associated with collecting local revenues by local authorities.

In spite of these advantages, there are serious problems with this approach. The first is that many central governments are themselves revenue short—as a result of high debt servicing, excessive employee payments, war, mismanagement, or graft. Second, the approach is not likely to enhance local governments' effectiveness or sustainability as it opens them up to the vagaries and instabilities of central government funding. Indeed, in many developing countries—especially the highly indebted poor countries (HIPC) such as Uganda, Mozambique, and several of the Francophone states of West Africa—central governments depend on donor funds to finance more than half of their total expenditure and practically all of their development projects (Doe 1998). Third, the resulting high dependency on central funds (which in many cases are unpredictable) reinforces and sustains the paternalist attitudes of the central government of the pre-devolution era.

Fourth, it leaves local government taxes underdeveloped. Whereas outstanding results have been achieved in central government tax reforms, local tax systems have remained in place, as they were in many countries since the colonial period. The poll tax (or octroi in Asia) belongs in this category. These taxes raise problems of horizontal and vertical equity; large numbers of beneficiaries from public services are excluded. The poll tax in the country where it is most developed (Uganda) has been determined to be inefficient on an input-output basis and grossly unequal both in terms of its vertical and horizontal impact (Livingstone and Charlton 1998). Fifth, the continuing dependence on central government transfers has weakened the accountability of local governments, as the elites who could ensure that

local governments are accountable have little moral or legal motivation (Guyer 1991; Moore 1998). Finally, it inhibits the development of independent local government capital financing. This is because most private-sector financial institutions are not likely to regard (usually) unreliable transfers as collateral for loans in the way that real property is regarded (Dillinger 1989).

The problems of developing alternatives to the presently available local taxes are also well known. There are severe limits to using user charges to finance general services, such as basic education and basic health, because of the need to exempt the desperately poor and the high administrative costs associated with such exemptions. Central organs often better collect most other possible tax sources, such as the business or valued added taxes, and in some countries these are shared with local governments. The idea of local income tax is not an attractive one as national governments still confront serious difficulties in collecting other direct taxes—although a few sub-Saharan countries (Kenya, Ghana, Rwanda) have made some modest progress. It seems clear then that there remain few alternatives to the property tax and, as shown below, the fact that some developing countries collect substantial sums from this source to finance infrastructure projects suggests that much more is possible in developing countries than has been seen.

However, the most serious objection to local taxation is the idea that local tax capacities do not exist, but the fact of the matter is that only a few large corporate operators and mainly public operations and employees fall into the tax net. The mass of others pays no taxes whatever. However, Table 3 shows that the problem in these countries has more to do with inequality than with an absolute lack of resources to finance development. There is a need for effective systems of transfers from the rich to the poor via the tax system. And since the national tax systems have reached their highest possible levels, the informal economy represented by real estate offers one of the most effective ways of mobilizing resources locally for financing infrastructure development in developing countries. In the industrialized countries, public action led to public policies that transferred resources via the tax system to reduce inequalities. This instrument is hardly available to many African countries since many are so heavily dependent on indirect rather than direct taxes (although public officials and a few large private enterprises bear a heavy burden of taxation) and aid (see World Bank 2000, 29–30).

In the absence of effective transfer systems, many local communities set up some form of informal taxation to finance their most basic services, as already described above (see also Barkan, McNulty and Ayeni 1991; Barkan 1994). Failing these, societies descend into various forms of bad governance—systemic grand corruption, warfare, banditry, and other forms of violent responses—in different parts of West Africa (Reno 1998; Olowu 2001).

Toward Asymmetric Decentralization: Property Tax as An Effective Revenue Base for Municipal Governments in Less Developed Countries

In adopting an asymmetric approach to decentralization, the key question is what should constitute the economic base for a system of local revenues for local governments. The answer is that urban centers must become self-financing and three possible bases exist—*property, sales,* and *income tax*. Although the most widely used and the most highly recommended is property tax, it is also the one that is yet to be fully utilized in many less developed countries (LDCs) and especially African countries.

Ursula Hicks (1961, 347) argued long ago that property taxes were the most appropriate for municipal governments. She gave five reasons: automatic localization, clear jurisdiction, ability to pay, steady revenues for local governments, and suitability for budget balancing. Bahl and Linn (1992) have added two further reasons for a fuller exploitation of the property tax in developing countries. First, the property tax is the most important local government revenue, responsible for one-third of the local tax in cities where substantial responsibility and revenues are allowed to municipalities. On the basis of the wealth of data that they gathered, they argue that where local government taxes play a major role in financing urban public services, the property tax will be an important source of revenue.

Second, they argue that, contrary to the conventional position, property taxes are not regressive in developing countries. Even though there is need for urgent reforms—especially with respect to multiple objectives, management, and exemptions—the tax was largely progressive in the developing countries and also has the potential to serve positive allocative goals. The experiences of both developed and developing countries with the tax generally confirm these positions.

The history of the property tax has been so closely tied to the development of local government in the developed countries as to merit repetition here. The report of the *Layfield Committee Enquiry into Local Government Finance* in the United Kingdom (1976, 151) noted that: "taxes on property form part of the taxation system of most developed countries and feature very frequently as local taxes." Similarly, in a review of several (mostly developed countries) local government finance systems, Marshall (1969, 20) reports that "taxes on owners and occupiers of real estate remain the most general kind of local tax. Almost all countries use them."

Experience with the property tax is more varied. In a global review, Bahl and Linn (1992, 81) offered an hypothesis that was largely confirmed by their data on 49 cities in 22 countries: where local government taxes play an important role in financing urban public services, property tax will be an important revenue source. Financing pressures on local governments and other problems of the tax have made the search for alternative revenue sources necessary since 1980, but the thesis is generally regarded to be consistent with the experiences of many developing countries and data provided by others who have worked on the subject (e.g., Dillinger 1989; Keith 1993). Why?

First, property taxes are regarded as generally underexplored and underexploited even in those municipalities where they generate a substantial proportion of the total internally generated revenue. Second, they provide opportunities for the strengthening of local governments, since the development of the tax will not eat into central government's own revenue sources, a major problem confronting financial decentralization in these countries. Third, in the wake of economic crisis and adjustment, many central governments have been forced to reduce the transfers they provide to local governments. Shortfalls in revenue for local government can only be met domestically by developing new revenue sources such as property tax or increasing its yield where they are already being collected.[4]

Fourth, analyses by economists have demonstrated beyond reasonable doubt that this tax is in fact inherently progressive rather than regressive, other things being equal, in developing country circumstances. Features that are found to increase the progressivity of the urban property tax are progressively graduated tax rates, exemption of low value properties, higher than average

4. In recent years, donor support for local governance program and projects have increased (OECD 2004).

tax rates on vacant lots or commercial properties, lower tax rates on improvement than on site (land) value, and better-than-average collection efforts for high-value properties (Linn 1983; Bahl and Linn 1992).

Fifth, the tax is found not only to be progressive, especially if confined to the largest cities because it will release grants for less wealthy localities, but is also thought to encourage a more productive use of urban land space as well as fewer births (Bird 1990, 285; Mabogunje 1972). Several cities in developing countries have been found to be 'parasitic' in their rural economic development effort. Mabogunje (1968, 316), for instance, classified 143 (49 percent) of a total of 293 urban centers (200 and above) in Nigeria as 'parasitic' and another 100 others as marginally so. This skewed concentration of government investments tends to promote fewer births because children incur high costs in urban communities.

Finally, in the absence of a good local tax, such as the property tax, local governments become hopelessly dependent on central government transfers, which are not always reliable or paid regularly. An important danger, as shown above, is that central government revenue sources are heavily dependent on taxes on international trade, which are subject to sudden and major swings of the market. Taxes on domestic activities/commodities remain low. But the services for which local governments are responsible are constant and increasing as the urban population increases phenomenally.

Empirical Evidence: Property Taxation and Municipal Governance

Selected Commonwealth Experience

An earlier study (Olowu 2000) focused on nine municipalities selected from four countries; all were from the Commonwealth and hence had been exposed to the same legal and local government tradition. Three of these countries had developed their property tax systems, and one had not—except in one city. Even in the countries with well-developed property tax legislations, some cities relied on other local revenue sources. The research sought to compare and explain the differences. The findings showed that all of the nine cities received a portion of their revenues from property tax. Cities with high property taxes were also those with strong democratic local government traditions (Harare, Kariba (Zimbabwe), Cape Town, Durban (Republic of South Africa), Bombay, Hyderabad (India) and Lagos (Nigeria). The obverse was the case for the other cities, e.g., Kano (Nigeria)

and Delhi (India), even though other cities in the same countries had a stronger local government tradition. Such a local government tradition also included the role of knowledgeable civil society organizations, such as the urban managers or city mayors association, chambers of commerce, and so on, which were able to provide substantial political pressure in favor of local governance (see Olowu 2000).

Of course, the paucity of our data makes generalizations extremely difficult but the same ideas were confirmed by the much larger samples in Bahl and Linn (1992, 81; other details in Olowu 2000).

Nigeria Ten-City Study

Even though there is a long history of this tax in Nigeria's major urban centers, the tax has remained underdeveloped and underexploited outside of the major city of Lagos. This was in spite of the 1976 reform, which supported the development of this tax for the purposes of financing the increasing array of services that the local governments were mandated to provide. As we saw above, although local government revenues had increased phenomenally as a result of the 1976 reforms, Nigerian local governments became heavily dependent on central transfers. Local governments raised 94 percent of their revenues in 1972, but they raised less than 6 percent some 27 years later (1999); however, their total revenue rose by 1,000 times. This is further compounded by the fact that the public revenue system is heavily dependent on a single product—oil—that is sold on a volatile world market. As the responsibilities of local governments grew it meant that local governments must finance predictable and basic services relied on by the public—especially the poor—from unpredictable revenue sources. Third, partly as a reaction to this fact, a number of state governments initiated bold reforms on property taxes.

Olowu, et al. (1994) selected 10 cities from 7 of Nigeria's 21 states (1994; there are now 36 states) that were also representative of the different regions of the country. Key actors—local government council members (33), employees of the councils (36), and ordinary citizens (10)—were interviewed, and the research team scrutinized the records of the respective councils. A rough count of actual housing properties was also taken in all ten cities. The following are highlights from the research findings:

- In absolute terms, local government revenue increased more than thirty-fold within a four-year period (1986–90); a significant increase

even making allowance for inflation. However, within the same period, local government's internally generated revenue (IGR) as a share of total revenue (TR) fell from 40.3 percent to almost a half that (22.5 percent). Explanations for a decline in IGR when TR is increasing hinges on the huge increase in the share of the federation account going to local governments—and the poor accounting for the use of these resources by powerful local government chairmen who operate as governors and presidents at state and federal levels, respectively.

- Property rates[5] as a proportion of LG's internally generated revenues also fell for most of the sample LGs within the period. Factors responsible for this include the relative ease with which other revenue sources can be tapped, the fission of several local governments within the period, the downturn in the economy that led a number of small-scale enterprises that pay tenement rates to close down, the difficulty of increasing the tax rate, and the poor and archaic organizational set up for managing property tax.

- On the other hand, a few local governments—all of Lagos state and some others in the South West—successfully introduced the property tax with strong support from the state government and, in most cases, the World Bank. For instance, the property rate was only 0.3 percent in Port Harcourt (a large oil city) but 44 percent in Ikeja (Lagos) in 1989, rising to 58.3 percent of the latter city's revenue in 1994. That is because Ikeja was in a state that had a strong pro-property-tax policy. Property rates also tended to boost overall municipal finances (see, for instance, the contribution of property rates to internally generated and total revenues in the asterisked cities on Table 4).

- Most of the LGs did not have good or up-to-date records of the total number of properties in their jurisdiction. The records were either outdated or contained estimates that had little bearing on reality. Things were generally different in LGs that had just introduced or modernized their property rating system.

5. In the British tradition, local government taxes are called "rates."

- The staffing of finance departments and tenement rating departments left much to be desired. But generally, in making decisions with respect to fiscal matters, LG officials had more input into this process than the political class (councilors). This is the case whether regarding the budget exercise or fund allocation among various sectors, although councilors play a more visible role in raising additional or new revenue sources.

- Contrary to popular belief, councilors believed that the property rate was generally acceptable to the people—it was regarded as equitable and ensured that municipal government (MG) infrastructure was improved. They did not regard its introduction as an unmanageable political risk, but then most of them had not given serious support to the idea of generating more revenues from this source. Eighty percent of interviewed ratepayers signified their willingness to pay the property rates if there was demonstrable benefit in the form of better services.

- The six most serious financial problems confronting these municipalities were: mandated costs from federal and state governments (e.g., for primary education), pressures from employees for increased salaries, loss of federal revenue (especially in the field of primary education), rising service demands from citizens, loss of state government revenues (10 percent of IGR), and inflation.

- MGs relied on the following strategies to generate more revenues: additional intergovernmental transfers (Onitsha, Jos, and Kaduna); new local government revenue sources, of which the property tax was the most successful (Onitsha, Ota, Abeokuta, and Ikeja); deferring some payments to the following year (Enugu, Onitsha, Jos, and Kaduna); and increased user fees and charges (Onitsha and Ikeja). Other minor strategies included the sale of some assets and short-term/long-term borrowing. Since many of them confront increased expenditure demands, they resorted to the following expenditure improvement strategies, in order of importance: better management; adoption of labor-saving techniques; reduction of capital expenditures; contracting out services to the private sector;

control of new construction; across-the-board cuts in all departments; cutting budgets of least-efficient departments; laying off personnel; shifting responsibilities to other units of government; and reducing overtime.

- None of the MGs had made a survey of how economic development impacted on the LG, but occasional project analysis was conducted to test the feasibility. Generally, the influx of huge resources into local governments had also been associated with more cases of fiscal malpractice and greater citizen apathy toward the local government system. Their citizens perceived many councilors and in particular LG chairmen to be corrupt. On the other hand, there were also some that distinguished themselves by serving their communities—especially in Lagos, Ado-Odo, and Jos.

- All MGs except Lafia and Kano were collecting property rates (PRs). PR confronts six major obstacles, according to their chief finance officers: lack of support from councilors; poor house numbering (and street naming); lack of personnel—in quantity and quality; public criticism; lack of incentives to taxpayers; lack of support from state government. As to be expected, the extent of these problems varied from one MG to another. In some MGs, the responsibility for collecting PR had been passed on to Urban Development Authorities (Jos), which may or may not share proceeds with MGs.

- On the whole, successful MGs (in terms of property rating) tended to engage more staff than their less successful counterparts. This is the most outstanding difference between these two sets of MGs. The former had an average of 16 staffers, while the latter had only 6. Some of the less-successful MGs (Kaduna and Lafia) had no separate department charged with property rating.

- The federal and state governments (especially the latter) and private individuals—with substantial properties—tended to have large arrears of unpaid rates. None of the MGs had succeeded in imposing sanctions because of their weak legal position (enabling law, legal staff, and inadequate or nonexisting revenue courts). None of

the MGs had an incentive system for encouraging ratepayers to pay promptly or to pay at all.

It became evident from the findings that if property rating is to become a major revenue source for Nigerian municipal governments, a number of important policy and administrative measures must be undertaken at each of the various governmental levels—federal, state, and local. Some of the policy measures would include the promulgation of model legislation on landed property and property taxation that each state can adapt to suit its own peculiar conditions. The model law should apply to all urban and semi-urban centers in Nigeria and, inevitably, a definition and classification of Nigerian cities will be necessary. The model law must also identify local governments as property rating authorities, indicate the assessment base, liability, valuation and revaluation procedures, and exemptions as well as enforcement mechanisms. Citizen representatives (based on community or civil structures) should also be actively involved in property assessments.

The administrative measures involve political, technical, and institutional matters. Political executives must be persuaded of the need to develop the tax and must be ready to 'sell' it to their electorate. The most important technical issue is the development of a land cadastre that incorporates the identification, registration, and mapping of land titles. Land policy—in the direction of full marketization—should be pursued in the cities, while the case for redistribution might be strong in the rural areas. New or modified institutional mechanisms may also be required, especially in setting up and effectively staffing a rating office.

Finally, federal and state governments must adopt a policy on the payment of grants-in-lieu of rates for their properties. Furthermore, the compliance by urban and semi-urban local governments with efforts to develop the property tax should form important criteria (up to 20 percent of the amount distributed) for disbursing allocated revenues to local governments.

Conclusion

A paradigm shift has occurred in Africa and many other developing countries in favor of local governance, especially since the 1990s. The most intractable problem confronting this experiment everywhere has been to find a suitable and reliable local revenue base. Central government transfers

in many countries have been the major source for financing local government revitalization. Although this is a welcome development, we highlighted some of its dangers. Of the possible forms of local revenues in many developing countries, the property tax is the most highly recommended—not only because of its potential for raising financial resources but for refocusing decentralization strategy on the local realities of people, culture, and governance. Other alternatives, such as the poll tax in East and West Africa, have been abused and are regressive in terms of their impact.

Three major problems are usually emphasized concerning property tax in developing countries—valuation, assessment, and collection (Proud'homme 1989). All three problems are compounded by the fact that land titles and cadastres are poorly developed in most of these societies. The idea that land is government or communally owned has only aggravated the problem.

The fact that the big players in politics at the center are also the substantial property owners and are likely therefore to be the ones to pay the tax when they are levied further aggravates the situation. One can understand why there will be strong opposition to the tax in many developing countries. Nevertheless, these problems are not insurmountable. For instance, at the national level, some breakthroughs have been recorded in improved revenue mobilization through the creation of revenue authorities in many African countries. The few such experiments in developing countries aimed at property taxation have been quite outstanding—as in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Accra in the 1970s and 1980s, besides the Nigerian cases described above (Bahl and Linn 1992; Keith 1993).

The task of raising substantial revenues from the property tax turns on two critical considerations. These are political *willingness* of the crucial stakeholders, and *opportunity* as presented by the economic base and size of urban centers. The capacity to implement the tax, often regarded by some as key, is actually dependent on the other two variables. If there is a willingness on the part of the key stakeholders—the political players at the central and local levels, private and civil society actors, and donors—and with many countries increasingly having cities of substantial size and economic base, all the problems associated with the tax—valuation, assessment and collection—can be tackled with conventional technologies, but new technologies promise to enhance this capacity.

Political willingness can only materialize if there are real incentives to those who wield power. There has to be an acceptance that the property tax

represents an important investment over time to finance urban infrastructures, which are presently in crisis in much of the developing world. Given the problem of financing urban infrastructures in many cities and the breakdown in social cohesion, real threats to security of the rich and powerful, a program of civic engagement on this subject can help to bring about a sea change in attitudes toward the tax. Donors that make the development of the property tax a condition for grants and loans can further enhance this. Although inequality is particularly high in both Latin America and Africa, Latin America has embarked on strong decentralization programs that have led to huge increases in property tax revenues in many cities. Even then, the contrast between the developing countries generally and the OECD countries, for instance, remains stark. The linkage between infrastructure and development is well established in the literature and it is not surprising to note that Africa's position on the poverty, equity, and effective local taxation levels are consistent.

In the meantime, Africa's cities are growing by leaps and bounds. Urban centers remain the preponderant centers of opportunity and growth in the developing world. And urban land is a major source of investment in these countries and is therefore a veritable source of mobilizing resources for declining infrastructures in many developing countries. But this will be dependent on the ability to tackle the cultural/political issues embedded in capitalizing urban land and transforming it from what it is presently—dead capital (see below).

The property tax will not be the only tax to finance urban development in LDCs, but it will be one of the most important. This is not only in terms of its own independent contribution to municipal revenues but because it will also stimulate other sources, such as loans for capital development decentralization especially in countries such as those in Africa where capital development projects are heavily dependent on donor funding. Second, it will help the region to benefit from its rich past in managing change successfully. Finally, the development of this tax contributes to the program of poverty alleviation in three critical ways. First, it will make possible the diversion of more central government grants to the development of rural areas away from urban areas where the property tax will be primarily instituted (as is currently the case in South Africa). Second, the successful introduction of the tax will lead to greater progressivity of the tax systems in these countries, thus relieving the poor of the unfair heavy burden they bear

presently of financing the development of their countries. Third, it will help transform much 'dead' capital—urban land—into ' living' capital, to use Hernando de Soto's (2002) terminology.

These issues should constitute the cutting edge of an urban research agenda in West Africa in the coming years.

Table 1. Percentage of Urban Population in African Countries, 1950–2030

Countries by Region	1950	1960	1990	1995	2000	2020
Eastern Africa (18)	5.2	7.3	21.8	25.4	29	43.2
Middle Africa (9)	14.2	17.9	37.8	41.6	45.6	60.4
Northern Africa (7)	24.5	30.0	44.6	47.9	51.2	63.6
Southern Africa (5)	38.0	41.7	54.9	58.2	61.3	71.6
Western Africa (17)	10.2	14.5	32.5	36.1	39.8	54.6
All Africa (56)	14.5	18.3	33.9	37.3	40.7	53.9
Latin America	41.5	49.3	71.5	74.1	76.4	82.9
Asia	16.4	21.5	34.4	38.6	42.7	56.4
Europe	56.5	61.1	73.4	75.0	76.7	83.1
N. America	63.9	69.9	75.2	76.1	77.3	83.4
Oceania	61.3	66.3	70.6	70.8	71.3	75.9
World	29.2	34.2	45.2	48.1	51.1	62.0

Source: United Nations, World Urbanization Prospects (1991, Table A.1).

Notes: Eastern Africa includes: British Indian Ocean Territory, Burundi, Comoros, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Reunion, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Middle Africa includes: Angola, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, São Tome, Principe, Zaire.

Northern Africa includes: Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia, and Western Sahara.

Southern Africa includes: Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa, and Swaziland.

Western Africa includes: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, St. Helena, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo.

Table 2: Overview and Analysis of Democratic Decentralization and Local Governance in Seven African Countries

Criteria	Botswana	Chad	Ghana	Kenya	Nigeria	RSA	Uganda
Political, Legal and Economic Context	High	Medium by default	Medium	Low	Low	Medium	Medium to High
Inst. Design for Resource Allocation and Utilization	Medium	Low	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium
Local Demands for Public Services	Medium	High	Low	Medium	Low	Low	Medium
Local Governanc e Structure	Medium	High	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium

Source: Olowu and Wunsch (2004)

Table 3: Average Gini Index by Region in the 1990s

Continent	Averages (No of Countries)			
	<40%	40-49%	>50%	Av
Africa	34% (8)	42% (10)	55% (9)	44%
Asia	34% (7)	43% (5)	0% (0)	39%
East Europe	28% (12)	45% (3)	0% (0)	37%
O.E.C.D.	30.1% (18)	41% (1)	0% (0)	36%
South / LA	0% (0)	47% (3)	57% (9)	52%

Source: World Bank (2002).

Note: The Gini Coefficient measures the extent to which the distribution of income among individuals or households deviates from a perfectly equal distribution. It thus varies from 0 (perfectly equal distribution) to 100 (perfectly unequal distribution).

Table 4: Municipal Government Revenue in Selected Cities 1986–1991

MUNICIPAL GOVT	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
ABEOKUTA SOUTH*						
PR/IGR %	20	28	26	19	12	20
IGR/TR%	34	28	26	19	12	8
TR (Nm)	5.0	6.4	9.0	12.5	32.3	32.6
*ADOODO/OTA**						
PR/IGR	58	46	48	35	35	37
IGR/TR	51	38	28	30	18	29
TR	4.8	5.8	9.3	10.8	19.6	14.4
IKEJA*						
PR/IGR	45	43	32	44	44	58
IGR/TR	55	40	36	32	33	17
TR	17.0	23.6	23.9	27.0	27.2	67.0
ENUGU*						
PR/IGR	N/A	11	13	16	20	27
IGR/TR		51	23	20	30	18
TR		8.1	23.1	18.1	15.0	53.6
*ONITSHA**	(1985)					
PR/IGR	15	11	13	12	18	21
IGR/TR	38	35	34	43	46	24
TR (Nm)	17.4	17.9	23.1	17.3	16.8	30.7
JOS NORTH						
PR/IGR	8	8	6	12	6	–
IGR/TR	25	21	23	21	11	9
TR	10.1	9.5	11.7	14.5	30.2	28.0
LAFIA						
PR/IGR	38	00	–	–	–	
IGR/TR	27	52	12	12	8	8
TR	4.2	1.3	9.8	9.9	20.8	13.5
KADUNA						
PR/IGR	61	49	59	44	54	54
IGR/TR	28	21	17	16	5	4
TR	11.8	16.2	23.5	24.9	57.3	55.9
ZARIA						
PR/IGR	13	11	6	9	11	13
IGR/TR	13	8	6	7	1	1
TR	9.4	13.7	17.4	13.2	17.3	18.6
KANO						
PR/IGR	N/A	5	5	8	–	–
IGR/TR	–	62	58	35	12	15
TR	23.0	15.6	19.4	9.2	11.5	14.1

Source: Olowu et al. (1994)

Note: Cities with PR policy have asterisks. Kaduna suspended PR in 1992.

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ONE CENTURY OF MUNICIPALIZATION IN CAMEROON: THE MISERIES OF URBAN DEMOCRACY

CHARLES NACH MBACK

INTRODUCTION

The territorial administration system in Cameroon is made up of two components: decentralization and deconcentration. The latter divides the national territory into administrative circumscriptions that are the extension of the central authority into the periphery. The former organizes the national territory and the populations into autonomous administrative units, within which the people have some right and capacity to decide for themselves on some public affairs, called "affairs of proximity." The communal institution (or the municipality) depends on this component of territorial administration. In the Cameroonian context, it is to a large extent only a simple element of the administrative machinery applied to the territory. As it has been since its inception, this has been a complete deformation of the meaning of communal institution.

Indeed, since the European Middle Ages, the commune was born as the institutional translation of the idea of community and of the desire for solidarity that inspires those it brings together. The history of institutions tells us that the notion of commune has taken root in human acts of solidarity, which all happened on the margins of the power of central governments. Thus the Canadian commune started as a gathering of the faithful of a same parish around an official they themselves named to take care of their affairs. This practice, which began in 1673, foreshadows the current commune that had to adapt to the demographic, political, and economic mutations of the country (Morel 1968). The current municipal institution in Switzerland claims to have inherited, in the European Middle Ages, urban franchises and lordly liberalities at the expense of the central government (Perrin 1968; de Vevey 1947). We witness, *mutatis mutandis*, a similar dynamic in Belgium. There, thanks to the expansion of trade in the course of the tenth and eleventh centuries, towns obtained certain freedoms and the right to administer themselves (Hoeffler 1968). Even when the French revolutionary wars spread municipal organization to Belgium, this concept of the commune was not questioned (ibid.). In France itself, the organiza-

tion of the faithful, grouped into parishes, led them to take on the secular interests of the villagers against the lords and the king.

Thus, in the sixteenth century, in most French regions, the community of rural inhabitants was managed by its notables and a general assembly represented by an official and, was granted its own legal status. Later on, the French commune overlapped the Revolution and resisted in adjusting to all the postrevolutionary convulsions to arrive at what it is today.[1] In all these examples, the commune appears as the legal personification of a network of human solidarities that had preceded it. It is a "human collectivity sharing its problems, its history, its interests, which is contained in a defined portion of the national territory" (Nlep 1986, 119). The commune is thus characterized by Francis-Paul Benoît (1968, 140):

> [B]ecause it constitutes a sociological reality easy to perceive physically, at least globally, and because it is close to the inhabitants…because it is a natural collectivity…and is therefore a human group before it is an administrative entity; which implies that the functions of this administration are strictly speaking determined by the needs of the group, and not likely to be arbitrarily set by a legislative decision.

This is the institution that the British and French colonizers introduced in Cameroon.

Yet, the commune that was introduced in Cameroon as part of the colonial project has none of this communitarian character. The urban and rural populations are not able to organize themselves around points of interest or to obtain rights. The French as well as the British claimed the right to create communes using unilaterally defined criteria; thus, the communes became an instrument of territorial control in the service of the colonizer. Marked by this original sin, the tropicalized commune in Cameroon will coincide with the independences and its flaws will be reinforced by the postcolonial authorities.

From the colonial era until now, the communal dynamic in Cameroon has been marked by a fundamental and permanent double distinction between urban and rural management against the background of local democracy. On the one hand, municipalization always starts in urban areas before spreading

1. See Douence (1994, 5ff); more generally, and in a historical perspective, see Burdeaux (1989), Mény (1974), and Ohnet (1996).

toward rural areas and, on the other hand, it does not grant the same local freedoms to the two zones. Depending on the periods, either local democracy is instituted in rural areas and forbidden in the cities, or the other way around. Even if these tendencies also vary depending on whether in the Francophone or the Anglophone part of the country, they structure the acclimatization of the institution by the colonizer, before being renewed by the independent state.[2] From one period to the other, the commune is not truly conceived as the basis of social initiative for the development of the population.

Until 1974: The Double Acclimatization of an Imported Institution

The agreement between France and Britain on the division of the German colony of Kamerun was signed in March 1916.[3] The French inherited a space equivalent to three quarters of the loot, and the British were content with what was left, the western part of the territory, with the Moungo River as a frontier. This agreement was ratified by the Treaty of Versailles, 28 June 1918. The League of Nations conferred a mandate to France and Great Britain, the new occupying powers, allowing them to administer the territory, each one in the area it occupied. In reality, each of these powers applied to its area the same administrative rules as in the rest of their colonial empire. The part of Cameroon under British mandate was assimilated into the colony of Nigeria. The French part was governed by the same rules that were applied to Afrique Equatoriale Française, a vast French colonial area.[4] The politics of decentralization would consequently be applied differently in Cameroon.

Although each ruling authority imported its communal system into Cameroon, its application would be marked by the demands of strict control of the territory for its economic exploitation, for the benefit of the metropoli-

2. The general tendency is very different in Africa today. Most African countries try to return the commune to its role as a school of democracy and cooperative development since it would be undertaken by the populations themselves. On this, see Nach Mbach (2001).
3. This agreement is repeated 10 July 1919, following the Versailles Treaty.
4. The 1922 London Treaty ratifies the 1919 French-British agreement and, in accordance with the Versailles Treaty, Cameroon is placed under regime "B." This meant that "the representative authority will have full powers to administer and legislate over the countries under their mandate; these countries will be administered according to the legislation of the representative authority." The "B" specified that the representative authority was in no way obliged to prepare the people they administered for political autonomy, and even less for independence.

tan area. In other words, when the communal institution arrived in Cameroon, it was less intended to serve a project of local democracy than to consolidate the colonial yoke. This goal, common to all colonizers, would be sought out in the municipalization through different modalities, according to the respective administrative traditions of the English and the French. The former instituted a local management that was identical for the cities and the country, whereas the latter instituted different regimes for these two types of local governments.

The English "Local Councils" and the Urban-Rural Identity

The area of the Cameroonian territory placed under British mandate was administered as an integral part of the British colony of Nigeria.[5] This policy was made official with the Cameroon Order in Council signed in June 1923, which applied to Cameroon the texts already in use in Nigeria. The territory was then renamed Southern Cameroons. It became a Nigerian province and was subdivided in two parts: the Northern Cameroons and the Southern Cameroons. Decentralization was symbolized there by the Native Authorities. This institution was the same in urban and rural areas.

The Composition of Native Authorities: From Personalization to Collegiality

In the new system of territorial administration, the customary authorities are considered one of the main pieces. Other political actors that were more representative of the population, in an optic of progressive democratization of local life, were associated with these authorities. The Native Authority was thus a territorial authority united in the person of the traditional chief. The range of the territory he governed followed the contours of his community. So, from 1920 to 1930, all politically organized ethnic communities would be established as Native Authorities over the whole territory of British Cameroon. In the areas without a centralized traditional authority, the colonizer created Native Authorities *ab initio* (Kamto 1987, 69, 498).

From the early 1930s on, the situation evolved and the principle of collegiality was introduced and extended to the Native Authorities. Traditional

5. The 1914 *Native Court Ordinance* (NCO), and the 1916 *Native Authority Ordinance* (NAO).

chiefs would henceforth be more than members of a council made up of other personalities: some of them were appointed by the colonial authority and others were elected by the local people. The Native Authority became a three-part college and called itself the Local Council or Local Authority. Traditional chiefs lost their monopoly over local political life.[6]

After independence, Northern Cameroon was attached to Nigeria and Southern Cameroon was united with Francophone Cameroon. Until 1974, it would have 24 institutions of the local council type. Over time, this composition of local councils would evolve in parallel fashion with the evolution of their powers.

The Powers and Functions of the Local Councils

The powers of local councils are quite widespread. Their main areas of competence are: administrative policy, basic education, primary health, trade regulation, the circulation of goods and people, land and property management, planning and construction, legal policy, and hunting. Local authorities even have municipal jails where those condemned for petty crimes and misdemeanors are held.

As for the budget, local councils get their resources from a range of local taxes, fees for municipal services, dues for the exploitation of national patrimony, and, after independence, from state grants. But during colonization, local councils were allowed to keep only a tiny part of the collected resources (less than 0.5 percent). Local councils can also hire and manage communal personnel, who are ruled by the Local Government Staff Regulations. Municipalities can also cooperate through joint committees for the management of common services.

The French Commune and the Urban-Rural Distinction

The French colonizers were suspicious of the indigenous population and did

6. But within the council, they still enjoy some prestige, which they owe to at least two factors. First, their status as rightful members gives them an advantage over their colleagues; they have the assurance that comes from the absence of electoral uncertainties and the moods of nominating authorities. Second, in an historical context rich in customs and traditions, traditional chiefs represent the whole community globally, and the elected members of councils are nonetheless their subjects; they are listed also on the traditional registry.

not trust their leaders. France was more preoccupied with assuring effective and direct control over Cameroon, thus the movement for communalization did not start until 1941. It took place in two principal phases: first, there were mixed communes, then there were communes with full powers.

Mixed Communes and Democratization of Rural Management

The notion of the mixed commune (CM) was invented by the French colonizers. It applied to urban centers and was not intended to favor local democracy. Only when it spread later to rural areas did it introduce elements of local democracy and autonomy.

The first CMs were created by decree on 25 June 1941 in Douala and Yaoundé, the only two large cities in the country. They were governed by an executive and a council, both appointed by the colonial authority, the French High Commissioner. The executive had the title of Mayor-Administrator, and the council, called the Municipal Commission, was constituted of four "French notables" and two "native notables, French subjects." The CM as it was created was responsible for the registry, the police, and local roads. It deliberated on the budget, the accounts, and the management of communal property. The Second War World put a halt to this decentralization movement. In 1950, a new variation appeared, the mixed urban commune (CMU). Its organs were always appointed by the colonial authority. Seven urban localities had that privilege.[7] But once more, the rural areas were ignored in the decentralization process.

In 1952 decentralization made its way into the bush with the invention of the mixed rural communes (CMR). They were governed by a mayor who could be chosen outside the framework of colonial administration, but was always appointed by the High Commissioner. However, local democracy began to unfold: the CMR municipal councils were elected by universal suffrage for a six-year period. On this model, thirteen mixed rural communes were instituted in rural areas.[8]

At this stage, a two-tier decentralization became clearer, depending on the area, whether rural or urban. Indeed, the control of colonial administration was stricter in the CMU, where a high proportion of Europeans lived, than in

7. Ebolowa, Edea, Garoua, Kribi, Mbalmayo, Nkongsamba, and Sangmelima.
8. Djoungolo, Mfou, Essé, Okolma, Saa, Nanga, Eboko, Akonolinga, Mbalmayo, Ebolowa, Ambam, Sangmelima, and Djoum.

the CMR, made up essentially of local populations.[9] Summing up this communal tendency, we can draw a direct relationship between the importance of the commune and the level of control exercised over the appointment of its governing bodies. Indeed, in the cities, they all are appointed, and in the rural municipalities all elected.

This tendency is confirmed with the progressive urbanization of rural areas. Thus, in middle-size cities, the designation of municipal council mixes elements of democracy with the technique of direct nomination. So, when in 1954, CMRs were created in Dschang, Bafang, Bafoussam, and Bouda, the municipal councils were composed of two kinds of members. Some were elected by universal suffrage; they represented the whole of the population and constituted two thirds of the council. The others were nominated by the locality's traditional chiefs from among their peers; generally speaking, the powers remained the same. This structure would be modified yet again.

Communes with Full Power: The Democratization of Urban Management at the Expense of Rural Areas

The French law of 18 November 1955 introduced in Cameroon the notions of the commune with full powers (CPE) and the commune with moderate powers (CME). The CPEs, as specified in article 2 of the law, were reserved to "localities with sufficient development to be able to dispose of their own resources, necessary to a balanced budget." The cities of Douala, Younde, and Nkongsamba were the first to benefit from this legislation. This law represented a significant advance, not only for the assimilation of Cameroon, but mainly in the acquisition of local freedoms.

Indeed, article 6 of the 1955 law stipulates: "in all matters not contrary to the dispositions of the present law, the law of 5 April 1884 on municipal organization and the texts that completed or modified it will be applied to communes with full powers." This 1884 law is the basis of municipal organization in France. Among other things, it prescribes that the commune must be administered by an elected municipal council and a mayor designated from within the council. This system would be transposed to Cameroonian CPEs.

9. The opposite would have been more logical if one considers that the Europeans, more numerous in the CMU, are able to take care of themselves because they have experience with democracy.

Further, in the relationships between the commune and the colonial administration, the law speaks no more of administrative supervision, but of control of operations. The accounts of the communes from then on would be submitted to jurisdictional control of the Court of Accounts. However, the tendency toward two-tier decentralization practiced until that point would be reversed. Local democracy, which grew in urban areas, became restricted in rural areas.

Indeed, the system of CMEs was markedly different from that of the CPEs. In particular, the mayor was appointed by the High Commissioner from among the high-ranking members of the colonial administration. But after two years of management with a balanced budget, the CME could be granted the status of CPE. This method had a clear advantage, since it offered the incentive of endogenous development by painting the picture of changing the status of their locality. Thus, the colonial administration could get a clearer commitment to local development from the strong elements of a commune. This tendency would be abandoned after independence: in independent Cameroon, decentralization would consist of restricting local democracy in the cities and tolerating it in rural areas.

After 1974: Ambiguous Reforms and Virtual Progress

All the mixed urban communes would be transformed into CPEs until 1962, two years after Cameroon's independence. The new state then created another variation: the CPE *with special status.* The law of 1 March 1967 amends the status of the communes with full and moderate powers. What is particular here is that, in these communes, the executive is not a mayor elected by the municipal council. He is a civil servant of the state, appointed by the government with the title of Government Delegate. This new system was applied in the largest cities of the country at that time.

In fact, with independence, municipal reform was preceded by a reform of the territorial administration of the state.[10] The decree of 24 July 1972 reorganized the system of administrative districts, creating seven provinces for the

10. Cameroon, under French administration, becomes independent on 1 January 1960; the part administered by Great Britain becomes independent on 1 September 1961 and the two entities unite to form a federal state. But the federation is brutally dissolved in 1972 through a very ambiguous procedure, the consequences of which are still felt today in the malaise of Anglophone populations in Cameroon. On the subject, see Lékéné Donfack (1998, 40ff) and Olinga (1994). For a synthesis, see Nach Mbach (2003, 126ff).

whole country. The communal reform was part of Law no. 74/23 of 5 December 1974, the first major initiative on the municipal front since independence. This law claimed to harmonize the municipal system over the whole national territory, thus breaking with the dualism inherited from the British-French colonial occupation. But instead of harmonization, the lawmakers only extended to the Anglophone part of the country the spirit of municipalization inherited from the French, which was also aggravated by changes in the then-current political system. None of the elements of the system of local councils under British administration was maintained. As the following analysis shows, local freedoms were not improved.

The 1974 Reform: The Retreat of Urban Democracy

The 1974 law instituted a kind of local government for the whole country: the commune. It was either urban or rural. In the former, the commune covered an urban area; in the latter, the territory spread both over an area, built up or not, and over rural zones. But the system of the agencies at the top and the determination of communal powers and functions was the same for both.

The Harmonization of Organic Structures

The system of the designation of municipal organization, instituted by the 1974 law, is a renewal of the French colonial heritage. The electoral principle was generalized for the election of deliberating organs; but, as under colonization, the government intended to maintain its control over the designation of the executive agencies in urban areas.

Extension of council elections

A municipal council was made up of councilors elected for five years by universal, direct, and secret suffrage. The only variation related to the number of councilors, which depended on the number of people in the municipality.[11] However, even if all municipal councils had a democratic origin, they were not all equal in the eyes of the law.

11. Article 4 of Law No. 92/002 of 14 August 1992 sets the conditions for the election of municipal councilors: a minimum of 15 councilors (communes of 10,000 or less) and a maximum of 45 councilors (communes of 60,000 or more); these limits will be extended to 25 councilors for communes of less than 40,000, and to 61 councilors for those of more than 200,000.

Special regime for urban centers

The 1974 law promised local democracy by instituting the "election of the mayor and the deputies." But it specified that for rural communes, "the municipal administrator and his deputies would be appointed through a deed by regulation of the supervisory authority. The deputies would be chosen from among the members of the municipal council." The municipal administrator, who was the executive official of the commune in rural areas, was therefore not elected, but appointed by the central authority.

For large cities, a "régime spécial" was put in place. It stipulated that cities must be governed by an executive appointed by the government.[12] The cities of Douala, Yaoundé, and Nkongsamba were automatically subject to this system. On top of this, the law granted the President of the Republic the additional ability of extending the special system by decree to any rural or urban commune "because of its size and level of development." The goal, as it was under colonization, seemed to be to restrict local freedoms in urban centers. "The state was planning to keep tighter control over the largest communes, in keeping with colonial practice," Martin Finken writes (1996). It must be said, however, that the independent state was also suspicious of the rural areas and restricted local freedoms there as well. This policy was further aggravated when, in 1992, the special system was extended by decree to nine other cities in the country.[13]

Following the same principle of limiting local rights and freedoms in urban centers, a 1987 law instituted urban communities in Douala and Yaoundé, the two metropolitan areas of the country. These two cities were divided into districts organized into sub-urban communes governed by councils elected by universal suffrage and executive officials chosen from among their councils. Then the councils named their representatives, who constituted the community council, the deliberative organ of the larger urban community. The municipal executive was made up of a government delegate, appointed by decree by the President of the Republic, as was the case for the municipalities with special regime.[14]

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12. Articles 173 to 177.
13. Article 2 (new) of Decree No. 93/322 of 25 November 1993 modifies and completes some of the clauses of decree No. 77/203 of 29 June 197,7 which determined the communes and their territorial competence. The communes involved are Bafoussam, Bamenda, Ebolowa, Edéa, Garoua, Kumba, Limbé, Maroua, and Nkongsamba (for this last one, it is a confirmation)
14. Law No. 87/15 of 15 July 1987 on the creation of urban communities.

That same year, a law removed the institution of the municipal administrator and extended local democracy to rural areas. From that point on, the municipal members of the executive were subjected to universal suffrage; the mayor and deputies were elected for five years by the municipal council. Thus, the citizens in the rural areas were generally authorized to elect the organs of their municipality. Once more, urban dwellers were deprived of local democracy.[15] This difference would not have any consequence at the level of municipal powers.

The unification of the powers and functions of municipalities

The 1996 constitutional revision implicitly sets at six the number of functional areas for local governments: economic development, health, education, culture, sports, and social affairs (article 5[2]). Under the 1974 law, municipalities had authority in the following areas: interventions in the economic and social areas; approval of urban plans; naming streets and public areas; and authorization for fairs and for their locations.

Only urban communities benefited from specific powers that were considered federative for the urban district municipalities that constituted them. However, considering the situation preceding the reform, the local councils had gotten a bad deal. Their margin of maneuver had been considerably reduced. The administrative and legal authority of the police had been reduced to nothing and municipal prisons had been transferred to the government through the ministry of territorial administration. But the hardest blow delivered to the autonomy of the communes in the Anglophone zones was the repeal of the Local Government Staff Regulations. This text set the status of municipal personnel under the exclusive authority of the municipality. The country has been waiting 30 years for a new document, which has been announced several times.

The Dashed Hopes of 1996

The year 1996 began with an important event in the area of political and institutional reforms in Cameroon. Indeed, on 18 January, the decree for

15. On a general view of this issue, and in a comparative perspective with the current systems in other African countries, see Nach Mback (2003).

the promulgation of a reform on constitutional law was passed. With the new text, decentralization obtained constitutional status: the principle of autonomous administration for local governments was instituted. Cameroon now counted two decentralization tiers with the transformation of provinces into regions, which were decentralized communities in addition to the municipalities. However, local freedoms remained limited despite the new constitution.

The Ambiguities of the Constitutional Principle of Free Administration of Local Governments

The 1996 constitutional reform instituted the principle of free, or autonomous, administration for local governments. These are grouped into two categories: the commune and the region. This was a major innovation because it was the first time since independence that decentralization was made part of the constitution.[16] The principle of free administration for local governments is French in origin. It was notably instituted in article 72 of the Constitution of 4 October 1958. Mentioned in article 55 (para. 2), the Cameroonian formulation of the principle of free administration presented a few ambiguities. In particular, the French text diverges substantially from the English version, while the constitutional status of the equality between the two languages[17] gives the two versions the status of equally legitimate text.[18]

The French version is classic: "decentralized territorial municipalities…administer themselves freely through elected councils and under conditions set by the law." This formulation is made up of two articles linked by a coordinate conjunction: on the one hand, decentralized territorial municipalities administer themselves freely through elected councils, and on the other hand, decentralized territorial municipalities administer themselves freely within the conditions set by the law. It is important to insist on these details, since they will have (serious) consequences later.

16. The Constitution of 4 March 1960 sanctions the communes and provinces as local governments of the Republic, no more.
17. "The Republic of Cameroon adopts English and French as its official languages, of equal importance" (article 1, para. 3).
18. "The law in question will be recorded and published in the *Journal Officiel de la République du Cameroun* in French and in English" (article 69).

To administer oneself freely through elected councils is one thing. To self-administer freely within conditions set by the law is another. In the first proposition, the principle of the election of councils is automatically guaranteed. The councils responsible for the (free) administration of decentralized territorial governments must be elected.[19] On the other hand, the interpretation of the second proposition is less evident. The proposition "decentralized territorial municipalities self-administer freely within the conditions set by the law" implies at least two kinds of considerations: one, the freedom of administration is instituted for these municipalities; two, this freedom depends on conditions set by the law. In this sense, a law may restrict or extend this freedom. It may, for example, recommend that freedom of administration does not mean the free choice of the executive body by the council for that commune. On that basis, the 1974 law and the 1993 decree cannot be contested constitutionally and legally.

But the English version of the same text does not seem to recommend such a restriction. The English text states: "the decentralized collectivities" are "administered freely, by councils elected under conditions lead by law." In this version, the two propositions of the French version are formulated differently: on the one hand, decentralized territorial municipalities are administered freely and, on the other, by elected councils within the conditions set by the law (by councils elected under conditions lead by law). In other words, it is not, contrary to what the French version implies, the free administration that takes place within the conditions set by the law, but the councils that are elected within the conditions set by the law ("councils elected under conditions lead by law"). It is in the election of the councils that law can interfere to set eventual limits, not in the free administration itself. This interpretation, which follows pure legal dogma, reveals a serious incoherence on the part of the lawmakers.[20]

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19. According to the Constitutional Court of Bénin, this suffrage is legal and absolutely secret, which excludes the voting procedure involving the alignment of electors behind a candidate of their choice; see Nach Mback,(2002).
20. In reality, it appears to be the simple but serious result of an error in translation. Indeed, the text seems to have been conceived and written in French before being translated into English. This would at least explain the numerous mistakes, inaccuracies, and errors that reveal an incomprehensible ignorance of the skills indispensable to the writing of legal documents; an unusual situation and, to be truthful, rather incredible in a country where human resources in the matter are not rare.

The election of councils is one element of free administration. If the lawmaker may limit it, it is the same as saying that he may limit free administration. But the first proposition excludes the possibility that the lawmaker might limit free administration. How then may he limit the electoral principle of the councils without limiting free administration? How is it possible to reduce the content without leaving a void in the container? These questions were to have consequences after the 1996 municipal elections.

The 1996 Municipal Elections and the Avatars of Constitutional Reform

The 1996 municipal elections created a craze on the side of the political actors as well as on that of the populations. It is necessary here to emphasize how the many delays provoked great impatience. The last elections had taken place in 1988. The elected councils then should have been renewed in 1992. In the meantime, the opposition parties, frustrated by the controversial results of legislative and presidential elections in 1992, intended to take their revenge during the municipal elections.

The election results confirmed a certain hold by the opposition parties on the electorate in the large cities.[21] In response to this breakthrough by the opposition into the local institutions of the country, the chief of state named government delegates at the helm of the municipalities in all the urban centers of the country.[22] The big cities remained under the strict surveillance of the government, contrary to the choices of the voters. Politically, this decision by the chief of state was part of a maneuver to maintain the country's urban centers under the control of the party in power. This practice dates back to colonization and consists of limiting local autonomy in cities and tolerating it in rural areas.

To complicate matters further, a group of traditional chiefs in the city of Douala, supported by a few politicians, organized a protest against what they called "the theft of their city halls by foreign elements" (see Mentah 1996, 183–85). Douala, which had experienced political and racial tensions, claimed

21. The Social Democratic Front (SDF), but also the National Union for Democracy and Progress (UNDP), the Movement for the Liberation of the Young People of Cameroon (MLJC), and the Democratic Union of Cameroon (UDC).
22. These cities were mentioned in the 1993 decree (see note 13), which extended to them the special regime provided by the 1974 law.

a "pre-emptive right" for local people.[23] The 1992 law, which set the conditions for the election of municipal councilors, recommended that the establishment of the list of candidates must "respect the sociological configuration of the constituency";[24] the Sawa elites understood this as demanding that the heads of lists, the future mayors, be chosen from within what they called "the local population."[25] Beyond this political aspect of the protest, the question of the legal significance of the demand for respect for the sociological configuration of the constituency needed to be clarified.

The doctrine was never approved unanimously. Roger Nlep had already brought up the problem ten years earlier in 1986. He could see—through the evolution of Cameroonian cities that had experienced, as a result of rural exodus, an intense mixing of populations from all corners of the country—the necessity to protect the people who had lived there the longest against the marginalization that threatened them. To him, this justified recourse to a process of specific nomination of the municipal executives in the urban centers' municipalities (urban municipalities with special regime). It was the only way, according to him, of guaranteeing that the office of chief municipal executive be reserved to a "native of the locality" (Nlep 1986, 119ff). It is therefore this interpretation that the Sawa elites chose to give to the notion of the sociological component of the constituency. This vision is corroborated by Bopda (1993, 247–57).

However, some scholars wanted to widen the debate by integrating into the concept considerations that would be more compatible with democratic values. Alain Didier Olinga (1996, 69) sees in the notion of the sociological component of the constituency, among other things, the division of the population by age (where do youths fit?) and by socioprofessional categories. For Barthélemy Kom Tchuenté (1996, 13), one must add elements such as the necessity of gender parity in the composition of electoral lists. In these divergences, the doctrine gives elements that are essential to the (at least phenomenological) understanding of the notion. Whatever the case, a Cameroonian

23. Indeed, convinced as they were that they would find it difficult, if not impossible, to have one of their sons elected at the head of one of the five urban communes that make up the city of Douala, in a system where the vote goes first to the ethnic groups, some political and traditional leaders organized marches and gatherings throughout the city after the election results had been announced on 10 February 1996.
24. Law No. 92/00 of 14 August1992, article 3.
25. On the Sawa insurrection, see Tatah Mentan (1996).

judge had to intervene to settle the debate by giving a jurisprudential interpretation of this article of the 1992 law.

The judge was given an opportunity to decide on the electoral right on that question, after the numerous objections that followed the proclamation of the 1996 election results. But, each time the question was asked expressly, he avoided coming to a decision.[26] The question is still controversial in Cameroon and the new legislation has not dealt with it.

The 2004 Laws

Since the adoption of the 1996 constitutional reform, the government has placed among its priorities the implementation of decentralization. As such, it occupies a good position in the national program of governance. A subcommittee in charge of decentralization was created in its midst (see PNGC n.d., 8–9). Its work has led to the new laws of July 2004. The new legislation on decentralization is made up of three texts, all promulgated on 22 July 2004: Law no. 2004/17 on orientation and decentralization; Law no. 2004/18 setting up the rules applicable to municipalities; and Law no. 2004/19 setting up the rules applicable to regions. The senate abstained from signing.

A Few Timid Breakthroughs of the New Legislation

It is important to point out that this is the first time Cameroon has adopted decentralization laws, that is to say, those that plan to deal with decentralization in its diverse aspects. The orientation law sets the major principles of the transfer of powers. The areas concerned are: economy, society, health, education, culture, and sports. Municipal personnel were granted their own authority, which they had been waiting for since 1974. The transfers of powers envisaged were to go together with a transfer of resources in terms of taxation and financial grants; in addition, the political entitlements from the preceding regime were maintained.

Thus, local bodies continue to be elected by universal suffrage. Better still, the administrative relationship between the state and local govern-

26. See, for example, CS/CA No. 24/95-96 of 29 March 1996, *Conseillers municipaux de la commune rurale de Nanga-Ekobo c/Etat du Cameroun;* CS/CA No. 31/95-96 of 19 April 1996, *RDPC (Commune rurale de Penja) c/Etat d Cameroun, SDF, UNDP, UFDC.*

ments evolves qualitatively, too. It goes from an a priori supervision to an a posteriori supervision under the control of a judge. This way, the decisions of local governments are implemented 15 days after they have been passed on to the state representative. In case of an objection about the legality of the decision, the state representative must refer it to the administrative jurisdiction, which settles contentious issues in the case of a disagreement.

Moreover, the law creates bodies for the follow up and evaluation of the implementation of decentralization: a national council on decentralization and an interministerial committee on local services. Unfortunately, all of these improvements are mitigated by restrictions and even serious setbacks.

The Limits of the New Legislation

The first limiting factor of the new legislation has to do with its relationship with its predecessor. The two-tier system persists at the level of local democracy. The law does indicate that local governments administer themselves through elected councils and that they have elected executive officials. But it also stipulates that it can bring about a few derogations. In terms of derogations in this area, experience has shown that the government will appoint municipal officials directly in urban centers and will limit local democracy to rural areas. This particular application of the orientation law is worrisome.

Then there is a new arrangement, which is in reality a step back from the previous situation. Indeed, the same law stipulates that "the powers transferred to territorial governments are not exclusive. They are exercised in a concurrent manner by the state and territorial governments, under the conditions and modalities provided by the law" (article 15[2]). This disposition excludes any clear distinction between the respective powers allocated to local governments and those retained by the state. We cannot therefore speak of an effective division of powers under these conditions. In the absence of a clear distinction between the respective powers at every level of governance, the risks of interference are great, as are the risks of conflicts.

In the same fashion, the abolition of the a priori supervision is only apparent in the relationship between the state and local governments. The law does cite a number of areas in which the decisions made by local governments can only be implemented after they have been approved by a state representative. On further examination, the areas in question form in fact the substance of local autonomy: the budget, loans, land management, del-

egations of public services, management of a certain category of personnel, and development planning. The state representative, in the exercise of his power of supervision, can delay up to 30 days before approving or rejecting the local decision submitted to him. To these restrictions, we must add the absence, for the moment, of a law governing the operations of the senate.

The Senate or the Elected Locals at the National Parliament

The introduction of a second chamber within parliaments is one of the major innovations of the recent institutional reforms currently taking place in Africa. As a general rule, African lawmakers of the first decades after independence did not give in to the two-chamber temptation, to which the European systems had exposed them, more specifically the French parliamentary system. The few exceptions to this rule in Francophone Africa applied to Madagascar, the Democratic Republic of Congo,[27] the kingdom of Morocco, and Burundi. The Republic of Dahomey (today Benin) had set up a consultative chamber whose members had been appointed by the chief of state but did not participate in the legislative process (Luchaire 1966, 342). In Cameroon, the experience of a two-chamber parliament began in 1961.

With the reunification of the two parts of the country (1961–72), Cameroon kept a sort of secondary two-chamber system. Only the parliament of the federated State of Western Cameroon (Anglophone) had a second chamber called the House of Chiefs, in addition to the legislative assembly (Kamto 1995, 7). This House of Chiefs brought together the representatives of traditional chiefs whose influence had remained quite strong in that part of the country. As for the federal parliament, it was constituted of a single chamber when one would have expected that the advent of federation might have brought about a political representation of federated entities. The 1972 unification put an end to this ambiguity. In any case, in all of these experiences, the intention never was to grant the second parliamentary chamber thus created a function of representation of local governments. In this, the 1996 reform constituted a major innovation.

The senate, born from the 1996 constitutional reform, had the responsibility to ensure the representation of local governments within the new

27. Which will become Zaïre in 1974 before returning to its previous name in 1997.

parliament. The latter was therefore to be made up of two chambers: the national assembly, composed of deputies that were elected by direct universal suffrage, and the senate, composed of representatives of local governments. This is in keeping with the logic of decentralizing reforms that want to take into account the important place of local governments in the system of national governance. In doing so, local governments participated from then on in the exercise of state power through one of its main pillars: parliament. Though the effectiveness of the institution remained rather virtual in nature, the adopted text announced a major role for local governments in the national legislative process. It was an innovation in the country's institutional history.

The Formation of the Senate and the Question of Its Legitimacy

The second parliamentary chamber is made up of one hundred members, the senators, elected within the framework of departments. They are divided up throughout the country, with ten senators representing the local governments of each of the country's ten regions. The senators are divided into two categories: 70 percent are elected by indirect universal suffrage, and 30 percent are appointed by the President of the Republic. The constitution divides these two categories for each region into seven elected and three appointed senators, all with a five-year mandate. Many writers have criticized this system. However, even if it is not so democratic, it constitutes an advance compared to the initial project submitted to the national assembly.

Indeed, in the 1993 preparatory project for the constitution, only three-fifths of the senate's members were to be elected by indirect suffrage. The others were to be elected under conditions to be set by subsequent law. But in the constitutional review, finally submitted by the government to be examined by the national assembly,[28] the regional quota for senators was maintained at 10, although a novelty was introduced in the modalities of their designation. The President of the Republic appointed up to five of the ten senators in each region, or 50 percent of the national total. Moreover, the former chiefs of state were entitled to become members. During the parliamentary phase of the review the proportion of senators was reduced to 30 percent and the category of entitled members was cancelled. A senator's

28. *Cameroon Tribune* (Youndé), 29 November 1995.

mandate lasted five years. The chamber must be completely renewed at the end of the mandate. But the fundamental problem was elsewhere. It had to do with the legitimacy of the senate itself as a democratic institution.

Indeed, the representativeness of an institution is generally dependent on the mode of recruiting its members. The degree of democratic legitimacy the nation grants depends on the manner in which senators are designated, and this legitimacy, in turn, greatly influences its real powers in terms of its hold on society and of its counterweight vis-à-vis the executive officials. Jean Grangé (1990, 5) summarizes this: "a large, unquestionable representativeness confers authority and calls for a real role. An uncertain or limited representativeness, on the contrary, tarnishes the image and the credibility of the institution and forbids it from claiming a major role. The system of representation, that is to say the mode of constitution of the assembly, determines the conditions for the exercise of its function." There are good reasons to worry about the powers of the future senate.

The Senate's Powers

The first political function of the senate is related to representative democracy. The intermediary bodies must be represented, and local governments are their most democratic symbol, since they encompass the whole population.[29] The new constitution has maintained for the senate this function of representation of local governments (article 20). They are at the same time the communes and the regions, as well as any other category of local governments the lawmaker might create. The initial proposal of a tripartite composition in the preparatory project was not retained. For the senate, it was a matter of gathering not only the representatives of local governments, but those of the traditional chiefs and the "great socioeconomic and cultural categories of the nation." This proposal had been reproduced as is in the project submitted by the government to be examined by the national assembly, which only retained the territorial governments as the intermediary bodies whose parliamentary representation had to be secured.

The senate's second political function is to participate in the legislative process. It is a normative function. Besides the adoption of the govern-

29. In some countries, citizens abroad (France Sénégal) are added or economic or socioprofessional organizations (Burkina Faso).

ment budget, the senate has the same powers as the national assembly when it comes to making laws. The senate can, as well as the state, propose private bills. Projects and private bills are deposited at the same time on the desks of the two chambers. The texts are examined and adopted in turn by each chamber in order to be valid. But in the case of a disagreement, the national assembly has the last word. What is striking in this formulation of the senate's legislative powers is the absence of any specific reference to decentralization and the local governments it represents.

The organic representation of local governments guaranteed by the presence of their elected members in the senate is not enough to allow full participation by these local governments in the exercise of national sovereignty. If the senate effectively represents local governments, the specific interests of local governments and, more globally, those of the local authority, would have to be defended and protected through its function in the legislative process; as well, the senate should be able to ensure this essential task. Indeed, the necessity to guarantee parliamentary representation for local governments, in addition to popular representation, reveals an awareness of the respective specificities that identify the two categories of the nation's components. Entering this preoccupation in the definition of the powers of the senate would consolidate this differentiation.

Indeed, there cannot be true representation without substantive content. That is to say, representation must revolve around specific powers. Representation cannot be evaluated only according to quantitative criteria related to demography. The qualitative element must intervene in terms of powers in order to establish a relation with the interests of the subjects represented through organizations. Then, rather than make the senate a parliamentary chamber—which differs, from the point of view of the legislative process, from the chamber of deputies only in its style of recruiting members and in its weaker powers—one could well envisage distinguishing the two chambers by defining their powers in relation to the type of representation they ensure, respectively. The national assembly represents the people, and the senate the local governments. It is therefore possible to grant the latter special prerogatives in the legislative process, whenever projects or bills involve decentralization in general and the interests of local governments in particular. All that would then be required would be to respect the privileges of the chamber of deputies whenever the texts in question have an impact on taxes or the budget.

Thus, rather than create an imbalance, such a division of powers between the two chambers could correct the imbalance resulting from the exclusive prerogatives of the national assembly in budgetary and government control matters.[30]

Conclusion

The city is the center as well as the lever of development. It is also the place where peoples intermix, where a feeling is born of belonging to a nation, a feeling that goes beyond that of belonging to a community. Therefore, it, as well as rural areas, should be a privileged place for the exercise of basic democracy. The opposite choice that Cameroon has made is not consistent with the construction of a legitimate governance system. But, the question is larger: Is Cameroon ready to consider local governments as part of the national system of governance, and consequently, decentralization as a requirement for its modernization as well as for the efficiency in the operation of its public services?

Only such political will would have the potential to transform municipal institutions and, more widely, local governments into the new actors in development they should have been and remained since they were introduced in Cameroon. But would such a government, hesitant to undertake any true democratization, subscribe to a significant decentralization? Indeed, like democratization, decentralization is a process involving the sharing of powers; therefore it involves a civilized management of the sociopolitical contradictions within the state.

30. This is not just hypothetical. The institutional reforms in Mali go in this direction. The Malian High Council of municipalities does indeed have a double function: to study and give advice on any local or regional development policy; and to make proposals to government on any question relating to the protection of the environment and the quality of life. In this case, government must depose a bill on the matter on the desk of the National Assembly, within 15 days. This is about notice and the authority of the High Council, which makes it an actor in the legislative initiative.

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IMPLICATIONS OF FISCAL AND FINANCIAL DECENTRALIZATION IN SENEGAL

Abdoul Wahab Ba

Senegal began the most important phase of the decentralization process the country has known with the adoption, on 22 March 1996, of Law 96–06, dealing with Local Government Code, and of Law 96–07, dealing with the transfer of powers to regions, communes, and rural communities. Since then, many studies and seminars and much research have considered ways to establish the fiscal and financial decentralization that they view as an important milestone in the intensification of decentralization in Senegal.

Today, more than eight years after the adoption of the 1996 reforms, the administrative system of local taxation in Senegal is still strongly centralized and only minimally deconcentrated. This deprives the local politicians, responsible for the definition of local development politics, of an important lever in determining the financial needs for the implementation of their plans and programs. A major dimension of this reflection has to do with the definition of the real implications of fiscal decentralization in the current context of Senegal.

This paper is a contribution to the debate through an examination of the following points:

- The evolution of fiscal and financial decentralization in the decentralization process,
- The analysis of the impact of fiscal and financial decentralization in the decentralization system,
- The identification of the current implications of fiscal and financial decentralization, and
- Proposals for orientations likely to contribute to the formulation of a coherent and efficient fiscal and financial decentralization policy.

Introduction

Senegal has a long democratic tradition as well as a long experience of decentralization. Historically, fiscal and financial decentralization preceded political decentralization. This happened for the purely technical reasons of the control of management costs, of financial mobilization efficiency, and incidentally, to bridge the gap in the system of transfers or rebates of the resources from the central to the local level (Bahl and Linn 1992).

But was this the result of deliberate choice? Do the transfer of powers and the affirmation of the financial autonomy of local governments allow, in their present form, the implementation of fiscal and financial decentralization? Or have the conditions of the implementation of a fiscal and financial decentralization not been satisfied? Are there forces of inertia changing fiscal and financial decentralization into an exercise in a balance of power, with winners and losers, whereby the eventual winners would champion a concentration of power in the hands of a central state at the expense of an elected local authority (rural, municipal, or regional councils) that would be the guardian of the citizens' vote? Debate on these questions remains open, but most actors involved in decentralization agree at least on the existence of limits when it comes to the intensification of decentralization in Senegal, because of the weaknesses in its fiscal and financial decentralization (Ndir, et al. 2000).

History of Fiscal and Financial Decentralization

Decentralization, understood as the transfer of powers and functions from the central state to an elected local entity, has been associated with the political history of Senegal for a century and a half, and is cited as one of the oldest in contemporary Africa, south of the Sahara. By1848, the towns of Saint-Louis and Gorée had the status of communes and their inhabitants voted in the French elections of 1872, when they chose their first deputies to the French National Assembly.

However, granting the right to vote and to elect representatives to the citizens of four communes (Gorée, Saint-Louis, Dakar, and Rufisque) was not actually accompanied by the transfer of power to local governments in the areas of taxation and financial management. This would prevail until the first years after independence.

Neither Law 64-02 of 19 January 1964, which granted special status to the Dakar commune, nor the reforms that were precursor to decentralization, which succeeded each other until 1996, brought significant evolution in the attribution of power to local government in terms of fiscal and financial decentralization. Law 90-35 of 8 October 1990, which modified the Code of Communal Administration, then cancelled the special status that made Dakar a commune with special municipal regime, thus going against the rules of common law. This regime had progressively been extended to the communes and the main towns of the region.

Before all this, the reform instituted by Law 72-02 of 1 February 1972 and the Law 72-25 of 9 April 1972, on the creation of a new local government or rural community, granted the latter a major authority, in this instance, the land management of rural areas. In other words, it was the power of the allocation or dis-allocation of land. But since these land allocations were essentially intended for agriculture, they were not taxable.

The first step toward financial decentralization going together with political decentralization was the adoption of Law 90-37 of 8 October 1990, which codified the transfer of budget management of rural communities from the subprefect to the president of rural councils, who became, like the mayor before him, director of the community budget.

However, the most significant first steps in an attempt to decentralize fiscally and financially will not appear until Law 96-06 of 22 March 1996, dealing with local governments, which turns the region into a collectivity, thus giving all the local governments of the country financial autonomy and an assembly elected by universal suffrage (Ministère de l'Intérieur et des Collectivités Locales 2003).

Among the principles that underlie this reform, we should note as founding elements of fiscal and financial decentralization the affirmation of the balance between decentralization and deconcentration, the distribution of functions between local governments following the subsidiarity principle, and the institution of a posteriori control over the laws and organs of local governments in place of a priori control.

These principles are also instituted by the 2001 Constitution. Clause 102 states, "Local governments constitute the institutional framework of citizens' participation in the management of public affairs. They administer themselves freely through elected assemblies."

Analysis of the Impact of Fiscal and Financial Decentralization

Fiscal Decentralization

The reforms of decentralization and regionalization, introduced with Laws 96-06 and 96-07 of 22 March 1996, are an important phase in the decentralization process in Senegal. Not only do they establish a third category of local government, the region, they also transfer important functions and powers for the benefit of local governments, as well as the lessening the supervision that had been in place. The process of real transfer of functions and powers to the regions, communes, and communities provides the rules of power sharing between the central state and local governments.

Since then, local governments have been administering themselves freely, outside of any supervision, and are controlled locally and a posteriori by a state representative. Moreover, they also have moral authority, financial autonomy, and, at last, benefit from a transfer of new powers previously held by the central administration.

Illusions and Glimmers of Fiscal Decentralization

The commonly accepted definitions of decentralization consider that it proceeds from the devolution, through law, of powers and responsibilities from the central state to local governments. In this point of view, fiscal and financial decentralization, beyond the technical objectives of generating income and optimizing the utilization of financial resources, proceeds also, in principle, from devolution to local elected officials of powers and functions in matters of planning, allocation, supervision, and evaluation of fiscal and financial resources.

In the context of decentralization in Senegal, however, the state has remained in charge of determining the tax base, collecting taxes, and keeping local governments' funds. Indeed, the state supports the communes, which enjoy the support of the deconcentrated services they use as technical advisers or rural engineers.

However, the objectives of fiscal deconcentration are different from those of real fiscal decentralization. In Senegal, the prevailing outline is rather the latter (Beal 1998). Until the adoption of the January 2004 reform, in addition to the General Tax Code, local taxation in Senegal was

organized according to a series of legislative measures.[1] These measures stipulate that the products from direct and indirect taxes (fiscal minimum, license, land contributions for built or unbuilt properties) are still intended as functioning revenues and are determined by law (Ministère de l'Intérieur et des Collectivités Locales 2003; Local Government Code Articles 250 and 251).

The local taxation reform introduced in 2004, which modifies some measures of the General Tax Code, has the following objectives: promote fiscal civism, simplify fiscal procedure and reduce management cost.

Each of the objectives of this law, taken separately, could be the title of a new chapter. However, they have a common denominator that lead to the creation of the Unique General Contribution (CGU), the result of concerns expressed in the above objectives. As the synthesis of several taxes and dues, among which are those imposed by the state, the CGU includes, besides the license tax, income tax based on industrial and commercial benefits (BIC), the fiscal minimum tax, the VAT (value added tax), and the permit tax.[2]

The effect of the CGU on the productivity of local taxation over the first year the reform was implemented has not yet been carefully evaluated. But, local elected officials continue to request efficient fiscal and financial decentralization, which, in reality, reflects the persistence of the status quo ante. While waiting for the results of the evaluation of the impact of the CGU on local government revenues, a few observations are in order. First, the implication of this measure for local governments is to ensure that the coefficient for the distribution of CGU revenues between the state and local governments would not translate into loss of revenues for them. For the 2005 fiscal year, the distribution ratio is 60 percent for local governments and 40 percent for the state. There has not yet been verification of the impact of the CGU on local governments' revenues. Second, the economic agents in the informal sector, who are the main contributors to the local minimum business tax, constitute the bulk of the tax base for local governments and they

1. Modified Law 66-64 of 30 June 1966, dealing with the Code of Communal Administration; Law 72-25 of 19 April 1972, dealing with rural communities; Law 96-06 of 22 March 1996, dealing with the Local Government Code in its articles 250 and 251; and Law 96-07 of 22 March 1996, dealing with the transfer of powers and functions in its article 04.

2. However, only shops with an annual income below 50 million FCFA and the providers of services with an income not exceeding 25 million FCFA are subject to the CGU.

will have some difficulties accepting to pay more than they do already. There is great risk that the institution of the CGU will take place at the expense of local resources. Third, the use of a formula to divide the CGU revenue between the state and local governments poses a problem insofar as it could liken the share given to local governments to a discount, it actually represents a tax to be, by law, expressly and fully paid to local governments.

Moreover, in addition to the purely fiscal revenues, local governments get resources from the products of privately owned estates, commonly called market revenues. These revenues are "stable" and collected by the local governments themselves, through communal agents or collectors, who in turn are responsible for paying them to the appropriate receiver, who happens to be the treasurer, therefore a representative of the state's central services. Decree 66-458 of 17 June 1966 institutes the separation of powers between the director (the mayor, the president of the rural community), who issues a legal certificate, and the fiscal agent, the municipal receiver responsible for the collection of the money (Beal 1998).

Revenues from markets and other commercial infrastructures thus constitute an indispensable resource for the regular functioning of local governments. Their characteristics are that they are regular and visibly available, thanks to the everyday system of collection of fees, unlike local taxes which are only available, at best, in the middle on the tax year. Consequently, revenues from markets and other commercial enterprises can constitute important resources for communes and rural communities, if one considers the regular flow of money they generate and its potential growth rate. But, the condition for the increase in this type of resource must be linked with the knowledge of the taxable potential and the quality of the services rendered, as well as with the optimization of the management of the structures that generate resources.

The lesson to be learned from the current state of fiscal decentralization, which overlaps with the conclusions of the studies carried out these last few years to evaluate its progress, its weaknesses, and its dysfunctions, is that the decisions have had little impact on the improvement of fiscal and financial decentralization that is, however, one of the conditions of the success of decentralization (Cabex 1998).

Integrity and Transparency of the Fiscal Chain

Among the reasons for lack of transparency are the following: insufficient knowledge of the fiscal potential; lack of fiscal consciousness among the cit-

izens; both the lack of interest in fiscal or financial obligations and the refusal to comply, as much on the part of locally elected politicians as on the part of the people; the state's lack of resources; bad governance; the inadequacies of decentralization; clientelism; and political and social nepotism.

One of the first questions the demand for integrity and transparency asks of fiscal decentralization is about fiscal potential. Local governments often do not know or cannot determine the revenue from the local business tax because of the changing size and mobility of the informal sector. Exemptions and discounts, which are generally granted at the center, can deprive local governments of important revenue. Information on these exemptions and discounts is not passed on to the local government, which will have beforehand established its budget on bases that have not accounted for this loss of revenue (Beal 1998).

As for the relationship between the citizen and local taxation, for many there is an incomprehension of the fiscal administration, an ignorance of taxation, as well as an impression of opaqueness surrounding fiscal administration that creates a kind of distrust and sometimes defiance toward their fiscal duty. A report on the study of local taxation undertaken in 1997 showed that 25 percent of the legal entities questioned knew about the existing exemptions, against only 2 percent of individuals. Moreover, an overwhelming majority of legal entities (90 percent) and a strong majority of individuals (72 percent) found local taxation to be heavy, and a large proportion of the people declared they agreed to pay their taxes only if that would make possible an improvement in the quality of services, such as garbage pick up, urban roads, education, and health (Ingesahel 1998).

In principle, all levels of local government (the region, the commune, and the rural community) may be concerned about fiscal decentralization. However, even if the fiscal chain leads to all levels of local governments, it cannot apply uniformly to the various categories of local government. Here the importance of the issue of the modernization of various types of taxation comes into focus (because many of them are obsolete today), as well as the necessity to imagine new categories of taxes, particularly for the regions. The region has no fiscal territory, therefore no tax base to speak of, unlike the commune and the rural community that are allowed by law to collect taxes on the territories falling under their jurisdiction.

In the final analysis, the fact that the state maintains its power to determine the tax base, to collect taxes, and to keep local government funds poses

a number of questions on the reality of fiscal and financial decentralization, in relation to the principal of free administration and financial autonomy.

Financial Decentralization

From the institutional point of view, financial decentralization in Senegal is similar to fiscal decentralization. Laws 96-06 and 96-07 of 22 March 1996 establish a redeployment of functions and powers for the benefit of local governments, together with an alteration of the financial relationship between them and the state.

In accordance with the principal of the free self-administration of local governments, they now enjoy financial autonomy in terms of the power of conception, adoption, and execution of their budget within the framework allowed by the Local Government Code (article 336 on the control of legality, departing from articles 334 and 335 on the laws adopted by local governments). Beyond the institutional approach, which would deal with the responsibilities and limitations of the decisional power of local governments in budget matters, putting in perspective both the issue of financing local governments and the problems of budget decentralization is another way of appreciating financial decentralization.

The Problem of the Transfer and Mobilization of Financial Resources

In Senegal, the financing of transferred powers and functions and of the infrastructure of local governments rests essentially on the transfers carried out by the state, through the Fonds de Dotation à la Decentralisation (FDD), set up to finance the transferred powers and provide revenue for operations by local governments, and the Fonds d'Equipement des Collectivités locales (FECL), for the investment revenues (the financing of infrastructure) of local governments. To these resources are added those offered by international assistance and decentralized cooperation agencies.

The total amount of transfers from the state between 1993 and 2003, from both FDD and FECL comes to an absolute value of about 73.6 billion francs CFA (1 US$ = 532 FCFA). The amount of the transfers remained constant during the first three years following the reform, between 1997 and 1999, and the first raise was introduced in the 2000 budget, showing a slight increase of 10 percent. In relative value, this same rate of progression was noted in 2001 and 2002. For 2003, there was a significant increase in absolute value: the

transfers reached nearly 22 billion francs CFA. In 2005, total FDD and FECL transfers reached 18.6 billion francs CFA and it now represents 1.56 percent of the national budget. In comparison with 2003, in relative and absolute terms, there is a reduction in the volume of transfers from the state to local governments. However, if we relate this data to the VAT or general budget revenues, we can make other observations. Indeed, the transfer ratios in relation to the VAT reach their limit at between 8 and 13 percent, depending on the year. The same amounts, compared to the total amount of expenses and revenues of the general budget, do not exceed 2 percent.

In addition to the transfers, it has been impossible for local governments to extract sufficient resources for themselves that would allow them to meet on a significant part of their investment needs. Consequently, the issue of the increase in the abilities to generate internal resources becomes important in every strategy intended to diversify sources of financing; this diversification itself is made necessary by the growing scarcity of the resources allocated to development aid.

Fiscal decentralization seems a preferred way to allocate Central Government resources to local governments, therefore to reduce their strong dependence on various grants and transfers from the central state. The questions of what is the real output of current local taxation and what is its contribution to the gross capital formation of local governments must then be asked. These questions, which have not yet been answered, unquestionably deserve to be studied in greater detail. It is however obvious that most of the taxable economic base is concentrated in big cities, particularly Dakar. On this subject, the 2004 National Human Development Report (NHDR), using the 2003 sources from la Direction de la Prévision et de la Statistique du Ministère de l'Economie et des Finances (MEF), indicates that 95 percent of all the registered businesses in 2002 are located in and around Dakar.

In terms of taxes and various other sources of revenues for local governments, the effect of this imbalance is felt in the loss of revenue on the order of 0.004 francs CFA for each invested franc. According to the same report, it is two and a half times more attractive for a business to invest in Dakar than in any other region.

Decentralization of the Budget

The management of public finances remains centralized. This situation is the origin of major constraints on the budget implementation process of

local governments. The slow process of transferring funds, the low level of transfers, the impossibility to predict the amounts and the allocations of transfer funds, the revenues hardly able to cover the functioning expenses, the structural budgetary imbalances (salaries prevail over other things), the insufficient internal resources that would allow raising the level of investment in infrastructure in order to improve basic services (health, education, potable water supply, etc.), the lack of human resources qualified to manage the finances of local governments—all of these factors weigh heavily on the promotion of financial decentralization for local governments.[3]

The Programme de Développement des Infrastructures de la Santé (PDIS) and the Programme de Développement de l'Education et de la Formation (PDEF) have already started decentralizing budgetary implementation through the establishment of a Cadre des Dépenses à Moyen Terme (Framework for Middle-Term Expenses, CDMT) as well as the functions connected with expenses.

The state makes provision for budgetary decentralization by decentralizing its consolidated investment budget, extending to 2006 within the implementation framework of the Stratégie de Réduction de la Pauvreté et la Stratégie de Croissance Accélérée (Strategy for the Reduction of Poverty and Strategy of Accelerated Growth) program, based on an important infusion of capital that would allow both the creation of infrastructure, particularly at the local level, as well as the promotion of exports. The mechanism of budgetary support, adopted by several development partners (World Bank, European Union, UNDP, French Development Agency) fits into this framework and also reveals a will to make local governments more aware of their responsibilities when planning, transferring power to public markets, and controlling works, as well as managing the finances of investments at the local level.

Requirements of Fiscal and Financial Decentralization

The debate over the modalities of effective implementation of fiscal and financial decentralization has not subsided. However, one can formulate a few guiding principles in the definition of fiscal decentralization policy.

3. Many examples can illustrate these constraints; for instance, one local government implemented its budget and the funds allocated from the FDD program never arrived (MGP Afrique 2003).

1. Fiscal decentralization must not be considered outside of a global approach to taxation in the national economy; that is to say, its implementation must be consistent with the necessity to maintain macroeconomic and regional development balances. In other words, fiscal decentralization must not cause an excessive increase in local taxation, which could have negative effects on the global fiscal pressure on the economy and the taxpayers (Joumard and Mathis 2003).

2. Eventually, allowing local governments, particularly regional governments, to freely establish their own taxation systems presents a risk of creating important interregional disparities, which could lead to added imbalances in regional development. This equation, which is still current in countries with long experience in decentralization, like France, was examined by Laetitia Van Eekhoud (2002). She analyzes the eventuality of a decision by the French state aiming to allow their local governments to freely establish the rate of their main local taxes (such as property taxes, business taxes, land taxes on built properties as well as properties without buildings) as an attempt to free itself from the actual responsibility of making sure that the rate of these taxes would evolve in exactly the same way, creating thus a risk of loopholes and individual taxation inconsistencies.

   In Senegal, those who support the establishment of a taxation system adapted to the region, in the name of a full and complete implementation of the principle of free administration of finances in local governments, would likely agree with the adoption of a similar measure. By contrast, those in favor of the predominant role of the central state in fiscal affairs would not agree to this change. The implementation of a ceiling rate in order to avoid major disparities between local governments could be a compromise solution.

3. The allocation of resources to local governments must be rationalized, ensuring particularly an optimal distribution of employment and resources. In other words, it is preferable to get the users to pay for the management of infrastructure and commercial services of local governments (public lighting, upkeep of markets and public venues) through a direct tax mechanism, and to pay through local taxes for the management of noncommercial infrastructure and pub-

lic services (upkeep of public parks and gardens, local roads, etc.) using a system of indirect taxation (Bahl and Linn 1992).

4. Efficient fiscal decentralization must have an operational and transparent system of information on the finances of local governments, supported by audits and regular controls of the accounts. This is essential because it will ensure that the citizens are informed of the use made of their taxes and contributions. Various field studies and experiences have shown that citizens are prepared to pay their taxes regularly, if they know exactly where the money is going (Ingesahel 1998).

5. The objectives of financial transfers from the central state to local governments (FDD, FECL) must be defined in relation to those of local governments. The obvious impact of these transfers on local finances and the economy is revealed in the grants and/or budget support, and in the support given to local investments and consumption at the local level. Consequently, the options to reduce or increase the transfers are also revelatory of the choices of a more or less important fiscal and financial decentralization.

The Implications of Fiscal and Financial Decentralization

Some studies in Senegal have shown a very weak performance in the collection of taxes by local governments in general (Cabex 1998). In urban areas, aside from a few rare exceptions like Dakar, where 80 percent of the economic activity takes place, the mobilization of fiscal revenues remains very low (UNDP 2004). In rural areas, both in towns and purely rural communities, the mobilization of revenues remains well below their expected annual income, and fiscal potentialities are often unknown.

In order to increase their revenues, local governments would require efforts for the mobilization of resources that go beyond what they already have. Indeed, the financing of local development cannot just rely, in the long run, on transfers from the central state alone. The absence of resources specific to local governments and the low level of those collected among rural communities, the insufficient resources, and their poor management by the communes—all make it indispensable to rethink decentralization from a perspective of modernizing the financing system. It is true that the diversifi-

cation of financing instruments for local investments is related to important factors, such as the legal and statutory environment of the financial market (bank loans), the level of development of the capital market (municipal bonds), the credibility in the management of local government as well as its financial capacity to honor its financial commitments, and so on.

In the case of Senegal, one of the main lessons to be derived from the Municipal Capacity Building Program, a technical capacity and infrastructure building project for municipalities funded by the World Bank and the French Development Assistance Program (Agence Française de Développement Municipal, AFD), is the assistance offered to restore the financial capacity of the communes and their integration into a credit system for the financing of local infrastructure. This credit mechanism, even under the most accommodating conditions, has the advantage of being set up on the basis of a prior stabilization of finances. Quite often, the reimbursement of credits rests on the creation of commercial infrastructure able to generate revenues for these local governments, therefore to strengthen their financial capacity.

In addition to these classic financial mechanisms, local governments must explore in more detail the possibilities offered by public/private partnerships (PPP), which create synergies with the possibility of activating important financial levers. Moreover, local governments, more often than before, are required to give effective responses to the peoples' requests for infrastructure and services, essentially commercial, since their efficient management can contribute to the increase in the revenues of the commune. To agree to take on the responsibility of this social request does present difficulties. The most important are related to the weak management capacity of the personnel responsible for the current administration, among which are the inadequacies of financial resources appropriate to local needs.

The state, responsible for determining the tax base and the tax collection and for keeping the funds of local governments, does give its support to local governments. However, this assistance is likely to change, particularly from the point of view of the implementation of the new principles of free administration, financial autonomy, and good governance, principles that are likely to govern the functioning of local governments in the future. Also to achieve good implementation of these principles, local governments must increase their internal financial resources. In principle, this should serve to better satisfy the increasing demand in infrastructure and social services.

The revenues from markets and other commercial infrastructure can, from the point of view of both the regular financial flow they generate and the progressive nature of the taxes collected, constitute important resources, capable eventually of contributing to the reimbursement of loans within the framework of some mechanisms, like the one established by the Programme d'Appui aux Communes.

Conclusion: Good Governance and Fiscal and Financial Decentralization

Beyond the management system of the fiscal and financial chain, the conditions for an increase in revenues must be related to the quality of the services delivered, the strictness applied to collection, and the optimization of the management of infrastructure, in particular commercial infrastructure, which generates these resources.

From then on, the implications for the success of fiscal and financial decentralization are not only measured by the yardstick of the power and authority of the elected officials over the determination and collection of fiscal revenues, but also by the yardstick of financed programs, the good execution of investment programs, the level of the strengthening of management capacities by the beneficiaries, the increase of possibilities for the reimbursement of loans, and the capacity of local governments to support themselves financially.

The success of fiscal and financial decentralization implies then rigor in the evaluation, analysis, and selection of investment programs, as well as staying with the beneficiaries through training, strict follow up, and periodic evaluation of the performances of each program. Thus, good governance in matters of fiscal and financial decentralization is the result of respect for the integrity of the fiscal chain, the increase in the output of local taxation, and the efficient management of operation and investment revenues.

The decentralization reform that introduced, among others measures, the transfer of authority and the reaffirmation of free administration for local governments has not been able to implement the fiscal decentralization that has been so sought after by mayors and other elected local officials. The implementation of the decentralization policy has not sufficiently taken into account the imperatives of fiscal decentralization. It turns out that, if well thought out, if well adapted to the evolutions of a rapidly changing society and to the demands of good governance and modernization (as in Senegal), this decen-

tralization can constitute a powerful lever for the mobilization of financial resources intended for the improvement of the systems providing infrastructure and services.

The policy of decentralization is consolidating itself as a function of a better understanding of good practices. These experiences are increasingly being drawn from the effects of decentralization in real-life situations. The Senegalese government has decided to evaluate decentralization in its institutional, financial, and human aspects. Let us hope that it will help confer on fiscal and financial decentralization its true dimension in the widening and deepening process of decentralization in Senegal.

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III. CITIZENSHIP, IDENTITY AND PARTICIPATION IN URBAN WEST AFRICA

SOCIAL CRISES AND POLITICAL RESTRUCTURING IN WEST AFRICAN CITIES

MAMADOU DIOUF

The most commonly used notion to characterize the African city is that of crisis. Is this a crisis of the models or of the analytical tools? Is it caused by the national economies or by the extraversion accompanying the economic slump? Does it arise from the inabilities of African cities to manage both their populations and their spaces, through the creation and the maintenance of infrastructure? Whatever the preferred answer might be, the crisis of the urban model poses the problem of the state. R. Pourtier observes "Nowhere else is the genetic link between the city and the state seen more clearly than in sub-Saharan Africa: the great majority of cities are indeed 'daughters of the state'" (Pourtier 1992, 87). And if the reproduction of the colonial model seems to have reached the point of no return, the Africanization (see Coquery-Vidrovitch 1993) of West-African cities inaugurated during the colonial era has accelerated with independence, and with the economic and financial crises of the 1970s and the end of the state as entrepreneur and planner. The problem it poses is that of the relevance of both concept and reality covered by the term *African city.*

How was this Africanization created and imagined and how did it impact the lives of communities, of individuals, and of both public and private institutions in the various historical situations and circumstances of these last thirty years (Anderson and Rathbone 2000, esp. the introductory chapter; De Latour 2000; Freund 2001; Enwezor 2002)? During that time and the years that followed, problems of employment and poverty among the masses that had grown much larger in the cities were added to the issues of infrastructure and social services and to the problems of institutions, financial capacities, and modes of governance of African cities (Evans 2002; Donnelly-Roark, Ouedraogo, and Xiao 2001). The solutions to these challenges are not a matter for the state alone or for municipal, national, or international institutions, but also for local associations, for international religious networks, and for migrants' associations. While participating in the creation and the strengthening of public expression, these kinds of

intervention are also at the root of many conflicts and the total absence of rational and coherent urban operation. On the contrary, they contribute to the privatization of the urban territory and to the fragmentation of civil society, thus making difficult the emergence of meaningful citizenship and of a civil society capable of a healthy spirit of competition. Such a strengthened civil society is indispensable to the kind of urban governance that would encourage the financing and management of African cities by Africans themselves (Simone 2004).

African urban societies have evolved in time and space. New dynamics are appearing with notably more young people playing a part and greater competition for resources (economic, land, symbolic resources, and so forth), that are becoming scarce, compartmentalized, and/or the object of dispute, faced with the state's retreat from larger and larger spheres of economic and social life. All this is combined with the emergence and/or the brutal affirmation of the logics of identity that negate the idea of cosmopolitanism, so naturally attached to the city in the Western philosophy of the nineteenth century.[1] Original commune or commune by nature, the identity stakes are currently the revealing factors of crises in the African city, while being confronted by state inertia and the disorders of political rebuilding and economic adjustments. They begin to forget their historical contingency to rely on prophecy (Moslem religious fundamentalisms, Christian charismatic movements), on the properties and natural appropriations of space, on ethnicity, and on the myths of origin and foundation. Thus the West African city participates in the selection between native and foreigner, a selection founded on memory.

Is it therefore necessary to specify that under the double pressure of both the demography—in a decade or so, the West African population will be mostly urban—and the crisis in its economic, social, political, moral, and

1. In his refusal of the urban world, Spengler describes this situation very well, when praising the village; "on the one hand, a culture which roots itself in nature, on the other hand, an artificial world which takes everyone's place: with its silent roofs resembling hills, its evening smoke, its fountains, its paddocks, its cattle, the village is being completely lost, sleeping in the landscape. The landscape *confirms* the countryside and enhances its image, which will only be defied by the late arrival of the city. The city's silhouette contradicts the lines of nature. It *denies* all nature….Finally, the gigantic world city, the city seen as a world without any other world beside it, begins the destruction of the country's image" (Spengler 1981, 2:94). This reading of Spengler finds an echo in the African literature written between 1950 and 1980; see Laye (1953), C. H. Kane (1961), and Boto (1954).

ecological manifestations, the idea of the city as an extension of rural societies and villages, which follows the rhythm of nature, is about to disappear or at least is being seriously questioned? Do these new modalities and the modernity they put into question—mean ethnic, religious, technocratic modernity, and good governance—favor social integration or the scattering of forms of socialization and identification?

In any case, the profusion of means to do things, means to live and survive in an urban setting, as well as the loosening of technologies of surveillance and repression, the political instability, and the community-based management of order and disorder have given way to totally new situations in African societies that sink deeper and deeper into the economy of scarcity. Violence, prophecy, and informal practices proliferate concomitantly.

This paper intends to follow the contours of this geography of memory in West African cities, particularly in the Dakar area. The situation in this latter is all the more interesting since the liaison, memorization, and imagination of new logics of socialization have successively taken the form of political protest (1988; see Diop and Diouf 1990, 335–54), the deadly repression of Mauritanian shopkeepers (ibid., 387–404), cleaning up the city after violent storms on the monstrous piles of household garbage uncollected by the municipality, and finally of the representation in pictures of the *Set Setal* movement (1990)[2] on the walls of Dakar.

The Dynamics of Urbanization

Many factors need to be considered in the analysis of the issues of demographics and migration, all being particular variables of urban evolution in West African cities. In terms of demography, one notices the increasing importance of urban demography within the general demography of the region. In the very near future, cities will be places of concentration for the majority of the West African population. Senegal was the first country to have experienced this growth in urban population (see Becker, Diouf, and Mbodji 1994). Migration is the dynamic element for population phenomena in West Africa. Its main characteristic is the historical shift of popula-

2. On this movement called *Set Setal* (cleanliness/making clean), which is the title of a song of one of the great Senegalese international stars, Youssou Ndour, see : Niane, Savané, and Diop (1991), Enda Third World (1991), and Diouf (1992).

tion of West Africa toward the coastal region. This movement, which is accelerating, is the result mainly of the extraversion of the economy, characteristic of the region since the colonial era.

However, one remarkable fact is that the internal politics of the country never favored either internal or external migratory movements. The hostility shown by the ruling classes toward migrants and migration appears in the term used to qualify it: rural exodus. Here are a few examples of their hostility: Benin had hampered the internal movement of its populations for 17 years, but today a great movement has begun in the direction of Cotonou, following democratization; the authorities have begun to require visas for foreigners and a living permit. A few years ago, Nigeria, despite international and regional treaties to which it had agreed, expelled several million foreigners to their countries of origin.

It should be noted that the interventions by the state, which have been as brutal as the ones taking place in Nigeria, do not discourage the candidates for migration. They have various ways of settling in an urban milieu and organizing themselves around both the relationship between old and new urban dwellers and the mechanisms allowing access to resources (work, housing, urban facilities, and the like.)[3] These relationships and competitions could get better treatment if they considered the following: migration modalities, government policies for people and national development, and decisions about migration (who leaves, when and how, who makes the decision, who chooses the migrant and at what level of authority [household, family, community, brotherhood, religious group]), itineraries, forms and times of migration, and so on). Indeed, relationships based on forms—the political, social, economic, and symbolic configurations—and stakes in the cities (points of arrival) and in the points of departure influence migration, since the economic situation is not the only cause for the decision to migrate. Following the crisis, the family again becomes the main focus for shelter, the almost exclusive place for the migrant in West African cities. Then we have the Christian religious sects, the Islamic brotherhoods, and other ethnic groups. The explosion of religious sects and Islamic associations, as well as the bloody demonstrations that have shaken Nigerian cities since the middle 1980s, has become the main manifestation of both the cri-

3. See the very interesting studies conducted by the ORSTOM/IFAN team, led by Philippe Antoine on Dakar and Bamako (Antoine et al. 1992).

sis and the recrudescence in the new expression of identity (see O. Kane 1990; Marshall 1993). Like families, these groups weather the crisis striking the youngest and the poorest, giving themselves opportunities to control the dynamics of ideological and social rebuilding.

A Youth Without Markers

The sudden outburst of youth on the political scene is not uniquely Senegalese. Almost all West African countries have known a "white year."[4] The latest case is Nigeria. Recourse to violence, the symbolism of purification by fire, the destruction of places and monuments of postcolonial grandeur, as if to de-territorialize their mark in space, all constitute common elements of the social movements run essentially by young people. Their need to uproot, in the proper sense of the term, the postcolonial legitimacies is visible in several events: the riots orchestrated by pupils and students in Mali (5 April 1993; see Diarrah 1993), the withdrawal of some Lagos neighborhoods and some Nigerian cities from the control of the administration and from politicians, except when the necessity to resort to the mediation of "area boys" arises;[5] and the crucial role played by the "disaffected youth" in the armed conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone (Richards 1995). The staging of these violent demonstrations seems to have borrowed much from the modern visual media, the riots in the South African *townships* and in the occupied territories in Gaza and the West Bank, as well as from movies like *Rambo* or *Terminator.*

These youths are heterogeneous in their composition. Their ways are as varied as the forms they occupy in the urban landscape. The stage of such activities, the city, poses as many problems as it explains through the young as actors. Indeed, the city has emerged in a postcolonial sociology dominated by a ruralist and peasant paradigm, as the fundamental expression of native

4. A white year is an academic year that has not been sanctioned because the final exams and competitions lacked organization, as a result of strikes and insufficient courses. The consequence is that the students have to do their year over.
5. On the "area boys" Abubakar Momoh (1993, 28) writes: "The area boys as a social category became preponderant, popularized and organized from about 1986 when the Structural Adjustment Programme took its full course. Hence today, any form of crime or criminal in the entire South-Western Nigeria is identifiable or traceable to the area boys. The area boys are the equivalent of "Yandaba" in Hausaland; they are also called alaayes, Omo oni ile (son of the soil or landlords), sweet urchins, government pickin, untouchables, or alright sir."

Africa. As a result, for a long time the city was thought of only in terms of the colonial ethnology of de-tribalization, of rural exodus, and of the loss of purely African markers and values.[6] Although rural territoriality is simple in its organization, the city is a place where references and inscriptions, calling on composite memories, are superimposed. It affirms an interweaving of cosmopolitanisms while organizing a geography of plots—spaces that are at the same time physical and places of identity—that constantly carry out a reconfiguration of belonging, of languages and idioms. Urban territoriality is defined in relation to state geometry: the city is the seat of power, the territory that is the expression of all things imaginary and of the rise of the ruling class. In this situation, nothing is possible other than confrontation and/or negotiation. Thus, what are called procedures are nothing but theft, deletion, bypass, and, more often, feigned acquiescence and direct confrontation.

The demographic weight of youth is one of the most spectacular elements of urban West African societies. The young there are, by far, the majority. Generally, they were born after independence. They do not have nor do they cultivate the exploits of a nationalist memory, of which they retain only the impossible realization of nationalistic promises. In most cases, they consider family socialization a failure, with parents giving up when faced with totalitarian or democratic powers. And in the extreme cases of Mali and the pupils' and students' struggles in Senegal, young people consider that they have made up for the failings of their parents and their moral and religious leaders by starting up themselves the decisive political battles for democratization. Some educational structures have undertaken the difficult task of socialization, and the total state of crisis they found themselves in only illustrates the failure of postcolonial politics, and the disarray of young people when faced with the modernizing pretension of the state. This situation is added to the globalization brought on by the media and ends up aggravating frustration and mimicry.[7] Young people adopt an attitude of defiance—interpreted as a crisis in traditional values—against their parents. Young urban dwellers are the main organizers of social movements.

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6. Novels from the colonial period and those from the first two decades after independence such as Camara Laye, *L'enfant noir.* Paris, Plon, 1953, C. H. Kane, *L'aventure ambiguë.* Paris, 1961 and Eza Boto (Mongo Béti), *Ville cruelle.* Paris, Présence Africaine, 1971 are the best illustrations of this point of view.
7. On this question, see two articles that seem to go beyond their range and theme: "L'Avenir de la tradition" (Diagne 1992), the work of a Senegalese philosopher, and Richards (1995).

The youths have ambivalent political expressions and social practices. They are both very nihilistic and very idealistic. For example, the young Senegalese who slit the throat of some Mauritanians (1989) had no problem cleaning up the street and painting the walls (1990). They are impervious to the institutional procedures of politics. Consequently, their manifestations always take the shape of clandestine practices that are essentially violent. People often say they are rootless, that they express themselves only to be destructive because their modes of expression are anything but positive. For example, in Bamako, they burned down the National Assembly and destroyed the house of the minister of national education. However, many young people insist on the moral value of their movements (Diallo 1993).

Interpretations of urban West African societies have been derived from this situation in terms of a value crisis. This is a crisis that reflects, in reality, the extraordinary gap between a real situation (young people are victims of the crisis) and another, just as real (the parents enduring the crisis). To better understand these mutations, one should analyze the process of creation of new, mainly urban cultures through the use of old, recycled, inherited cultural artifacts and the appropriations of outside influences. These transactions, often experienced as traumatic, at the intellectual and individual levels, explain the difficult adaptation to new circumstances. Demographic data are good indicators of structural modifications—marriage age, the age of first employment, and so on—and they help us better understand the political, cultural, and social politics of the youth in African cities. However, for some observers, the mass of young people and the spectacular demonstrations they organize in the city cover up other more structuring practices, forms of socialization, and manifestations—for example, the emergence of new logics of identity (religions, new groups, new sects) influenced by international media, drugs, and so on. These new dynamics provoke the explosion of both old frames of reference and value systems. These transformations are accompanied by new forms of territoriality and new community and communication networks, through the use and the reinterpretation of the elements present in old cultural repertoires intermixed with *world culture.*

Several factors seem to have contributed to the repositioning mentioned above of the themes of young people and youth in an urban setting. First, the weight of young people in African demography, which contrasts strangely with the disappearance of young people—caused by the continu-

ous decline in the fertility rate in developed countries—radically transforms the terms of the African debate. Its consequences are economic as well as cultural, political, and social because each one of these cultural repertoires has an impact on the process of integration in society, as well in terms of civic responsibilities, as the sense of belonging. As well, young people are strongly influenced by the connections between local and global pressures that define contemporary Africa. These pressures are caught, on the one hand, between dissolution and/or national geographic fragmentation and its memories, and, on the other hand, by a return to local times that let themselves be carried by the impulsions of world time, whether religious, esthetic, and cultural or political and economic, or all of it at once.

Then there was the failed project of nationalist politics with its double objective of economic development and social justice. It manifested itself in the training of young people and the attribution to them of a major role, dealing with both the language of universal and social rights and the range of specific African cultures, thus leading to continuous redefinitions of youth and of the modalities of their socialization.

Finally, the violent irruption of youth in the public space and the domestic sphere seems to have led to a concept of African youth as a threat, and provoked in global society a panic that is at the same time moral and civic. The mass of young people, their behavior, which eludes the constraints of social constructs, sexuality, and pleasure are in question as well as their intervention and their presence as younger people in society. The tensions arising from this new situation have an impact on several issues, the most important of which are the redefinition of the relationship between identity and citizenship in the whirlwind of globalization, combined with the metamorphoses of the processes of socialization, the production of new forms of inequality accompanied by personal representations and imaginations, and the extraordinary mutation in the chronological and psychological constructs of the passage from youth to adult life.

To summarize the new trajectory, we might understand it as a radical transformation of the idea of citizenship, associated with the double collapse of the domestic sphere and the public space, the production of new forms of identification requiring many resources, such as the remodeling of indices and signs of indigenous identity, and the sense of belonging, of inclusion and exclusion, associated with the reconfiguration of national territory, of domestic or sacred spaces, of forms of organization, of loyalties…. All these ele-

ments offer, in most cases, new expressions, whether or not violent, whether or not formal, of political action, of a refusal of the self-righteous regimes of modern or traditional elites, in the face of the erosion of state and family responsibilities. These new expressions are often accompanied by new associative formulas of political commitments and esthetic formulations, on the margins of the institutions and traditional modes of conduct.

Social Movements and Urban Politics

The city is the place where Africa inserts itself into modernity. It is therefore capable of generating tensions, adaptations, and/or resistances to change. In situations of economic crises, we may note a resurgence of village behavior. Not everyone agrees on the meaning of this resurgence. The question is: Can the West African city function with village/rural values, even after they have been recycled? Asked like this, it indicates that urban development and modernity seem to have generated a loss of civic consciousness in societies, thus making the current big cities ungovernable. The electoral campaigns in Mali, in Senegal, and the phenomenon of the area boys, militias born in urban neighborhoods, have made it clear that they function as villages. Does village sociability allow the management of the tensions that seem inseparable from integration in an urban setting? Also, what happens to those practices with the second, essentially urban generation?

In general, the state has been discredited in West African societies. As partisan and clientelistic, it has abdicated its role as mediator, thus leaving conflicts and competition to take unusual forms, particularly in urban situations. The city, being the place where competition reigns between individuals, between groups, between ethnic groups, between urban old and new, is also the framework of competition between those capable of mobilizing resources, whatever their nature (financial, land, political, symbolic) and those who cannot. Poverty and its consequences in the degradation of the environment and the infrastructure are the best proof of it. Being the site of the modern economy and of the state, it is where general confrontation is deployed. Its main stake is access to urban resources, international aid, public functions, and economic and political incomes. Reduced trust in the state has had enormous consequences. Each time the state, under the pressure of financial assistance agencies or economic circumstances, abandons some of the prerogatives and domains that had always been its own, its

claim to govern is lessened. These "liberated zones" become areas of invention, dissidence, and dissonance, thus contributing to the renewal of daily life, to the spreading of violence, following the multiplication of competing versions of identity, thus overwhelming the state.

The strength of social movements is not revealed only through anti-establishment behavior, through protests and violence. The interlocking of living spaces with work, resourcefulness, and/or delinquency is an important aspect of the identity of West African cities. In between these various territorialities has blossomed what is called the "informal sector" or the "popular urban economy," which, like the unplanned section of the city, occupies the immense majority of the population. Its morphology seems to be the spatial representation of the competition/collaboration between the modern and informal sectors of the city. This is an architecture in which the dynamic element is the identity and ethnic recomposition aimed at control of land. These recompositions often entail the implementation of various logics leading to the elaboration of various land tenure regimes. This superimposition of regimes and very heterogeneous forms of appropriation has consequences not only on urban morphology but on social relationships and solidarity networks.

There are numerous modes of financial and economic accumulation. However, it is difficult to track down the forms taken by capitalization procedures and structures, which are their supporting institutions, and to therefore understand the manner in which social classes come to be in West African cities, and the factors that differentiate them. Are the settling down period, the training, the modes of integration into the urban fabric, or other elements the determining factors in the actors' success or failure?

In the areas of capitalization and accumulation, the city represents a great opportunity for powerful groups, themselves very contradictory. If the dynamic of indigenization persists, the problem of the accumulation of wealth will appear in a never-before experienced context. If the game of double citizenship becomes imperative, whatever the origins of the individual might be, then long-term change will be thwarted. Today, in Cameroon, the Bamilikés do not dare open bakery shops in the Bété country, even when this used to be one of their traditional specialties. Likewise in Nigeria, the Ibo are more and more reluctant to invest outside Iboland. And the reactions against Baol-Baol businessmen and shopkeepers in the Dakar region, on the part of the local people, foreshadow conflict situations.

Can urban public authorities contain the explosive potential of the competition between the most visible segments of society, since the accumulation of wealth occurs through a process of sedimentation? The new practices provoke a division of urban space into socially exclusive groups. The common good, the commune, disappear gradually for the benefit of clans and groups. The creation of local militias to secure order and discrimination in health and school community structures against those who do not pay and foreigners in Bamako (see Antoine 1992), for example, are illustrations of this trend. They are proof of the parceling up of social responsibility, of common interest.

The new forms of accumulation are different from those of the Western bourgeoisie and of businessmen, the clients of a state that undertakes projects, and distributes quotas and import licenses. They rest on community enterprises, for example, the Baol-Baol; on religious groupings such as the Mourides or the Pentecostal Nigerians; or on ethnic groups such as the Hausa, in Niger, the Peuls in Guinea, the Ibo in Nigeria, sharing housing and food, as they do in the village, their modest consumption supporting an impressive level of accumulation. The Baol-Baol are very powerful today and they can trade directly with the rest of the world without going through the national modern structures (such as banks); from this point of view, they bypass the authorities (see the work of Ebin, particularly 1992; and Salem (1981).

The relationship between the authorities and the informal sector is one of hostility, of control, and, sometimes, for street vendors and for the productive part of the informal sector (such as mechanics, welders, and so on), of repression (the confiscation of merchandise; clean-up operations on the sidewalks, public places, and the entrance to markets).

The function of the informal sector is to organize the process of urban development by creating employment, without growth in productivity. The growth of demand is satisfied by a corresponding growth in the number of producers of goods and services. It is a sector in transition with a rapidly increasing political weight. The informal sector plays a role in socializing those newly arrived in the city. But it is, in the current situation, a major constraint on urban policy, in terms of layout and cleanliness.

Indeed, if the city is a site favorable to accumulation, it is also the seat of power. It is the territory for the expression of indigenous logics and those of "passing visitors," all manifestations that are part of the struggle for power

and control of space. At the time of independence, urban planning was situated within the framework of the politics of global organization. As it turns out, it does not necessarily correspond to the logic of those who actually live in the city. With the crisis of control of urban space, the state cannot manage to stop people from allocating plots of land and settling down. It is forced to compromise and share the function of urban management.

Urban policies had been pursuing three main objectives: to master demographic growth, to promote policies of employment and social housing, and to meet essential needs with respect to infrastructure and physical equipment. These goals were never reached. Not only is urban growth not related to employment creation, but governments have conducted policies of political and economic centralization, opposed to any promotion of local democracy, participation, or allocation and expression of any economic role whatsoever to local government.

We have to ask ourselves if there exists a policy of urban planning other than the making and the publishing of master plans that never come to pass. What has been the impact of master plans in terms of urban planning when we see, for example, that the squatter areas of Bamako are more heavily populated than the official city? Whether it is added to or combined with this demographic contrast between squatter areas and official city, the exercise of public authority is deployed in a manner that is both unequal and full of contrasts. The police are forbidden from going into some neighborhoods because of the risk involved. Instead, neighborhood militias have emerged, gangs of delinquents and dangerous elements like the area boys in many Nigerian states. The sovereignty of the state is therefore limited to a very precise area, its clients' territory; in other words, the country that has seemed to be economically useful, producer of wealth, and the place where "rents" could be obtained.

New Repertoires and New Memories

The state's fallow zones, which completely elude its control and which harbor expressions of identity capable of generating conflicts and xenophobia, are growing rapidly. Instead of cosmopolitanism, we witness the explosion of cities and the emergence of subgroups poorly controlled by public authorities, more ethnically homogeneous. Some do not hesitate to call these new dynamics *the villagization of the city*. In the village, it is abundance that

organizes the community; in the city, it is emptiness (the street). To govern the city is to manage a vacuum, the street. The risk of villagization of the city is that the logics of the village will be used as a way to treat politics and social life. Thus, collective organization to create services that are missing has become the germ for new organizations that get involved in the marking of their territory. These markings produce new idioms and rely on new memories born of clever, sometimes provocative, and/or ironic, creatively arranged multiple traditions and often conflicting heterogeneous histories.

It is imperative to read these changes in the context of economic adjustment and political liberalization, with the crisis as a background, in order to understand both its configuration and the stakes it involves. At a time when international borders become disputed spaces once again (the conflicts between Senegal-Mauritania and Senegal-Guinea-Bissau, the quarrels between Nigeria and Cameroon, the interferences of Zaïre [now Democratic Republic of Congo] in Rwandan affairs, the spilling over of the Liberian civil war into the Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone, and Guinea, the spreading of the Tuareg crisis over the whole Sahelian border, and so on), internal borders are being erected in an effort to reaffirm, in an exclusive and discriminatory manner, appropriation around the issue of identity, of spaces of life and death.

Several cases can help illustrate these mutations: Casamance and the claim to independence of the Mouvement des Forces Démocratiques de la Casamance (MFDC), and the appearance of new practices in the city and the countryside. They present autonomous organizations, focused on ethnic groups, the neighborhood, religious brotherhood, the church, and so on. These new organizations take on community tasks. They are an initiative created at the grass roots; more democratic, more open to youth and women, they widen the marginalized zones where strategies to bypass the state are elaborated. Thus, they carry within themselves the germs of a new social conscience that is very critical of the state's projects. They are beginning to deal in a different way with these countries in crisis, which are becoming more and more difficult to manage.

However, we must admit that these fractures, even though they impose themselves on our consciousness and on our analysis because of their violence—and because of the way their images are portrayed—are not the most spectacular of the current disillusions in African societies. Consequently, we must ask about the proliferation of the notion of identi-

fication in the context of both the increased scarcity of resources for collective and individual income and that of the deflation of the state (see Mbembe [1994] and Diouf [1994]).

The great mutations that appeared in those years are equivalent to the harmful effects of the crisis. No sector is spared. The responses implemented by African societies in such a situation affect several economic, social, political, religious, and ideological sectors, but mainly a number of geographic spaces.

The entrenchment in everything local and "primordial" and the entanglement of resources involved in the process of remaking spaces and rememorizing collective trajectories leave more and more room for new forms of socialization and even sometimes of uniquely African individualism. Indeed, the loosening of state control makes room for a profusion of unruly practices in which the licit, illicit, parody, and religious totalitarianism, what is familial and moral, intertwine, overlap, echo, or contradict one another in a mad, ancient dance admirably described in the *The Famished Road*, by the Nigerian novelist Ben Okri.

In these socioeconomic arabesques there is competition, cooperation, and conflicts between groups asking for political, economic, symbolic, any imaginable kind of resource. Structures such as the family, the group of origin—like the area boys in South-West Nigeria; the *Yansaba,* or a religious sect or brotherhood resembling the Pentecostal associations or the "born again" in Lagos; the *Almajarai*, traveling Moslem students from northern Nigeria or the Mourides in Senegal—become sites of conflicts. The intensification of competition between the groups reveals violent forms of the expression of their indigenous character, which seeps into social sites and logics of accumulation such that the African state, currently on a slimming diet, cannot claim to manage on its own.

In the Senegalese situation, the extraordinary economic success of the Mourides is the most perfect illustration of the pattern of these new trajectories, set against the failure of nationalist modernization. Toward the end of the colonial period, the Senegal economy was controlled by French industrial and commercial firms assisted by small Lebanese wholesalers. At the lowest level of the commercial system there were the Moors, acting as shopkeepers. When independent, the Senegalese government nationalized commercial circuits, mainly having to do with peanuts, the main export product. Both the failure of the economic state support (with the bank-

ruptcy of the Office National de Commercialisation Agricole [ONCAD]) and the onset of liberal policies with the Senegalese government's decision to stop protecting the manufactured goods of foreign competitors have helped the development of a more or less informal commercial sector. One of the most spectacular signs of the expansion of the commercial sector is the extraordinary growth these last 15 years of the Sandaga market, in the central plateau, in Dakar. This market, that dealt exclusively in food products and textiles, today offers all kinds of products (electronics, textiles, cosmetics, for example) from Asia, the United States, Italy, and so on. The result of this very rapid expansion and diversification of economic activities in the Sandaga market has been the recapture of some commercial streets, next to the market, at the expense of the Lebanese traders.

The revitalization of commercial activities is due to a social group claiming to belong to the same religious Moslem brotherhood, the Mourides. According to one observer, the shopkeepers associated with an important Dakar wholesaler do not just bring products into Senegal; they participate also in more complex buying and selling circuits that allow Mouride street vendors in Paris to sell Asian articles bought in New York's China Town, or those in Brussels to provide the Moslems in that city with brass artifacts from Morocco. This type of networking economic activity has led to the creation of various small jobs around the import-export and selling activities in the main arteries of Dakar and around the Sandaga market. It has also led to the implantation of a candlewick-making factory, in association with Korean partners.

Mouride solidarity may have also bypassed the crisis in the banking system, by establishing its own informal systems of loans and mobilization of financial resources, which do not present any of the inconveniences responsible for the collapse of the classic Senegalese banking system. One of the signs of this economic Mouride success is Mourtada Diop, whose extraordinary private art collection is exhibited in the Musée de l'IFAN in Dakar. The Mourides are not alone in this new orientation of the Senegalese people. Beyond this economic success, the regroupings have provoked the emergence of a new social conscience disconnected from the state.

In cities too, one can observe the same movement with the emergence of neighborhood associations (Association Culturelle et Sportive [ASC]), groupings of people coming from the same region, ethnic group, or religious brotherhood. They organize of local labor groups to clean up their

neighborhood, summer classes for school children and secondary school students, and the building of urban infrastructure. More and more, they organize a resistance to and impose a dialogue on institutions and public authorities to discuss the occupation of urban space. Some of these associations try today to create public libraries and professional training centers as well as set up economic ventures in the form of a Groupement d'Intérêt Economique (GIE). These manifestations, mixing violence and good deeds, civility and incivility (or disobedience)[8], try more and more to take away from the state the physical, imaginary space, and from its institutions, the signs, parades, monuments, and commemorations.[9]

This evolution obliges us to rethink the state and citizenship, in response to two major changes: the crisis and democratization. On the one hand, the state is not able to carry on with its responsibilities, on the other, demonstrations aim to force it to accomplish some of the functions it neglects, such as garbage collection, cleaning up living spaces, and setting up infrastructure and well-functioning equipment. What are the political solutions currently available? At what level should public authority, local government, and consequently a real citizenship capable of collective mobilization be placed? Should people aim for a neighborhood kind of citizenship, a territorial authority where the individual feels implicated and responsible? Can urban policies contain the abundance of practices in the informal sector? Can we plan what already exists and make institutional modernity coincide with the rules of production in the city, since the management of changes is the management of poorly designed solutions that are in effect a series of conjectural consensus decisions but that at least permit survival until the next step? Who has the power to develop a new approach, now that the state has been discredited—the World Bank, the neighborhood leader? How do we know with whom to negotiate the new equilibrium if we know the frontiers of politics are changing, without even the traditional actors realizing those changes? Will the return in the heart of cities to smaller physical divisions centered around the notion of identity open up onto a new social contract, a new inventiveness opening new possibilities in the future, or will it

8. Achille Mbembe (1992a)
9. On these conflicts between imagination and symbols and on the proliferation of social spaces escaping the state's authority, see: Bayart, Mbembe and Toulabor (1992); O. Kane (1990); Marshall (1993); Tripp (1994); Woods (1994); and Diouf (1992).

lead to barbarism, this "culture of riot and racket" (Mbembe 1992b, 59) that foreshadows a probable outcome of "anarchic equilibrium"?[10]

Conclusion

The abundance of practices and identity markers in West African urban areas, the signs of an advanced degradation of the cities' environment and of citizens' living conditions, poses unusual and urgent questions to African societies. Beyond the deficiency in equipment and infrastructure, poverty and disorder, they are confronted with moral challenges, searching for memories multiplied by the number of actors, emblematic signs, and conflicts. We must identify today the authorities in charge of moral management, of morality in the cities. Can we reinvent them? What are the forces able to carry them out? How can we manage inequalities? What balance do we create between urban and rural areas? If raw materials continue to decline on the world markets, if the pressure on international savings increases, what will be the future of the cities that developed as intermediaries for the world market, while relying on rural economies? If the state disengages itself, who will collect—the local governments, the religious groups, nobody? And this latter possibility could open the door to anarchy or the Wild West, allegories and/or metaphors often attached to African societies in African literature. In other words, it would be structural adjustment or chaos, with the unusual effects of poverty, AIDS, and violence.

Urban poverty continues to grow; and infrastructure and urban services are deteriorating at an unimaginable speed under the weight of sustained demographic growth. However, African cities continue to expand, trying through internal connections (national and African) as well as external connections (international migrations [Péraldi 2001; Bava 2002]), to find ingenious solutions that would meet—whether or not on a long-term basis—the political, cultural, and social needs of their populations. They invent for themselves a varied and variable modernity: indigenous, religious (Roberts and Roberts 2003; Gueye 2002),[11] and international (under the

10. This probability of the evolution of African societies is the exit toward the nineteenth century, according to Mbembe (wars, disorders, murders, warlordism [1992b, 64]); see also Mbembe (1992a).
11. Including Islamic (Watts 1999) and Christian (Marshall-Fratani 1998; Meyer 1998).

control of financial and international organizations, donor countries, and governmental policies), amid tremendous turmoil, spectacular successes, and resounding failures (Tostensen, Tvedten, and Vaa 2001) and amid ethnic and religious violence and political compromises that are endlessly renegotiated. Can the African city to come find its way under such troubled and convoluted circumstances? What is at stake today is nothing less than the relationship between nationalist memory and local memories in the clean-up operations of societies in crisis.

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POLITICS OF URBAN IDENTITY IN ANGLOPHONE AFRICA

DICKSON EYOH

INTRODUCTION

This paper comments on the politics of urban identity in Anglophone West Africa at a high level of abstraction. The main intention is to highlight some patterns that are salient in this group of states, and for that matter states across the continent. The countries that are usually designated as "Anglophone West Africa" include Nigeria, Ghana, Gambia, Sierra Leone, and Liberia. This designation rests on their common use of English as the official language of state, and, in the case of the first four, a shared history of British colonization. But they are a remarkably diverse group of states in important regards. They include the continent's most populous state (Nigeria) and one of its microstates (Gambia). They differ in the structure and composition of their economies, political arrangements, and experiences as well as sociocultural makeup.

At a superficial level, at the turn of the new millennium, two of the states, Sierra Leone and Liberia, were paragons of "state collapse" and the extremes of societal disintegration, while Nigeria, Ghana, and Gambia returned to multiparty politics after varying interludes of military dictatorship. They differ in their current levels of urbanization. The estimated proportion of their urban populations in 2000 was: 30.7 percent (Gambia), 36.0 percent (Ghana), 44.9 percent (Liberia), 44.1 percent (Nigeria), and 36.6 percent (Sierra Leone). These variations in levels of urbanization are projected to persist to 2030 when over half of their populations will be urban: Gambia (50.2 percent), Ghana (51.6 percent), Liberia (62.2 percent), Nigeria (63.6 percent), and Sierra Leone (55.9 percent). Equally, and more significant, are differences in the number and scale of urban areas. The estimated population in 2003 of Gambia's largest urban agglomeration, Serekunda, was under half a million, Freetown in Sierra Leone 1.5 million, and Accra in Ghana 2.82 million. In contrast, the population of Nigeria's leading urban agglomeration, Lagos, was over 9.5 million; its next three largest urban agglomerations

were Kano, 3.33 million, Ibadan, 3.14 million, and Kaduna, 1.51 million. Lagos was ranked at 29 of 30 of the world's largest urban agglomerations by population size in 1995. It moved up to 23 in 2000, and is projected to climb to 15 in 2005 and 11 in 2015.[1]

These perfunctory observations should be sufficient to caution that, while the label "Anglophone West Africa" may be of some heuristic value in exploring regional patterns of urbanization and urban identity formation, a unity premised on common official language of state and shared colonial history can easily become a tempting excuse not to take seriously the particularities of their histories of urbanization and the unfolding of their politics of urban identity. After all, urban identities, like all social identities, are relational and dynamic. They are products of human agency, shaped and transformed by the complex and mostly unanticipated ways in which social groups and individuals respond to shifting socioeconomic, political, and cultural circumstances in particular times and places. A satisfactory account of the politics of urban identity and the effects on structures of national political economies and decision making must be attentive to the particularities of national histories of urbanization. Thus, while the analysis here is at a high level of generalization, it is so in full recognition that the manner in which these and other salient patterns are manifested, and their bearing on national and urban politics, would vary across any group of states.

An important analytical premise is that the politics of urban identity are foremost about the construction and expression of (oftentimes conflicting) conceptions of citizenship within state-structured arenas of political action. In the universalized liberal conception, citizenship invokes the juridical status of members of territorially delimited national communities with equal rights and responsibilities to the state. In liberal and radical versions of the master narratives of modernization and development, cities, because they are the sites of the most intense encounters with the forces of (Western) modernity and their cosmopolitanism, are the most fecund environments for the manufacture of rights-bearing citizens as modern political subjects. But liberalism's universal equal rights-bearing political subjects are differentially

1. Data are from World Urbanization Prospects: The 2001 Revisions: Table and Highlights (www.un.org/esa/population/wup2002/wop2001dh.pdf), accessed 10 November 2003), except for estimates for urban population in 2003, which are from country files (www.infoplease.com/), accessed 14 November 2003).

incorporated into state and political economy, based on divisions of class, gender, ethnicity, religion, region, and so on. The result is constant challenge to the pretensions of equality in liberal conceptions of citizenship and, thereby, the production of new types of citizens (Appadurai 1996). Because of "their concentrations of the nonlocal, the mixed, the strange, and the public," cities are preeminent places for the "contestation and production of new types of citizens and claims for new forms of participation in the decisions that govern their lives" (Holston and Appadurai 1999).

This paper focuses on two axes of urban identity: ethnicity and youth. Although very salient, there is no presumption that they are overdetermining or that they are the basis of self-contained individual and collective conceptions of citizenship and rights to political participation. They are crisscrossed with other identity markers (class, gender, region, religion, locality, etc.). They have been selected because they allow us to meaningfully probe the ways in which the politics of urban identity, as the politics of the construction and expression of notions of citizenship, are modulated by complex repertoires of identifications that form the basis of conceptions of individual and collective selves by contemporary Africans.

Urbanization and Ethnicity

The Western African region has a rich history of urbanization which pre-dated colonialism by centuries. Many of the famous precolonial African urban civilizations are found in this group of states: Kumasi in Ghana; Ibadan, Ife, and Benin in the South; and Kano, Zaria, and Sokoto, among others, in the emirate north of Nigeria, to give a random sample (see map in Gulger 1996, 213; for rich case studies, see Anderson and Rathbone 2000). But the current processes and patterns of urbanization have been defined by the establishment of colonial extractive economies and by territorially bounded states. The rapid growth of colonial cities, some of which were built on or replaced preexisting towns and others that were created from scratch, was propelled by rural migrations. Migrants were initially drawn from the immediate hinterlands and then increasingly from more remote hinterlands and internationally. Migration has remained the main source of the accelerated pace of urbanization in the postcolonial era, thanks to the urban-biased development ambitions and priorities of postcolonial ruling elites. Although there is a suggestion of a slowing down of the growth rates of large cities in favor of small and mid-sized cities and

increased movement between cities, as part of new patterns and trends in the movement of people across Africa and beyond, it seems reasonable to assume that migration will remain a major, if not the main, source of urban growth in the region for the foreseeable future (Tacoli 2001).

Migration-propelled urbanization accounts for the cultural heterogeneity of cities in these and all contemporary African states, and therefore frames them as laboratories for the invention of new and the recasting of old identities and ways of living. In fact, as is well known, contemporary African ethnicities are in significant ways urban-produced phenomena. They are the result of the reworking of notions of kinship and community by migrants faced with the challenges of urban living and as responses to the shifting structures of material opportunities presented by market and state incorporation under colonialism (for an overview, see Eyoh 1999).

Migration-propelled urbanization also accounts for the privileging of ethnicity in the study of African urban experiences and identities in colonial and much of postcolonial urban sociology. The problematic, sometimes explicitly and at other times implicitly stated, has been the question of the persistence of "ethnic ways, habits, affiliations," and so on among urban Africans; put differently, the continued significance of rural connections to urban Africans. Teleological modes of reasoning, which presumed a unimodal passage from tribesmen/ethnic citizens to urbanite/cosmopolitan subjects, have given way to more nuanced understandings of the dynamics of urban ethnicity and cultural pluralism. Part of this is accounted for by the better appreciation of the dynamics of urban ethnicity, including the highly varied and contingent values attached to and investments in the maintenance of rural connections by urbanites.[2] This said, contemporary urban ethnicity in these states, like others, continues to be shaped and reshaped, for the most part, by the fundamental factors that have underscored the formation of urban ethnicities since colonial times. Thus, if we accept that "ethnicity is always or nearly always, a form of metaphorical kinship," then, the anchor of contemporary urban ethnicity is the resilience of "kinship as the most significant principle of local organization" in West

2. For a critical review of colonial and postcolonial urban anthropology, see Ferguson (1999), especially chap. 3, in which specifications of "localist" and "cosmopolitan" urban styles are offered as a way of breaking with the teleological impulses of past conceptualizations of urban cultural pluralism.

African societies and its undiminished (albeit malleable) importance to African conceptions of personhood (Ericksen 1999).

In the past, ethnic networks facilitated the socialization of migrants in cities and the organization of urban commercial circuits, labor markets, and residential locations (outside the planned neighborhoods of the elite and middle classes and company housing estates in which class was determinant) were hued by ethnic differences.[3] Much has changed since the end of colonial rule to alter but not erode these patterns. Today, "natives," so-called because of their earlier settlement of cities or their immediate hinterlands, are numerical minorities in any fair-sized city in these states. In some cities of precolonial origin, such as Kano and Ibadan in Nigeria and Kumasi in Ghana, old sections may still be fairly populated by "indigenes" and closely related cultural groups. And smaller, regional cities and towns are more likely to have localities in which the "native" presence is pronounced. But, overall, the rapid growth of cities and especially the chaotic expansion of poor as well as mixed-income residential neighborhoods has meant that ethnic residential segregation is presently more of a myth than reality; a myth sustained by the historical association of neighborhoods with particular ethnic groups.

The same applies to the association of particular livelihood activities with ethnic groups as participation in different economic sectors has become more diffuse. Yet, despite the preoccupation of postcolonial states and international development institutions with large-scale corporate enterprises, artisanal production, small-scale manufacturing, and commerce have remained the source of livelihood of the overwhelming majority of urban populations. The organization of these modes of livelihood continues to be kin-based and reliant on ethnic networks of support and trust. Urban popular culture continues to be marked by forms that are strongly cosmopolitan (the result of the creative mixing of local and transnational influences) as well as distinctively ethnic. Good examples of this are urban popular music and drama, which tend to be "ethnic" in origin even when particular genres have become "national" and "transnational" (Barber, Collins, and Ricard 1990; Collins 1994). This also holds for public places of leisure, for example, bars and taverns, which are performance arenas for "cosmopolitan" and "localist" cultural orientations. As Ferguson (1999), from whom these categories are borrowed, notes, "cosmo-

3. For classic case studies of these phenomena in two of the states under consideration, see Banton (1957) and Cohen (1969).

politan" and "localist" cultural styles are not discontinuous nor do they map easily onto class hierarchies.

Significant to all of this is what can loosely be termed the prevailing "ideology of home" in these societies. For people the world over, home is a complicated and fragmented concept. For most West African urban dwellers, home in everyday language invokes both the place of current residence and a village or town that is one's ancestral place. Nothing expresses more powerfully the hold of this conception of home as ancestral community—an ethnically demarcated fragment of the nation-space—than the expectation of most that the ancestral home will be the final destination of life, regardless of the how long they have lived in cites (Eyoh 1999, 291–93).

This "ideology of home" is also the moral foundation of the ubiquitous urban-based "hometown associations." Founded for myriad purposes, such associations unite kinsmen and women across class, age, religion, locality, and so on, based on appeals to moral obligations to common homelands and kinship ties.[4] These forms of associations remain vibrant; in fact, it is commonly presumed that they have expanded in the recent past as the "squeeze" on patronage has intensified elite-driven communal competition for resources and as ordinary citizens have been forced into greater reliance on kinship ties for economic survival and security from predatory states and elites. Be that as it may, there has been renewed scholarly interest in them as vehicles of economic development as well as for the development of civil society, as a source for relegitimation of postcolonial states (Tangor 1998; Barkan, McNulty, and Oyehi 1991). Whether and how "hometown" associations promote these goals aside, their instrumental and moral logics are such that they privilege the ethnic citizenship of urban groups in the competition for resources within the national frame.

As earlier intimated, the organization of state power and structures of resource distribution are pivotal to the ways in which urban ethnic identities are brought into play in the constructions and contestations of citizenship. Recent reconsiderations of colonial state legacies, especially the role of colonial states in the "invention" of contemporary African ethnicities, have, with good reason, tended to concentrate on techniques of political and adminis-

4. On the growth of these types of voluntary associations during colonial and early independence eras, see Little (1965).

trative control over rural society (Young 1994; Mamdani 1996; Herbst 2000). In Mamdani's argument about the double (institutional and spatial) segregation of the colonial state and society, for example, state complicity, through indirect rule, in the 'invention' and politicization of ethnic identities is treated as primarily a rural matter. In contrast to rural citizenship, which was restricted to members of ethnic groups within demarcated territories, urban Africans and Europeans were accorded (universal) citizenship status and governed though European civil and criminal law.

Colonial urban politics in these states were the business of ethnically-structured patronage networks (for studies on Nigeria and Ghana, see Barnes [1986] and Nugent [1995]). True, colonial cities were subject to more direct and intense administrative control through the deployment of European models of urban planning and regulation. However, in the case of the four former British colonies, the Native Authority system and recognition of traditional rulers in urban communities were premised on the differentiation of local citizenship between urban "natives" and "strangers." Groups that were supposed to be natives, that is, original settlers of urban areas, were presumed to have particular claims to political representation and participation, albeit within tightly constrained circumstances. This buttressed their claims of "ownership" of urban areas and encouraged migrant minorities (collectively the majority population in most instances) to mobilize along ethnic lines in order to more effectively assert collective rights to patronage and decision making.

The elaboration of the authoritarian rule after independence, justified as necessary to contain ethnic conflict in the interest of nation building, led to the emasculation of institutions of local governance and political participation across West African states. Authoritarian rule and state-directed development made access to state-controlled resources, through patronage networks, ever more pivotal to accumulation. Linked by ties of class, kinship and community, patronage networks fed the internalization of communal cleavages within state apparatuses by sustaining or reordering patterns of hierarchical representation of ethnic communities within the state-centered system of power and decision making across all societal levels. In other words, patronage systems in general, and in particular the preference of ruling elites (civilian and military) to privilege 'natives' in the choice of local political leadership, reinforced notions of differential urban citizenship based on ethnic identities.

So, too, the governing logic of the delineation of subnational political administrative units in these and other states: the presumption that these units are best if they coincide with cultural (ethnic) boundaries. This overvaluation of autochthony as the basis of local political representation has been carried to absurd extremes in Nigeria, through its ceaseless multiplication of states and local government councils. Current models of decentralization and constituency representation under multiparty politics, there and elsewhere, do not query the logic of autochthony. Although the intensity varies across these states, it is hardly surprising that the return to multiparty politics has been marked by ethnic mobilization, which is motivated by the need to challenge or defend real or perceived imbalances in the distribution of political power among ethnic communities. In all cases, but as exemplified with the usual extravagance in Nigeria, ethnic political mobilization continues to be organized primarily by urban-based groups.[5] Youth, to whom we now turn, have been crucial in this process.

Politics and Urban Youth Identities[6]

Youth, too, are a historically constructed and relational social category, and societal definitions and expectations of them vary across time and place. Urban youth identities are also heterogeneous, inscribed by differences of class, gender, ethnicity, religion, locality, and so on. The cultural styles (language, dress, modes of everyday socialization) that are expressive of youth identities are shaped by articulations of localized cultural idioms and transnational cultural flows. For the present purpose, youth are defined in primarily generational terms, that is, as the demographic segment of populations in between childhood and adulthood. Youth, so defined, already constitute and will expand in the foreseeable future as the preponderant segment of populations of African states and their cities. In 2001, persons under 15 years accounted for 40.6 percent of Ghana's population; 41.1 percent of Gambia's, 44.8 percent of Nigeria's, and 44 percent of Sierra Leone's. The respective proportions of people over 65 were 3.3 percent, 3.5 percent, 3.1 percent, and 2.9 percent (UNDP 2003).[7]

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5. See introduction and chapters by T. Falola and M. Mustapha on Nigeria in Berman, Eyoh, and Kymlicka (2004) and Mbembe (2000).
6. This reflection on the politics of urban youth identity is much indebted to Diouf (1999).
7. Data are not reported for Liberia.

There recently has been increased scholarly attention on African youth. In much of the current discourse (which remains heavily gendered as it is focused on young males), urban youth in particular are represented as a social category in crisis and of exclusion. Youth have been the most victimized by economic collapse and the majority exists without prospect of a meaningful future. Their responses to victimization and exclusion is, for many, the leading source of the pervasive social disorder and political instability that prevent the return of African states to more positive development trajectories.[8] This sort of framing of youth as simultaneously victims of development failure and agents of disorder constrains appreciation of how the identity-based politics of urban youth are expressions of complex struggles over the meanings of citizenship and rights to participation, and how these struggles are ordered by official discourses on youth and the ways in which ruling elites seek to incorporate and police youth participation in the political spaces.

The multiple reorderings of African societies by colonialism through the imposition of states, commodification of economic relations, new systems of belief, cultural logics and class structures, and so on, destabilized precolonial precepts of social status and power, including those relating to hierarchies of youth and elders. The emergence of a new Westernized elite, whose social standing and expectation of an uncontested inheritance of colonial states were premised on their acceptance by society as the prime agents of modernity, represented the social and political ascendancy of youth over seniors (see Diouf 2003). In the rhetorics of nationalism through which this successor elite sought to legitimize its power and modernization projects (projects whose cultural and moral frameworks were to be anchored by traditional values), youth were positioned as the future of nations. That is, youth were to be the prime beneficiaries of modernization and its sustaining agents. At the same time, in accordance with traditional values, which, to paraphrase Diouf, mandated difference and submission of youth to social and political seniors, they had to be controlled in the interest of social order and the realization of modernization projects.

The ambivalence of official discourses on the rights and responsibilities of youth as citizens was accentuated by the deepening differentiation among urban youth by authoritarian strategies of nation formation and development

8. On this framing of youth, see Sommers (2003) and Durham (2000).

along two broad categories: the select few who profited from higher education and the vast majority of uneducated or poorly educated who formed the cascading stream of rural migrants. For the first group, youth was a transitional moment of socialization into elite status, typically confirmed by state employment. Even for the rural born and bred (the majority for much of the postcolonial era), the urban-centered higher education systems meant that their socialization included 'baptism' into the cosmopolitan/modern lifestyles of the ruling elite. During moments of acute social tensions that, for example, preceded military coups d'état in all of these states and placed university and high school students at the forefront of public protests, ruling elites resorted to violence as a means of control. But normally, regulation of participation by this relatively privileged group was through co-option into party- and state-centered patronage networks as apprentice members of the "hegemonic" alliance.

The second category, excluded from meaningful employment in the state and private formal sectors, was positioned as "saboteurs" of the modernization project, and their status as citizens construed largely in terms of "deviance" and "criminality." Their migration or escape from rural society, and not state-organized exploitation of peasants, was seen to be the main cause of agricultural stagnation. So was understood the unrelenting informalization of cities as young migrants struggled to claim spaces for economic reproduction. Their cultural styles were an assault on traditional values and outward registers of their criminality. Whether through slum clearance exercises and the habitual harassment of itinerant traders and service providers, regulation was by means of a causal official violence.

The political engagement of urban youth in the current conjuncture is conditioned by their deepening alienation from state and society, an alienation engendered and sustained by the failure of the statist model of development and the erosion of the always-tenuous legitimacy of the authoritarian postcolonial state. For the first category of urban youth, the collapse of educational standards, the contraction of opportunities for state employment and curtailment of patronage (conditions aggravated by neoliberal adjustment programs) amounted to the closing of possibilities for a nonproblematic transition to adulthood promised by their mode of socialization. They have, in effect, increasingly been "situated in a context of 'extended youth,' irrespective of age, by economic and social circumstances, and with little prospect of future advancement" (Gore and Pratten 2003, 216). For the vast majority of the marginalized and always excluded, economic collapse simply worsened dire mate-

rial circumstances, pushing them into even more inventive strategies of survival in the borderlands between lawful and criminal conduct.

Youth alienation exploded in the late 1980s as university and high school students, together with young urban professionals, emerged at the forefront of the primarily urban-based movements demanding an end to authoritarian rule. These movements would culminate in returns to multiparty politics in Gambia, Nigeria, and Ghana. In the case of Sierra Leone, middle-class university students together with marginalized youth—styled "lumpen elements" by Abdullah (1997)—formed the initial core of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), which launched an insurgency to overthrow the state and establish a more just society. This insurgency, which in large measure represented the transfer of urban youth grievances to a disinterested rural society, would subject the country to unspeakable horrors.[9]

The challenge to authoritarian rule by urban youth has been accompanied by the proliferation of masculinist, youth-identity based social movements: university-based clubs, ethnic militias, urban vigilantes, and youth gangs. The intensity of this phenomenon has varied across states, as have the objectives and modes of operation of these movements. However, as movements that seek to redefine notions of youth as citizens and serve as vehicles for the assertion of new claims to power and resources by youth, they seem to be characterized by two key features. First, is their use of reworked localized idioms of social and political organization. Pronounced among these are "age-set" groupings, which traditionally served as a basis for arranging political authority and accountability between generational and social seniors and juniors in local society. Second, are their political practices, which in some cases incline toward disengagement from formal politics, but more often are simultaneously subversive and reinforcing of patrimonial logics of power and resource distribution. A few random examples from Nigeria, which may not be typical of most West African states because of the exaggerated nature of its oil-driven politics of predation and disorder, will suffice to illustrate the pervasiveness of these characteristics.[10]

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9. On youth and the origins of the RUF, see Abdullah (1997); on African rebel movements as movements of alienated urbanites that use rural society as passage to seizure of the "capital," see Mkandawire (2002).
10. See Gore and Pratten (2003, 211) for an ethnographically rich and theoretically insightful discussion of these characteristics and ways in which youth identity-based social movements "combine elements of complicity, insurgency, monitoring and disengagement" in their involvement with state authority in Nigeria.

Youth vigilantes, such as the Lagos "area boys" and the "Bakassi boys" in South-Eastern sections, emerged as a major presence in Nigerian cities in the 1980s. As Momoh (2002) demonstrates, the organization of Lagos' area boys has been patterned on traditional Lagos neighborhood age-set groupings, which articulated a locality-based youth identity through annual cultural festivals and sports competitions. As the economic crisis intensified in the 1980s, swelling the ranks of the marginalized youth and spreading urban insecurity, area boys mutated into neighborhood vigilantes. The state responded to their increased presence with violence. By providing extralegal security in neighborhoods with popular, albeit nervous, endorsement, the vigilantes asserted a (negative) youth power in urban space and claims on resources. They were canvassed by university students to join prodemocracy protests. But they were also easily incorporated into structures of patronage by local big men, especially Yoruba landlords who called on their services to intimidate their primarily Igbo (trader) tenants. As the return to multiparty politics ignited a more vicious cycle of struggle for power by elites, Lagos' areas boys, like youth vigilantes across the nation, would be increasingly patronized by the political elite, including elected state governors, to intimidate rivals and non-supporting constituencies.[11]

A variation of this phenomenon is the *Yandaba* (youth gangs) in the northern Nigeria city of Kano, also with antecedents in traditional age-set groupings (see Zakari Ya'u 2000). In contrast to these traditional groups whose members aspired to their parents' occupational status, the *Yandaba* are composed of uneducated and unemployed youth from poor families. The presence of this class of youth in the city increased dramatically in the days of frenzied oil-based accumulation and consumption. It continued to expand, thanks to the combination of neoliberal economic adjustment policies and the resource crisis in rural society, which turned rural youths from seasonal migrants to part of the permanent floating population of the thoroughly disenfranchised and unemployable.[12] Apolitical, they were concerned with economic survival through clandestine activity. The *Yandaba*,

11. On youth vigilantes and politics in general, but with many examples from Nigeria, see Reno (2002).
12. They formed the core of *Maitatsine*, a millenarian Islamic movement centered in Kano in the 1970s and 1980s; see Watts (1999).

with elite and popular social acceptance, also transformed into providers of extralegal security in neighborhoods as the state's inability to do so become ever more glaring. On the approach to multiparty politics and intensified elite competition, they became the source for recruiting political thugs (*Yanbanga*) used by elites to terrorize opponents and nonsupporting constituencies, to provide bands of paid voters, and so on.

Ethnic-based social movements or so-called ethnic militias are another type of youth-led localized response to the crisis of political legitimacy. They are also rooted in particularized cultural idioms. They grew in the 1980s and 1990s, a period during which the population had become convinced that endemic state corruption and social disorder had risen to unprecedented levels. Despite their critique of the interrelationship among the organization of state power, elite predation, and youth exclusion, these movements have been geared not to the abolishment but to the re-ordering of patrimonial structures of resource distribution. In other words, as expressions of the politics of youth identity and citizenship, their main concern has been to alter perceived communal inequalities in the workings of the patrimonial system they regard as a leading cause of youth exclusion.

For example, the Oodua Peoples Congress (OPC) and allied groups, such as the Oodua Liberation Movement (OLM), the Oodua Youth Movement (OYM), and the Yoruba Liberation Movement (YLM) in western Nigeria, rely on ethnic idioms to advocate the formation of an independent Yoruba nation, based on the claim that the Yorubas have been disadvantaged in the distribution of resources by a federal state long-dominated by "northerners." The OPC's threat as a secessionist force is exaggerated. However, through involvement in local political party organization, patronage by rural and urban elites, and the performance of law-and-order functions, such as neighborhood clean-ups, direction of traffic, vigilante-style security, and so on, it has enabled youth to assert a new presence in local political spaces. The Arewa Peoples Congress (APC) in the north deploys religious idioms (Islam) to mobilize "northerners" against purported efforts to marginalize them at the national level, and to defend local political spaces and prerogative to patronage from external challenges. In oil-producing Niger delta areas, the Ijaw Youth Congress (IYC), Ijaw Egbesu boys, the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni Peoples (MOSOP), and similar youth-led ethnic militias are focused on getting a fairer share of oil revenues for producing areas that have long been neg-

lected and victims of ecological degradation. The leaders of these movements, who style themselves as a new breed of "young politicians," have taken to screening local candidates for political office, and in a number of cases, had elected state governors publicly align themselves with their brand of youth politics.[13]

Conclusion

The need to empower citizens and local communities in the making of decisions that govern their lives is the normative thrust of the current concern with democratic decentralization. At the most basic, democratic participation is a framework for competition for power and access to resources among citizens who are bearers of multiple identities whose political salience varies across time and space. Decentralization tends to produce an increase in local politics as it reshapes old and opens up new arenas for political participation and competition for resources. The crisis of the postcolonial state in Africa and uneven processes of economic and political liberalization have engendered a resurgence of identity-based politics that represents enormous challenges to the development of democratic urban governance. Not least of these challenges is that identity-based politics tend to reinforce the politics of patronage that have bedeviled the quest for more accountable systems of governance and development-oriented states. The two axes of urban identities discussed here make evident the reality of multiple and oftentimes conflicting conceptions of citizenship that reflect the myriad of social identities borne by contemporary Africans. If there is a conclusion to this paper it is the imperative to transcend the narrow liberal conception of citizenship in order to design more effective and just systems of political representation and accountability. Taking identity-based politics seriously need not lead to endorsement of unbounded recognition of group rights; it does, however, suggest that the pursuit of democratic participation and accountability as frameworks for managing Western African cities will be handicapped by inattention to intertwined and competing notions of citizenship and the historical circumstances that have shaped them.

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13. For general discussion of this phenomenon, see Gore and Pratten (2003) and Reno (2002); on the OPC, see Akinyele (2001); on the Niger delta, see Obi (2001).

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URBAN ISSUES AND LOCAL POWERS: WHO CAN SPEAK FOR THE COMMUNITY?

MICHÈLE LECLERC-OLIVE

Many countries in Francophone Africa are involved in the decentralization process. Indeed, their progress is comparatively uneven, their sociohistorical contexts are different, and their strategies vary. However, these reforms share a few common characteristics and face similar problems. The international development agencies encourage them to contribute decisively to local development, but they are governed by procedural and decision-making protocols that are strongly inspired by Western democracies, and they must coexist with traditional forms of power that were not eliminated by the regimes put in place after independence.

In general, one is led to believe that these forms of power, often considered residual, have only survived in the farthest rural areas and that their influence does not reach the urban centers. And if ruling elites attempt sometimes to use their imaginary qualities, they essentially take them into account as cultural and religious remnants. Only rarely will institutional mechanisms associate them with the decision-making process. Using examples in two Francophone West African countries, Mali and Benin, I would like to propose for debate the issue of the relationship between these local authorities, seen essentially as political structures, and the public authorities set up by decentralization. The forms taken by this relationship might very well condition decisively the legitimacy of these authorities and therefore the institutionalization of public policies. I will conclude in offering some thoughts to help analyze this relationship. These thoughts have emerged from the studies of a few endogenous political transitions reported by historians and anthropologists and are foreign to the encounter with the European West.

The first common characteristic of numerous decentralizations is the injunction and, as a result, the presupposed corresponding power to ensure local development. This is not obvious. In France, for several decades, the communes remained politico-administrative structures with limited powers. A quick survey also reveals that the territorial organization adapted to local development is often larger than would be necessary if the main preoccupa-

tion was to bring closer together administrative and political services and the people. So much so that the criteria on which the support programs for the new territorial governments are evaluated, taking into account successes in matters of local development, could very well lead to a very weak outcome. All the more so since the time granted these new entities in order to acquire real legitimacy in the eyes of the people and to demonstrate their performance's efficiency is limited. One cannot reflect on the possible or the necessary contribution of territorial governments to local development or to the success of public policies without wondering about the true meaning of local or urban issues. What problems can the city handle on its own? Which problems should become the shared responsibility of various levels of territorial governments? The answers to these questions vary depending on the time and place. More particularly, the sharing of activities may have been, at certain times in history, the subject of lively debate. One only has to remember those who stirred up the Paris neighborhoods during the French Revolution. On what issues should laws be designed: on the ones concerning citizens or only on those previously authorized by the central power?

Today, particularly under the pressure of international assistance agencies, the "local affairs," the "powers" to be managed by the new local governments have been predefined without them being consulted; that is to say, according to a decision protocol that itself disrespects the autonomy supposed to be conferred on these local governments. Indeed, their ability to set up and take on social services and local infrastructure should allow them to consolidate their legitimacy with the people. However, reciprocally, they can only mobilize the populations to participate in the set-up and the upkeep, not to mention respect for the infrastructure the city needs, by virtue of their legitimacy. Therefore, the legitimacy of these territorial governments is both the consequence of and the condition for the success of public policies they must implement, even though they did not decide on them in the first place.

The funds granted by the international agencies in support of local development often cover up the deficit in tax collection, although there are programs conceived specifically to reduce this deficit and set up self-financing procedures. In addition, even if tax collection matched the amount given by theoretical estimates, it appears that local taxation cannot be enough in a number of cities to cover the expenses required to carry out the development plans local governments had to establish at the onset. Let us note that these plans are nothing but a list of needs without any sense of priorities (for exam-

ple, a commune in Mali listed in its priority requirements the reduction in the rain deficit). These plans resemble rather a grocery list for the international agencies with little or no strategy to self-finance infrastructure and services.

I have analyzed elsewhere the possible effects that the "methods" of these aid programs may have on the kind of legitimacy of these new local governments (Leclerc-Olive 2003a). I would like now to touch on the issue of the legitimacy of local governments from the point of view of their relationship with traditional authorities: Do they compete with each other or do they complement each other? It appears as if the social dynamic produced by some urban development projects contributes to reconfigure the local sociopolitical landscape, within which these traditional political authorities (which have likely been reinvented) play a role not always anticipated by the reforms. Not only is the durability of these institutions at stake, but, more radically, so is their capacity to ensure the s*ustainability* of the local development they are supposed to boost and manage. Indeed, fiscal public-spiritedness cannot be the exclusive result of only the legitimacy of the new local governments. In Mali, for example, the mayors were made responsible for tax collection. This decision expressed a certain trust in a public-spiritedness that would not be forced on the people, but would be acquired thanks to a well-performing government. This conviction was shared when local governments started their first mandate. However, one cannot but notice the turnaround at the end of the mandate: the mayors running for re-election did not have the commitment required to convince their potential electorate to pay their taxes. The legitimacy of local governments seems an insufficient condition for their efficiency in a context of autonomy; however it is indispensable.

Below I will examine the case of a neighborhood of Bamako, Samé. There, some of the measures taken by the traditional sociopolitical organization were finally shown up by a program of neighborhood upgrading, which it had itself wished for and boosted. If the project has met with some success in the area of material achievements, this partial success has had its sociopolitical price.[1] In fact, the local customs of "making" politics

1. The program, though it enjoyed its own private financing, was integrated into a program supported by the World Bank, "Save Our Neighborhood" (SNQ, Sauvons Notre Quartier), which provided for the restoration of 25 squatter areas in Bamako. The evaluation of the success rate of these 25 subprograms placed Samé at the top of the list.

(mainly the practice of having assemblies) ended up being rejected. Then, I will examine the difficulties in establishing a cadastre in Porto-Novo, Bénin.[2] This registry, which intended to allow a systematic collection of taxes, finally helped give a little more strength to traditional authorities that reorganized themselves on the occasion of decentralization reforms.

These two case studies do not at all claim to offer an exhaustive description of likely situations; they are intended to bring attention to the absence of a *transitional* arrangement between the "traditional" and "modern" political legitimacies, putting them in positions more competitive than complementary, thus participating in a kind of delegitimization of the local public authorities. They also show that understanding situations and their stakes requires both an examination of current methods and placing these situations in historical perspective. Then we note that the formulation of local development problems in purely technical terms helps disqualify some forms of politics—assemblies, even if only accessible to some lineages—to the benefit of a "by default" political style, which agrees as much with traditional forms of authorities modeled on what is "secret" (as in Porto-Novo) as with Western practice of lobbying. The evolution of these new local governments could be affected for a long time to come and their role in the management of local democracy could possibly be compromised; as simple municipalities, they might never become true communes (Leclerc-Olive 2006).

The Experience of the Samé Neighborhood of Bamako

Samé is a recent neighborhood: the inhabitants occupy land given to them by the neighboring area of Kouliniko. Several years ago, within the context of customary law, heads of households obtained authorization to settle on a plot of land. Samé now has its own social structures but the neighborhood is organized according to the same rules as those of village communities (Cefaï and Pasquier 2003). Samé is one of the "squatter" areas of the capital. The houses are made of cement blocks. No town planning was

2. These studies are taken from a wider survey on the processes of legitimization/delegitimization of local actors linked to setting up urban developments projects. Titled "Les villes, laboratoires de démocratie?" this study took place within the framework of the Programme de Recherches Urbaines pour le Développement (PRUD), financed by the French ministry of Foreign Affairs.

applied to the allocation of plots. No vehicle can pass through this area. There is no sewage disposal, no public lighting, and, obviously, no basic public infrastructure. There is no school, no health center, no market. The population is young or poor; educated people without employment have settled there for lack of money to rent in downtown Bamako.

The issue of restructuring the neighborhood came up for the first time at the end of the 1980s. The general assembly of heads of households (the traditional authority responsible for neighborhood affairs) approached Commune III in Bamako. Their efforts remained fruitless. Without an answer from the municipal authorities, the head of the neighborhood spoke with Alphalog, a Malian NGO, which had introduced itself to the people of the neighborhood. The promoters of that NGO, as was then sometimes the case, were close to the authorities (Leclerc-Olive 2004). The NGO mobilized some students from a German urban planning school, who settled in the neighborhood for a while and participated in numerous consultation meetings with the local people. They produced technical studies allowing the introduction of financial requests, which would be granted eventually by Dutch assistance in 1993. The restoration project is made up of various sections: one was the sharing out of a neighboring plot in order to "re-house" those who were removed from the restructured part of the neighborhood—this section addressed individual interests. Another was the creation of some urban services (pipes for draining rain water, roads, etc.)—this section addressed common interests. Although some are chargeable services (lighting, water, etc.) others could potentially generate resources for some of the inhabitants (for example, a market). The creation of collective infrastructure (for example, a school, a health center) was intended mainly for the poorest who could not make the trip to the downtown area—this constituted public services incorporating a redistribution principle.

Although they had previously received funds, the NGO and the mayor of the commune decided to register the project within the World Bank's program titled "Save our Neighborhood," which in turn subjected it to a set of standards quite foreign to current practices in neighborhoods or village communities. For example, the authority representing the neighborhood would have to be subjected to an outside evaluation and risk losing its mandate after three years, whereas, under normal circumstances, the neighborhood leader is chosen for life. This injunction has had disastrous effects.

Between the end of the 1980s and now, one can distinguish three successive phases, separated by major events, which have each time altered the nature of the relationship between the actors and their respective legitimacy. Two dates stand out: 1993 and 1998.

1993: Creation of the Neighborhood Association

Alphalog succeeded in convincing the general assembly of the heads of households in Samé to constitute itself into an association headed by the neighborhood leader.[3] Thus was created the Community Association for the development of Samé and Kouliniko (ACDSK), whose president is the Samé neighborhood leader. This transformation may appear to be a simple formality that recognizes the traditional structure, thus giving it access to the status of a legal person. Indeed, this has been the case. At the same time, it changed not only the ways in which the ex-assembly of heads of households operated, but the association's foundations themselves.

Three agreements were then signed: one between the ACDSK and Alphalog, the other two with the government. The agreement with Alphalog specified the responsibilities and the tasks of the ACDSK. The association would, among other things, make a list of the families to rehouse, negotiate the price of plots, follow up on the resettling procedure, mobilize the population to undertake development work, help in setting up various regroupings (young people, women, professionals) recommended by the program, and control the implementation of the work.

The two agreements with the government were with the representatives of Commune III and with the District of Bamako, which piloted the neighborhood rescue program. In the agreement signed with Commune III, the ACDSK ceased to exist in itself: the representative for the commune was "the Project," a designation that included both the ACDSK and the NGO without distinction. From this point on, the neighborhood representatives would not have any more specific relationships with their commune; these relationships would be handled by the NGO, which, as a result, would exercise permanent supervision over the organization of the neighborhood.

3. The 1959 Malian law on associations is not very different from the 1901 French law.

1998: Replacing the Office of the ACDSK

In 1998, the office of the ACDSK was "fired" and all of its members were replaced. The team that had started and seen to the implementation of the project was completely delegitimized and the president was dismissed from his duties. Moreover, he was relieved of his role as neighborhood leader, a very rare occurrence, indeed, since only age and lineage gave access to this position. Since then, a new team has been set up, but neighborhood development, still unfinished, is at a standstill. What happened? We can observe that the loss of legitimacy of the project's promoters had to do with the type of participative plan set up by the NGO, on the one hand, and on the other, with the town council's intervention at a very decisive point in the plot attribution process. Let us examine these two aspects separately.

The project's promoters paid particular attention to setting up collective infrastructure, but the inhabitants, for the most part, were more interested in receiving plots. The ACDSK was responsible for following up on their allocation. The allocation of 300 plots taken out of the "re-housing" zone would take place in such a way that priority would be given to "the removed" from the area to be built and to farmers of these open pieces of land. When the time came, the commune made it clear that the allocation could not take place according to customary law and reminded the people that the state alone was master of the land; as such, it assumed the right to allocate to itself most of the plots. This left only sixty plots to be used for "re-housing," while the ACDSK had made up a list of about one hundred "eligible" people. One of the arguments offered by both city hall and the NGO (which appears in one of its reports) is that the sale (at a higher price, of course) of the plots to richer people living outside the area would allow the "injection of additional means to help develop the neighborhood."

In the meantime, the ACDSK operated a little differently, in view of new statutes to be respected, and of the fragmented tasks it had to undertake. The relationship with the people was no more governed by the rules of the local political system, in which the affairs of the city are examined by the general assembly of the heads of households, but now by a technical commission. To the extent that the requests made by families in the area had not all been satisfied, the office was held responsible for the allocations, deemed illegitimate. Moreover, in 1998, the NGO enforced the standards of the "Save our neighborhood" program, which required an external evaluation. This evaluation

stressed the obligation to carry out a new designation of officials. This recommendation, strongly supported by the NGO, led to the office's resignation and to the delegitimization of the neighborhood leader. The NGO then deserted the area, and the local political space changed style. It went from an assembly of heads of households, responsible for all local affairs, to an authority fragmenting the problems in a technical fashion. In so doing, the process helped disqualify all things political, if we understand the expression to mean a set of public deliberation procedures intended to manage the city's affairs. It has been replaced by a conception of politics reduced to power relations and to fashioning along purely clientelist lines.

The Urban Land Registry (Cadastre) in Porto-Novo

The Registre Foncier Urbain (RFU) project was started at the end of the 1980s by SERHAU[4] (and set up within the framework of an agreement between France and Bénin). It has as its objective to help cities have a minimum of resources before decentralization, with a budget for the functioning of collective infrastructure. It was initiated at a time when the collectivity (the urban constituency) was nothing but a decentralized territory of the state.[5] The RFU had two goals: to make an inventory of all urban data and to establish a database that would allow exploitation of the city's "taxable resources." Djougou, in the country's northwest, experimented with a simplified test project in 1991–92. The heads of households in that city rejected it; they gathered up all the tax notices and returned them to the tax collection offices and thus forced the government provisionally to give up using this tool. The establishment of the RFU in Porto-Novo was expected to take place at the start of the program, but the first surveys were only set up in 1995, after Cotonou had been properly equipped. Therefore this survey—collecting general urban data on house fittings (electricity, WC, water), infrastructure, building use (as housing, churches)—was conducted over a period of two months by a team of sixty peo-

4. Société d' Études Régionales d'Habitat et d'Aménagement urbain, a parastatal organization
5. Neighborhood leaders and commune mayors do not have real decisional powers. In order to get an idea of the place given to them, we quote an RFU official: "The mayors of old communes did not have sufficient status to influence local decision. If we associate with them, it will mean that their point of view might eventually alter the position of SERHAU. And that is not possible.…I admit that some mayors may have been very useful in Porto-Novo. But it was all informal" (Leclerc-Olive 2003a).

ple (city council personnel assisted by outside qualified personnel provided by SERHAU). Later, thanks to data processing, two databases would be created, one for taxation, the other for urban management. The district of Zebou (Pineau-Jamous 1986), in the center of Porto-Novo, one of the oldest areas of the city, is made up of old houses, with narrow and winding streets. Its inhabitants do not have access to networks of urban services. Electricity works through collective connections, water is bought from those inhabitants in the area who have a meter, people use their neighbors' toilets, and so on. The renovation of these areas also ran up against the refusal to disturb the certain religious symbols, protectors of the "collectivity."

Before starting the survey, preliminary to setting up the RFU, a campaign was created, intending to sensitize the people and mobilize the district leaders,[6] with the particular aim of reconstituting the boundaries of districts and old communes.[7] Public meetings were convened to inform the population. Despite the promises to improve the standard of living in the poor districts, the ultimate purpose of the survey fooled no one. In Porto-Novo, a steering committee was set up, made up of technical cadres, local administrators, tax authorities, SERHAU, and the ministry of the interior.[8] Alongside this group, a committee for the city, including the district leaders and the elders' committees, was responsible for dealing with the people; however, it did not have the power to make any decisions. "It was only to help us better sensitize the people. We make suggestions, on the technical level, we explain things to them. Sometimes, they criticize, but they cannot change what we propose to them, *the work is so technical*."[9] When maps and addresses were drawn up, the committee suggested naming the streets. One of the people in charge explained:

> They suggested street names to us, but we rejected them. This committee also contested the amount of taxes, while helping to explain to

6. Local chiefs today are elected. This function is a source (often modest) of income: any contract or agreement, in order to be valid, must pass before the local chief who then collects a tax, the amount of which he fixes on the spot.
7. Along the system of administrative organization, before decentralization (elections in 2003).
8. Elsewhere (as in Dassa, for example) they opted for a specific space for decision making where they gathered SERHAU, the committee of the elders, associations, and local chiefs in order to discuss reform and sensitize people to the concept of "fiscal responsibility."
9. An official of the RFU department in Porto-Novo; emphasis added (Leclerc-Olive 2003a).

> the people the ways to calculate the tax rate. This rate is evaluated, using the data collected for each plot: landlord, area, level of infrastructure, accessibility, etc. The "taxable" plots are identified, the tax base is determined in collaboration with the tax department, the urban constituency, and the officials responsible for the communes. Once we reach an agreement, the tax notices are edited, they are then sent to the tax department which begins to distribute them….The distribution to the population must not exceed twenty days. We have realized that beyond that, difficulties arise: there are riots and people refuse to pay (Leclerc-Olive 2003a).

There was also no agreement between the central tax department and the city on the share of tax revenues that are to be returned to the city.

At the end of 2003, at the time of our study, only 60 percent of the "taxable resources" had been identified; the remaining 40 percent of landlords had not. This is because of the "collective houses" found in great numbers in old Porto-Novo, particularly in Zébou. Many collective houses are jointly owned. The RFU committee had decided to calculate taxation by housing unit: each person would pay according to the space he/she occupied. But, "it doesn't work well: joint occupants are people with nothing to do. No income. They throw away the notice, and we can't do anything." Sometimes, a delegation comes to complain about the calculation method: "We are used to paying our taxes jointly, and you come and divide us." In this case, "we agglomerate in order to create a single tax, we adapt, but…we need a leader of the collectivity who would assume responsibility and have the financial means to take on the taxes, which doesn't always happen. Besides, many buildings house religious symbols or spirits. We decided on a rule: the religious leader's home is taxed, not the place of worship itself." Naturally, there have been protests—"it is our voodoo house, we'll pay nothing"; others invoke their royal ancestry—"we are princes, we don't pay taxes," "this is the king's house, it must be exempted." Often, when it comes to "convents," it is hard to distinguish between housing and place of worship. One of the officials in the RFU department confirmed: "We have tried to explain that having royal ancestry does not justify an exemption. I intervened a few times on local radio, but I succeeded only in reviving the conflict" (Leclerc-Olive 2003a).

The story of the implementation of this plan of action calls for a few comments. Bear in mind that it aimed to create an urban management tool for

the new communes, set up in 2003, and to contribute consequently to the legitimization of these new local authorities.

On the one hand, this program did not contribute to strengthening "fiscal responsibility." Generally, the RFU succeeded in the three large cities of Cotonou, Parakou, and Porto-Novo. The RFU widened the tax base (in particular, the distribution of notices increased) and improved the aggregate amount of collections. However, the ratio between collection and distribution of notices has decreased considerably in Porto-Novo unlike in Cotonou and Parakou. This rate, calculated on the basis of data provided by the municipal development program, which can be considered an indicator of fiscal public spiritedness among the citizens, has gone from 66 percent in 1994 to 59 percent in 1995 and to 35 percent in 1999, four years after the creation of the RFU. In other words, this arrangement required that more citizens pay their taxes; however, over time, proportionately fewer paid. The political performance of the arrangement deserves to be called into question. When the program was introduced, the urban constituency (a decentralized structure of the state on the territory of the future commune) had to "receive" this new tool, without being consulted. "It is the state's idea which the local authority, being a deconcentrated part of its territory, did not have the option to refuse.[10]"

The Collectivities in Zébou

This process seems to have first confined the "modern" representatives[11] of the people to an information role ("the work is so technical"!) in the name of traditional legitimacies, thus contributing to the "awakening" of forms of power considered archaic and obsolete, maybe somewhat irrelevant. Indeed, what can be said about these recent manifestations of "tradition" (Leclerc-Olive 2003b)? It is not possible to offer here an exhaustive history of the organization of traditional authorities. I will mention only a few elements that support the propositions I would like to submit for discussion.

First, I must specify the methodological approach behind this part of my research. I borrow the notions from an important work by J.F. Bayard

10. Declaration by an official of the RFU within SERHAU (Leclerc-Olive 2003a).
11. That is to say, a committee of elders, formed essentially by retired high officials close to the present regime and by "elected" locals (chiefs and mayors of old communes), not by the "traditional" authorities who claim precolonial legitimacy.

(1993). Quite often, when we think of politics and religion, we do it according to a tradition of political science that sees them as two distinctive forces. Each constitutes a homogenous phenomenon, which can be analyzed by itself, since both would represent coherent orders of significance that remain external to one another. My observations show, conversely, a remarkable involvement with each other of these two dimensions of social life, which does not permit postulating their autonomy: they can be considered separately in an analysis, but they cannot be separated.

Second, most of the time the political authorities have tried to eradicate[12] or exploit[13] old references and memories, as the case may be; one only remembers the religious or cultural aspects (these would be very strong particularly in rural areas) or the imaginary aspects (they are then the subject of national ideological discourse). I would like to draw attention here to the sociopolitical *practices* linked with these religious and cultural aspects in the urban areas, which are usually associated in the "modern" sector of society. This is the methodological side.

The propositions I would like to make in the light of the Porto-Novo survey have to do with the "indigenous" dynamics initiated by the leaders of "collectivities," concomitant with democratization and especially with decentralization. These collectivities are at the center of the objections against the measures taken by the RFU. The word "collectivity" first describes a royal lineage, a dynasty; but it also has a generic use, either to describe a simple family that did not distinguish itself by actions finding favor with the Porto-Novo king, or to point to a group of collectivities, the ones from Zébou for example, that Pineau-Jamous (1986) calls a "lineage-district." Generally speaking, it is at once a matter of lineage, of joint plot ownership, and of the people who inhabit it. A collectivity is a home. In each house of a collectivity, there is a place of worship where all those related to it live.[14]

Mito Agboton, present king of the Zébou collectivities, is also "defense minister" of King Toffa of Porto-Novo. Several religious monarchies, like Agboton's, depend on this royal monarchy. Agboton is also the supreme

12. In 1976, under the Marxist-Leninist regime of Mathieu Kérékou, a law was promulgated to fight feudalism and witchcraft. Cited in Tall (1995).
13. A reference to the international festival of vodun (voodoo) arts and cultures initiated by President Nicéphore Soglo (see Tall 1995).
14. See Pineau-Jamous (1986) for more historical and mythical references.

authority of the voodoo god Gbé-Loko. "I own the voodoo; I am the one who named the voodoo chief. We do not take care of the voodoo ourselves; we may be Moslems, Catholics, there are people destined to perpetuate our voodoo. They are prepared from father to son. We take an interest in it only for financial reasons." To manage the collectivity, Agboton is helped by a committee of sages, "people older than my father, who come to help me because they have the memory, the references to solve problems."[15]

When the French arrived, in the second half of the nineteenth century, the reigning monarchies lost some of their prerogatives and were nothing more than higher-level chiefs. Among the people they continued to receive the same veneration, but they did not have supreme power: they could not execute nor imprison a person, they could not raise taxes—that was the prerogative of the colonial authorities. The kings of the local communities never ceased to settle the numerous conflicts that arose in everyday life. In this role as "mediators" they preserved a legitimacy that, though not as wide-ranging, has not disappeared. The tradition of the Zangbetos, for example, is still very vibrant.[16] Agboton has four of them at his palace as "night watchmen."

In fact, Mito Agboton was enthroned in 2002, succeeding his great-uncle Mongbagan Zounhon, who had died in 1961. Thus "power" had remained vacant for 41 years. There is no shortage of explanations for this vacancy: "There were no candidates, because the palace was more or less dilapidated, it needed restoration. Also, there was Christianity; we were the first Christians of Porto-Novo, while being religious leaders, this is quite a paradox!"[17]

But notice the dates marking this history: 1960, independence; 2002, the decentralization reform. The latter was interpreted, among other things, as authorization for "local authorities" to reappear on the public stage. These authorities, whose legitimacy in the eyes of the people remains to be evaluated more carefully, seem to have seized this opportunity to regroup and widen the prerogatives their absence from the public stage had limited. For example, Agboton reports that, thanks to democracy, the legitimacy of Porto-Novo's Toffa king is being contested by other princes, descendants of cousins or brothers of the king. They did not participate in the war against

15. Mito Agboton, interview, 8 July 2003.
16. In contrast with voodoo, which is inherited, one can join this secret society.
17. Mito Agboton interview.

the King of Abomey, thus forcing the Toffa king of the time to turn to the French for assistance against the invasion.

This general context, favorable to the public expression of these old local authorities, is coupled with the effects caused by practices of the state and the city's institutions, like the setting up the RFU. This program's political style, the main goal of which is to legitimate and collect taxes, has led the people, and particularly the residents of the local communities, to seek ways to avoid this imposition. For instance, there are so many joint owners in the local communities of these old neighborhoods, that when the taxes are calculated, one arrives at very nominal figures. Some people live in rooms only two meters square, often made of mud; that gives a taxable amount of less than a dollar. Some suggest removing old Porto-Novo from the taxation area. Family members who have "succeeded" have left their original collectivity to start their own homes, often in Cotonou. The arguments against paying taxes are many and well articulated: indeed, there is poverty but, as we have seen, there is also the idea that some local communities are royal monarchies that, as such, should be exempt from tax, and that some dwellings are used for religious purposes and not as houses.

It is easy to see how a "modernizing" arrangement intended to legitimize taxes (including charging amounts lower than collection costs[18]) helps to awaken and legitimize sociopolitical forms of organization that borrow from memory, from an inherited past. These indigenous authorities are not simply memories, they are living memory, even if the idea one has of them has evolved considerably, has recreated itself in the current situation (Leclerc-Olive 2003b). These initiatives, both allowed by the general context and almost caused by local political actions, are neither pure reminiscence nor invention. The question then is about the way in which reform processes takes them into account, particularly in the conception and expression of decisions. It is interesting to note the conception the Zébou local communities' king has of his role: "When the administration brings us together, we respond." He does not himself address the administration to communicate the grievances of the people. "The people speak for themselves. When they are not happy, they [the administration] know it, we can then sensitize them, but generally they are the ones to contact us. We act as

18. An official of the RFU talked about the possibility of undertaking "important work projects" to encourage residents to pay tax (Leclerc-Olive 2003a).

a resource for them." The political style claimed by the king is that of the *sage* consulted by the authorities, not that of the *representative* of the population (Leclerc-Olive 2003b).

Toward an Analysis of Discontinuities/Continuities of Political Legitimacies

In the ways of accessing power and making political decisions, it might be interesting to look at what confers on a political style a legitimacy that inspires respect for those decisions.

Let us look at some historical situations in which the populations themselves have been led to change both the rules of access to decision-making assemblies and the procedures that prevail in those assemblies, separate from intervention by outside actors. I offer two examples, one taken from a study on the forms of government in Circassia in the middle of the nineteenth century (Charachidzé 2003), the other among the Ochollo in Ethiopia (Abélès 2003).

Part of Circassian society went from a structure that had been rigid for two millennia—four categories, organized into a hierarchy (princes, nobles, free peasants, serfs and slaves)—to a social system in which "lineage and residence were used as *markers* and no more as *foundations* for society" (Charachidzé 2003, 203). Before reaching that point, two sets of assemblies were held, each leading to a transformation in the rules of access to power and the exercise of power. During the first set of assemblies, the Circassians adopted forms for the designation of delegates, which would legitimize the participation of the four categories in the assemblies (reserved in the old days to princes and the nobility), based on the rules of family relationship (one of the pillars in the reproduction of their society). These rules decided on "components" able to agree on the nomination of representatives for these assemblies.

But these groups were scattered over the various territories where the tribes lived. A new change was introduced, which inaugurated the following set of assemblies. The great "constituent" assembly, held for a year in Adagoum (1848–49). was established on very different foundations. "The real attempt to organize the Circassian people into a democratic union, based on a representative system that took into account the real compact residence rather than the division into lineages scattered all over the coun-

try, dates back to that time…. The participants came from all over, ignoring the notion of clans, and their assembly named among themselves a group of elders to sit as long as was necessary" (Charachidzé 2003, 201). In that particular instance, it was for a whole year. He then cites a military report of that time: "The mass of people chose their representatives among the elders. When these elected old men have deliberated and adopted a resolution, the oldest informs the crowd of the proposed decision. The gathered people adopt by acclamation the council's proposal. In case of refusal or disagreement, even from a small minority, the process starts over again. If the proposal is accepted, the audience swears to respect and implement it. An educated person writes up the agreement, on which the delegates apply their ink-stained thumbs, and the text henceforth becomes law."

Between the first assemblies and the later, the categories of people with access to power—lineages—were modified, but the powers of the elders continue to be respected, as well as the rule on consensus of opinion.

After a long stay among the Ochollo in the mid-1970s, ethnologist M. Abélès brought back a study showing their attachment to the practice of assemblies with voting rights. They were organized around subtle precedence, different according to each group, but functioned in a way that reinforced the supremacy of the assemblies over individuals (dignitaries or sacrificers) who might have the impulse to take over power (potters, tanners, and women were excluded from these assemblies). The Ethiopian revolution profoundly affected the political organization of that society. The intensification of centralization; the progressive replacement of ethnic and linguistic categories for the benefit of sociological entities, such as "the people" or "the Ethiopian workers"; the transfer of populations to the lower-lying regions, a few hours away on foot from the mountains where they lived; and the creation of all-inclusive committees are all measures that altered the ways of "making" politics. Nevertheless, these measures have not broken down their attachment to the practice of assemblies with voting rights.

In his later work, Abélès reports on a particularly significant event. In the mid-1990s, "a small group of Ochollo, many of them living in Addis-Ababa, decided to create an economic development committee that would promote new activities and obtain grants from nongovernmental organizations. The population was receptive to the project. To make it official, they planned to create an assembly." It was important that all Ochollo attend.

"The Bekero are chosen. This assembly's initiators are no older than thirty; they have only a distant memory of the old forums. It is revealing to see them reactivate the tradition and ask the few still-living dignitaries to organize the assembly, in accordance with *woga*, a ritual…an inaugural blessing." They could have organized it near their actual homes. When Abélès asked them why they chose to have the assemblies in a place now distant (a few hours walk), he was told that "the real center of Ochollo was there, and 'affairs that concern all of us' all must be conducted there" (2003, 410). The widening of the right of participation in the assembly to all categories of people was not challenged, but it was necessary to establish continuity with the past, which translated here into the choice of the location and the ritual for the opening of the assembly.

These examples suggest several points. Access to speaking publicly and to decision making must be examined along two dimensions: the lineages that are entitled to them, and the criteria that help determine who, within a lineage, can represent them; that is to say, the access and designation procedures. In order to evaluate the seriousness of the transgressions brought about by decentralization in relation to indigenous practices, one must now note three axes of change in the (potential) access to public speaking (speaking up in the public arena, participating in the decision-making process): (1) What lineages are entitled to speak and take care of "everyone's affairs"; (2) how are the speakers chosen within lineages; and (3) whether women have access to political space. The historical examples cited show that when strictly endogenous events lead to reforms in the rules that govern decision making it is an opening of access to all lineages, which is the first (and often the only) modification introduced. The rules of seniority and of the non-participation of women have not generally been abolished.

The institution of continuit, to adequately understand a possible *transitivity* of legitimacy (that some societies seem to do when they have the opportunity) implies not only to keep or revive some elements of the procedures that have been suspended, but also to establish ties with the modalities for the enunciation of decisions, in places and according to rituals allowing them to be inscribed in a story that restores the thread of history. Legitimacy, like the story, feeds on a subtle dialectic of continuity and discontinuity (Ricœur 1983). It seems to me that the establishment of decentralizations, and of the public policies that accompany them, should also be analyzed (even evaluated) in this perspective.

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IV. PARALLELS FROM OTHER REGIONS

DECENTRALIZATION IN THE UNITED STATES

RONALD K. VOGEL

"Although to date there has been little devolution, the era of federal aid and federal policy-making for places—one that extended from the New Deal to the Great Society and elevated cities to the status of third partner in the federal system—is over."

— John Kincaid (1999)

INTRODUCTION

The study of urban politics in nations increases in importance in relation to the degree of decentralization. In very centralized states, urban politics has little relevance. As local autonomy increases, urban politics becomes more important (Muramatsu 1997; Stren 2003). The current trend worldwide toward decentralization (United Nations 2001; Dillinger 1994) suggests that urban politics, and by implication comparative urban politics, is becoming more salient. Scholars and practitioners alike must now look more closely at how the organization of local governance in a nation-state affects public policy-making and policy outcomes.

Nations differ in their degree of decentralization. There are three ideal types of decentralization: *political decentralization*, *administrative decentralization*, and *deconcentration* (Muramatsu 1997). In the case of political decentralization, the central government and lower governments are equal under the constitution. Here, local governments enjoy a great deal of a fiscal autonomy and independence. Administrative decentralization exists where local governments derive their powers from laws passed by the central government, which delegate functions and powers. In these systems, local governments still may have a high degree of financial autonomy and independence.

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1. This paper was originally presented at Woodrow Wilson International Center Conference on Decentralization in West Africa, Dakar Senegal, December 8, 2003.

In the case of deconcentration, local governments are clearly "subordinate" to the central government and have little independence. They owe their entire existence to central government. According to Michio Muramatsu (1997, 3), "local government is almost a branch office of the center":

> Political decentralization has become a normative model for proponents of strong local government in administratively decentralized countries, *or the countries so perceived.* It is not that these proponents want unitary countries to become federal systems; rather, they idealize the decentralized type of local government frequently seen in federal countries (for example, the United States or Switzerland) and use it as a normative model to reform the system they have. In contrast, the deconcentration model, in which local government becomes a branch office, serves as a model of what they do not want.

Movements toward decentralization involve altering the existing pattern by the "transfer of significant powers and functions, along with fiscal responsibility to carry out these powers and functions, from the national to the local level of government" (Stren 2003, 1). Decentralization trends have to be considered in light of the situation of local government in the nation's political organization. In a federal system, local government is likely to already have a strong degree of local autonomy. In a unitary system, where the central government is preeminent, there is the possibility of a high degree of local autonomy depending upon the historical experience, political culture, party structure, and system of representation. However, this is an empirical question. It is possible that the central government views local government as a convenient tool to implement the national agenda at the local level to ensure efficient service delivery. In this case, local government is clearly subordinate with little free will.

It is important to recognize these as tendencies. The legal-political context of central-local relations may indicate the likely state of intergovernmental relations in any particular nation. However, as Muramatsu points out, political leaders and circumstances may lead to local initiatives in ways not predicted by the ideal-type models. Indeed, Richard Stren's (2003) notion of *moments* of decentralization suggests that there are historical points in a nation's development when decentralization may indicate a serious new pattern of intergovernmental relations. For example, he finds the

third moment of decentralization in developing countries with unitary systems may result in local governments objectively operating under the deconcentration pattern, realizing significant local autonomy because it serves national interests or the interests of the ruling regime.

Gauging the success of decentralization policies requires an operational definition of decentralization. Essential features of local self-governance include:

- Authority: local governments have a high degree of independent authority or power to act on behalf of the public interest and set their own priorities over a broad range of functions.
- Fiscal resources**:** local governments have a reliable revenue stream adequate to provide basic public services and to support local priorities.
- Technical capacity**:** local governments have a high degree of technical expertise, organizational competence, and management skills to administer efficiently and effectively the programs for which they are responsible.
- Legitimacy: local government leaders are selected democratically and are primarily accountable to local citizens. Poor service delivery will lead to low citizen satisfaction levels and undermine support for local government.

If decentralization is intended to substantially bolster local self-government, then it is referred to as *devolution* (Kincaid 1999). Central policies aimed at greater administrative discretion being assigned to subnational governments but not significantly altering the intergovernmental relationship would still be viewed as decentralization policies but fall short of devolution. Analysts must be cautious in assessing the degree of decentralization. It is possible that decentralization policies are more rhetoric than reality (Boone 2003) or that official devolution policies may disguise other policy goals. In addition, national policies often lack coherence. Some national policies promote decentralization while others may lead to greater centralization (Bowman and Krause 2003). Devolution or decentralization may be a by-product of other higher-level government policies rather than a deliberate effort to realign intergovernmental relations (Kincaid 1999).

In the rest of this paper, the case of decentralization in the United States is examined. First, the nature of the local government system is reviewed. Then, recent decentralization policies are considered to determine whether decen-

tralization and devolution are more rhetoric or reality in the United States. In the final section, the case of the United States is considered against the backdrop of decentralization elsewhere in the world in an effort to discern any lessons or relevance for decision makers contemplating decentralization policies.

Local Government in the United States

The United States is noted for its extremely fragmented system of local government (see Table 1 and Figure 1) (Vogel and Harrigan 2007). Indeed, the American political system is predicated on the constitutional division of powers between the national and state governments, each sovereign when acting in its own arenas. However, the relationship between states and local government in the United States parallels that of a unitary system. This point is often overlooked in comparative analysis of local government in the

Table 1. Number of Local Governments in US

Type of government	1952[1]	1962	1967	1972	1977	1982	1987	1992	1997
Total units	116,807	91,237	81,299	78,269	79,913	81,831	83,237	85,006	87,504
U.S. Government	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
State government	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
Local governments	116,756	91,186	81,248	78,218	79,862	81,780	83,186	84,955	87,453
County	3,052	3,043	3,049	3,044	3,042	3,041	3,042	3,043	3,043
Municipal	16,807	18,000	18,048	18,517	18,862	19,076	19,200	19,279	19,372
Township and town	17,202	17,142	17,105	16,991	16,822	16,734	16,691	16,656	16,629
School district	67,355	34,678	21,782	15,781	15,174	14,851	14,721	14,422	13,726
Special district	12,340	18,323	21,264	23,885	25,962	28,078	29,532	31,555	34,683

Source: Reproduced from US Bureau of Census, Statistical Abstract of the United States (2002), p. 260 http://www.census.gov/prod/2003pubs/02statab/stlocgov.pdf
Note: Adjusted to include units in Alaska and Hawaii which adopted statehood in 1959.

United States, leading to misunderstandings and misclassification. For example, earlier in the paper, the distinction among political decentralization, administrative decentralization, and deconcentration was introduced. Muramatsu (1997) and others frequently characterize the United States as a politically decentralized system. This is only true with respect to the national and state governments. The US system of local government is more accurately described as administrative decentralization. The 50 state governments establish local governments under their own laws and constitutions. The local governments do not have co-equal status with their state governments but rather have delegated powers.

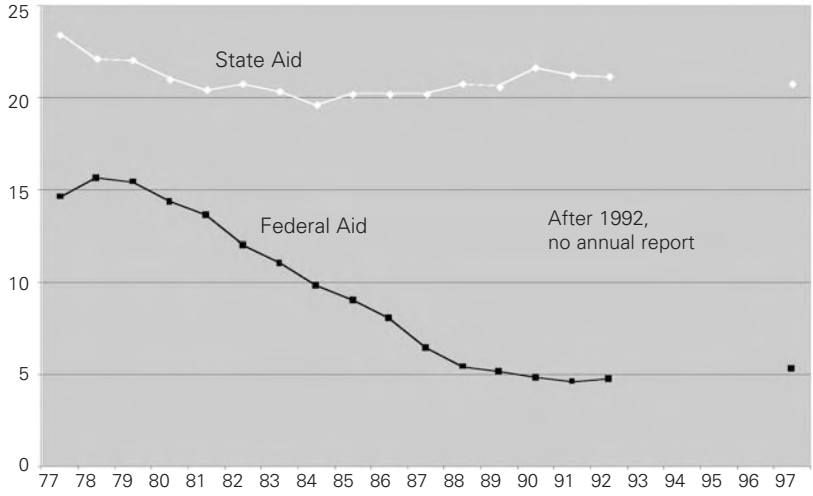
The only restraint on states' prerogatives regarding local governments are those included in the states' constitutions. The legal doctrine of "Dillon's Rule," followed by state and federal courts in the in the nineteenth century, makes clear that local governments only have authority that is specifically enumerated and delegated to them under state constitutions or state legislative acts. The courts have interpreted those powers narrowly. City and county governments frequently turn to the state legislature to bolster local authority to deal with new problems not anticipated or provided for in local charters or state laws that establish these local governments and provide their basic authority. In recent decades, state legislatures have provided home rule charters as a way to bolster local powers and reduce the number of special local acts that clog state legislative agendas (Krane, Rigos, and Hill 2001). However, home rule has not significantly altered the basic limitation on local authority.

Other features of the American political system also undermine local autonomy. There is a high regard and strong role reserved for private markets to generate economic growth and employment in the United States leading to a "privileged position for business" (Lindblom 1977). In the postindustrial age, this results in the *dependent* city, as local officials must cater to business interests to secure urban development and recruit new businesses to the area (Kantor 1988). As local officials focus on their economic base, they strive to keep taxes low, provide incentives to businesses that contribute to job growth or revenue, and look to higher levels of government to provide financial aid (Peterson 1981). These *city limits* suggest that American cities lack a great deal of autonomy.

This leads to an anomaly. Although US local governments are viewed around the world as having a great deal of local autonomy, from a legal point of view, local government powers in the United States are actually quite lim-

ited. In addition, the rise of the postindustrial economy and the increasing mobility of capital leads local leaders to compete for business while keeping taxes and regulations low. At the same time, the federal government has greatly reduced federal aid to cities (see Figure 1 and next section). Why then do many view American cities as having quite a lot of local autonomy?

Figure 1. Trends in State and Federal Aid to Cities

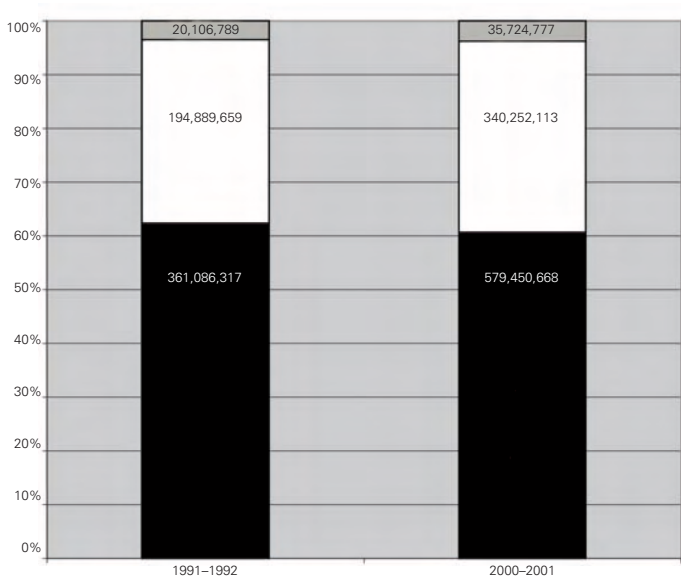


Source: US Bureau of Census. Figure provided courtesy of Michael Pagano, University of Illinois at Chicago.

This is partly explained by a comparative perspective in which the degree of local self-governance is stronger in the United States than in many other nations. For example, the system of local revenue generation and discretionary spending provides a strong base for local self-governance (see Figure 2). Indeed local governments generate well over 60 percent of their revenue from their own sources. Local authorities may operate within constraints set by state governments but they do have significant leeway in what they fund, how they provide services, and what they do with their revenues.

Other features of the American political system and culture also help override structural legal limits of local government. One factor is the strong regard for localism in the American system. Officials in higher-level governments have a healthy respect for local preferences and values. This is

Figure 2. Intergovernmental Aid Compared to Own Source Revenue, Local Governments



Source: US Bureau of Census, State and Local Government Finances. http://www.census.gov/govs/www/estimate.html

reinforced by a weak party system alongside a system of representation organized around local voting districts. The national Democratic and Republican Parties are an aggregation of the 50 state Democratic and Republican Parties, which are themselves an aggregation of the more than 3000 local county Democratic and Republican Parties. The county Democratic and Republican Parties themselves are selected by precinct elections or caucuses held in ward or neighborhood voting districts. Naturally, this leads most legislators and party leaders to view themselves as representatives of local communities rather than the state or the nation.

Public leaders will seek to mobilize private interests to support their agendas and supplement their resources (Stone 1989). Private leaders also recognize that they need a strong government as well (Vogel 1992). Without adequate public infrastructure and services, business cannot operate. Local government must train and educate the workforce, provide for

public safety and community stability. Finally, American political culture emphasizes individualism and pragmatism. Local public officials are not hesitant to just "do it," as the Nike commercial says. Local political leaders will find creative ways around barriers.

To summarize, local government in the United States is formally classified as administrative decentralization rather than political decentralization. However, the states have been willing to delegate significant local powers. This is most apparent in the willingness of states to provide local governments with the ability to generate much of their local revenue through taxes and fees. Local governments also enjoy a great deal of discretion over how to organize their public services. Finally, local governments, especially compared to the developing world, are resource wealthy. This provides them with a great deal of technical and institutional capacity as they can hire a well-qualified and professional workforce, employ sophisticated management tools to provide services efficiently, and hire expert consultants when confronted with issues beyond their expertise. The important point then is to recognize that the degree of local autonomy found in American local government is more a function of the political culture, history, and organization of the party and national representation system around local territorial boundaries.

Decentralization and Cities in the United States

The 1930s marked a new era of federalism in the United States. Prior to the Great Depression, the federal government largely restricted its activity to foreign affairs and promoting commerce. There was limited federal involvement in domestic issues, which were properly considered the domain of states and their subordinate units, counties, cities, and special districts. The United States had only just become an urban nation in 1920. The theory of federalism underwent significant revision following the Great Depression and World War II.

Although the federal government lacked specific enumerated authority to act in domestic affairs, Congress clearly had the right to "appropriate" money for legitimate public purposes. In addition, the federal "commerce" clause of the Constitution clearly held the national government preeminent in regulating the national economy. Thus, there was room for extensive growth of federal involvement in state and local affairs. The national government had earlier enacted a national income tax, which greatly enhanced

national revenue-raising capacity. The collapse of the economy in the Great Depression and the accompanying national crisis, as well as World War II (national defense and war industries), certainly provided a rationale for greater federal involvement. Following the war, the national economy was growing and little commerce remained within the boundaries of a single state (Vogel and Harrigan 2003).

After the 1930s, the *layer cake* model of federalism, with the central government and states having specifically enumerated functions in the Constitution, was rejected. In its place was the *marble cake* version of federalism. Now, the federal government and the states were viewed as having joint responsibility for addressing domestic policy. This led to the new language of dynamic *intergovernmental relations* rather than the static legalistic language of *federalism*. Intergovernmental relations were built upon the grants-in-aid system, with the federal government setting the policies and providing financial aid and states and local governments responsible for local administration (Kleinberg 1995). Initially, grants were targeted toward the states, which would determine how to allocate money and administer the programs. In the 1960s, Lyndon Johnson extended the grants-in-aid system to link directly to the nation's cities and groups within them, bypassing the state governments. This period is referred to as *creative federalism* (Vogel and Harrigan 2007).

Changes in the grants-in-aid system are related to the political interests of presidents and their reelection fortunes. The extension of the categorical grant programs under the Johnson administration rewarded big cities of the Northeast and Midwest, the base of the Democratic Party. The federal government was able to ensure that money went directly to the mayors and groups in the cities rather than being redirected by state governments, which are less responsive to city interests.

In the 1970s and 1980s, there was a retreat from cooperative federalism. Under Richard Nixon (1968–74), there was concern that the federal government was growing too large and eclipsing state and local initiative with the growth of federal grants. Under *New Federalism I*, also known as fiscal federalism, the federal government provided revenue sharing to states and local governments with no strings attached. Categorical grants, which were primarily aimed at large cities, were targeted for consolidation into block grants. This marked a shift away from the grant policies that bolstered big city mayors in the Northeast and Midwest, the Democratic strongholds.

Under Ronald Reagan (1980–88), *New Federalism II* took a sharp turn to the right. Citizen attitudes had changed, with few still believing in an active and positive national government (Self 2000). Markets, not governments, were seen as contributing to an improved standard of living. This called for privatization, deregulation, and tax cutting leading to a federal withdrawal from the concerns of cities. The national policy agenda emphasized deficit reduction, budget policy, and eliminating bureaucracy. This meshed well with the suburban electorate and growing population shift to the South and West, benefiting Republicans.

John Kincaid (1999) refers to "de facto devolution" in the United States as the federal government withdraws financial support from cities (see Figure 1). Here, devolution is not a deliberate policy to bolster local autonomy; rather, the federal government is moving away from cities and their problems. Eisinger (1998) argues that in the "new federal order," city politics in the United States is changing because of this devolution. Cities must be more fiscally and administratively self-reliant. Thus, local public management takes on increasing importance. This leads urban managers to focus less on issues of social justice and racial equality. Larger cities in the United States operate under the strong-mayor model of city government. Thus, mayors in cities like New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago embraced the new public management policies and our now hailed for saving the cities (Savitch and Vogel 2005).

Local governments, including older central cities, thrived in the 1990s in the United States as the economy boomed and revenues grew. In this climate, it is easy to see how mayors were successfully managing devolution. Even if mayors were less inclined to pursue redistributive policies, the stronger economy produced jobs and income for all levels of the workforce. However, the current period of economic recession has changed that. As the National League of Cities reports, "A federal and state fiscal crisis that is the largest the nation has experienced in decades is trickling down to city governments, making it increasingly difficult for city officials to balance their own budgets" (Hoene and Pagano 2003, 1). The report points out that nearly half the states cut revenue for cities in 2003 and 2004, resulting in a 9.2 percent drop in state aid to cities.

Although there has been a de facto devolution in American cities with mixed effects, the national government has continued to play a strong role in domestic policy. The entitlement programs that aid *people* instead of

places continue to account for a large share of the national budget. This includes programs such as Social Security and Medicare. The welfare program has been converted from an entitlement program to a block grant to states. Overall, the evidence actually indicates that in spite of the language of devolution and decentralization, the national government has actually centralized policy-making even in areas the Constitution traditionally reserves to the states (Bowman and Krause 2003).

The US Case in Comparative Perspective

Decentralization and devolution have been undertaken for different reasons in different countries. There is a sense that this agenda has been pushed on developing countries by globalization or external actors, such as the World Bank. Richard Stren (2003) examines whether decentralization is a function of internal political dynamics or external pressure in the developing world. He finds that current decentralization processes underway are indeed a function of internal political dynamics rather than external forces. Similarly, Takashi Tsukamoto and Ronald Vogel (2007) looked at whether decentralization processes in the 20 highest ranked world cities are the result of globalization or politics. Surprisingly, political decentralization was not the overwhelming trend as expected. Rather, there was clear evidence of decentralization processes in just over half the cases (11 of 20 cases). Moreover, in the cases where decentralization occurred, most were due to internal political dynamics (8 of 11 cases).

In the United States we saw that political decentralization and devolution are a function of a federal withdrawal from the plight of cities. This withdrawal itself is a function of changing political realities as the liberal democratic coalition that governed America from the 1930s through the 1970s has come under challenge. Increasingly, Republicans have been able to forge a neoconservative coalition based in the suburbs and the South and West. A major policy orientation tying this coalition together is a neoconservative market orientation and a more limited view of the role of government, especially the national government in domestic affairs.

This results in a de facto devolution. Cities and their leaders adjust to changing realities by becoming more entrepreneurial and eschewing social justice and redistribution policies in favor of economic development to generate revenue and promote job creation. The American city, although chal-

lenged by postindustrial change, especially in the Northeast and Midwest, tends to enjoy a high degree of local discretion compared to cities elsewhere in the world. This is especially true with regard to revenue-generating capacity and local government capacity (e.g., professional expertise, organizational development). The American political culture emphasizes individualism, pragmatism, and a healthy regard for market processes. This lends itself to privatization, public-private partnerships, and local innovation in providing public services. Thus, the American case represents a strong case for successful decentralization even if not entirely rational. In addition, this does not mean that decentralization has not had negative consequences. There is concern that urban problems cannot be adequately addressed without a stronger federal role (Waste 1998; Dreier, Mollenkopf, and Swanstrom 2001). There is also concern that new public management policies adopted by local mayors and cities lead to greater inequality and have not been proven effective (Morgan and Carnevale 1997; Savitch and Vogel 2005).

Discussion and Conclusion

Are there lessons in the US case for other countries in the developing and developed world? *First, decentralization means different things in different places.* Rather than a clear standard of what the desired state of decentralization is, analysts should consider the situational context. In the United States, decentralization policy is not a clear and consistent national policy objective, although analysts and politicians treat it as such. Moreover, and contrary to conventional wisdom, devolution rhetoric is inconsistent with the policy centralization that has been occurring over the last two decades (Bowman and Krause 2003). Rather, in the US context, devolution was withdrawal of federal support for cities.

Second, successful decentralization rests upon a well-developed system of local governance. This includes fiscal and technical capacity, organizational development, and citizen support. In the United States, although most scholars and local mayors decry the federal withdrawal leading to de facto devolution, cities were largely in a position to accept the greater responsibilities thrust upon them. These cities have a substantial amount of local autonomy even if the grants of authority from state governments are delegations. Formally, local government in the United States is more properly classified as administrative decentralization rather than political decentralization. However,

state governments have provided substantial local discretion over revenue generation and organization of local public service delivery. Moreover, local governments have fully developed local bureaucracies with considerable in-house expertise as well as the resources to contract for outside consultants when necessary. Although local governments in the United States are not as autonomous as outside viewers sometimes claim, in practice, local governments and especially cities have substantial local autonomy.

Third, decentralization has significant policy consequences. In the United States, city mayors found they needed to forge public-private partnerships to supplement their limited resources in order to accomplish community goals. Mayors now pursue new public management policies, including public-private partnerships, privatization, performance-based budgeting, and reinvention (Osborne and Gaebler 1992; Morgan and Carnevale 1997). Especially in larger cities, US mayors have had considerable success in redeveloping the urban core, maintaining essential public services, reducing crime, and even attracting back the middle class. There is some evidence that in pursuing the new public management policies, mayors are less willing to focus on the issues of social justice and redistributive policies that dominated urban agendas in the 1960s and 1970s. In some cases, this exacerbates social tension in the community and there is a longer-term risk that greater social conflict could occur in American communities.

Fourth, the ability of local governments to accept new responsibilities is closely related to the overall health of the economy. American cities were able to weather the withdrawal of federal support because a strong economy provided growing revenues and jobs for residents. Now that the economy is performing less well, these cities are struggling to keep up services as costs increase and revenues drop. As productivity gains accomplished through new public management techniques are largely exhausted, cities have nowhere to turn.

The bottom line is that decentralization policies are more likely to be the result of pragmatic political considerations than consciously pursued political philosophies over how to organize political systems. Local governments often must adapt to changes in the intergovernmental system, regardless of the causes and perhaps with little input. In this regard, decentralization offers many opportunities as well as risks for local officials. In the American context, local governments starting from a strong base have been in a position to take advantage of changes to benefit their cities. Now that the economy is in decline, cities are suffering.

Moreover, there is a price to be paid for the federal withdrawal from urban policy-making. In a federal system, as Peterson (1981) points out, redistributive policies generally are the province of the national government. If higher-level governments are not serious about decentralization and devolution, then urban services may be compromised as lower-level governments struggle to take up the slack. In other nations where local government and cities are less developed in their organization, resources, and status, decentralization will be more problematic absent accompanying fiscal devolution (which rarely occurs to a significant degree).

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DECENTRALIZATION AND URBAN POLITICAL EXPERIENCES IN OTHER REGIONS: ASIA

Aprodicio A. Laquian

Asia, the most populous region in the world (with 3.6 billion people), is divided into four subregions:

(a) *Eastern Asia*—China, Republic of Korea, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Taiwan, Mongolia, and Japan;

(b) S*outh Central Asia*—Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan;

(c) *South-eastern Asia*—Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Timor-Leste, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam; and

(d) *Western Asia*—Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Cyprus, Gaza Strip, Georgia, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, United Arab Emirate, and Yemen (United Nations 2001a).

The 49 countries within the Asian region represent a great variety of economic, political and cultural conditions. The countries range from the completely urbanized city-state of Singapore, with its 3 million people, to the People's Republic of China, the most populous country in the world with 1.3 billion inhabitants, 465 million of them urban. The two largest Asian countries, China and India, together make up 38 percent of the total world population. Asian countries also include those with ancient urban traditions as well as the most recent addition to the family of nations.

Because of this great variety of countries in Asia, this paper is confined to a few selected Eastern, South Central, and South-eastern Asian countries that reflect main trends in decentralization and urban political develop-

ment. In particular, the analysis is focused on (a) countries in transition from centrally planned to more market-oriented economies (China and Vietnam); (b) countries that were former colonies but after gaining independence started emerging as liberal democracies (Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines, Pakistan, India, and Sri Lanka); and (c) countries that were never colonized but were nevertheless influenced by Western ideas (Japan, Thailand). This selection is guided by the view that the socialist experience (or lack of it) is a significant factor that influences decentralization and urban political development. It is the qualitative differences between socialist and nonsocialist countries that make the Asian political situation unique and interesting.

Decentralization Defined

In Asian jurisprudence, decentralization is generally defined as:

- The *devolution* or transfer of formal authority and power from central governments to local governments through constitutional provisions and/or statutory enactments.
- The administrative *delegation* of authority and power from central government agencies to local government units where local officials continue to be responsible and accountable to their central government superiors.
- The *privatization* of governmental functions where the central government transfers authority and power to private-sector instrumentalities that perform specific functions and services.

In highly centralized nation-states in Asia, decentralization is also sometimes seen as the *deconcentration* of authority and power geographically from the national capital to local units in the hinterland.

The main characteristics of decentralization as a governmental process are embodied in the concept of "local autonomy," which has been defined as "the state of self-determination of local governments and their relative freedom from central government control over local affairs and other community concerns" (Sosmena 1991, 62). Local autonomy is based on the principle of "home rule," which argues that sovereignty in a liberal democratic regime resides in the people and that, therefore, citizens living in a

particular community should have the right to decide public affairs on the basis of their own free will. The paramount nature of home rule is thought to be especially effective when the people rely on their own capabilities rather than on resources from the central government.

It must be clarified that as understood in Asia, delegation of authority as well as privatization do not mean absolute loss of authority and power by the central government to local authorities or enterprises. This is particularly the case when it comes to delegation of authority to local officials who continue to have the status of central government functionaries, as has been the case in India, Pakistan, and Thailand. Here, the governing management principle is: "what has been delegated can be taken back." Furthermore, even in the case of devolution of authority and powers to local units (true decentralization), the central government does not completely lose power and influence over local units. The central government can continue to wield this power and influence through such steps as (a) setting policy goals that local government units and enterprises have to follow as parts of the nation-state; (b) imposing performance standards that have to be lived up to by local government units; and (c) selectively making financial and other resources available to local governments for programs and projects that it favors.

The Asian Situation

It is interesting that, historically, the political situation in Asia has not been too different from West Africa in a number of ways. In both regions, political development has been characterized by two conceptually divergent trends. First, a number of factors have strongly encouraged centralization of authority and power in dominant central governments. At the same time, however, there have also been many features of Asian and West African political cultures that have encouraged greater decentralization of authority and power to local government units.

In almost all Asian countries at present, decentralization programs have been adopted devolving authority and power to local governments. Constitutions have been amended in India, Sri Lanka, and the Philippines to provide greater autonomy to local units. New laws have been passed implementing decentralization programs. A number of public functions have also been privatized, especially in urban areas. To get a better appreciation of the effects and impact of decentralization on the politics of urban development in

Asia, therefore, one needs to analyze these two competing trends more closely. Government authorities in West Africa interested in decentralization programs may gain new ideas and insights from the Asian experience.

Factors Contributing to Centralization

There are a number of reasons for the dominance of the central government in Asia. First, many Asian countries trace their origins to ancient kingdoms and empires where rulers exercised absolute authority based on divine rights, military prowess, and the authority of centralized bureaucracies. China, Japan, Korea, India, Indonesia, Thailand, and Sri Lanka were ruled, at one time or other, by all-powerful dynasties. Even when imperial powers have become ceremonial and symbolic, as in Japan and Thailand, the emperor and the king continue to play important roles in governance. It is interesting that in these two former imperial countries, decentralization has taken the form of administrative delegation of authority to central government officials working at the local level rather than true devolution of powers to local government units.

A second reason for the dominance of central governments in Asia, a factor that was also most influential in West Africa, is the colonial experience. From the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, most of the countries in Asia were ruled as colonies by European powers. As in West Africa, the colonizers set up nation-states by force of arms, religious conversion, economic dominance, and cultural hegemony. The Dutch in Indonesia, the English in India, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan, and the Spaniards and Americans in the Philippines set up nation-states in societies made up of various ethnic groups, competing clans, religious enclaves, and races. In many instances, the national boundaries set up by the colonizers haphazardly cut across territories occupied by ethnically homogeneous groups. In other cases, these boundaries forced the amalgamation of traditionally warring groups and tribes, with the tensions temporarily papered over by colonial might. It may be said, therefore, that in a number of countries in Asia (as in West Africa), the nation-state was mainly imposed by colonization.

A third reason for central government dominance in Asia is the fight for independence. With the overthrow of colonial power, many of the primordial differences and enmity among local groups that were suppressed by the colonizers re-emerged. The new national leaders, who were mostly highly west-

ernized and urbanized elites, reasserted the authority and power of the nation-state to suppress these antagonisms. These national elites simply employed the centralist institutions used by the colonizers. In some instances, in their efforts to maintain national unity under threats of local secession, they became even more ruthless in their imposition of central government dominance.

Fourth, in China, Vietnam, North Korea, and Mongolia, the adoption of communism as the dominant ideology made the nation-state the paramount factor in society and politics. The communist rulers used a single political party, the military, central planning, state ownership of land and the factors of production, widespread state propaganda, and coercive practices to exert the authority and power of the nation-state. The old elite in these socialist countries was overthrown but a new class of rulers emerged that exercised even stronger national dominance over the whole society.

Finally, even in countries that did not become communist, continuing divisiveness and the threat of rebellion and civil war served to strengthen central governments. The communist threat in Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines initially weakened but eventually strengthened the central government. The invasion by North Korea and the persistent threat by its Stalinist state greatly contributed to the centralism of South Korea. Other noncommunist threats such as the Tamil rebellion in Sri Lanka and the conflict between India and Pakistan over Kashmir called for stronger central governments. The strong role of the central government, in turn, has served to inhibit chances for decentralization of authority and power to local units.

Factors Enhancing Decentralization

History and ideology worked to make the nation-state dominant in Asia but a number of cultural factors also emerged that enhanced movement toward decentralization. The most important of these is the fact that in many Asian countries, the majority of the people still live in small rural communities where face-to-face relationships predominate and the primary concerns of the people are local. In traditional local units such as the Indonesian and Malaysian *kampung,* the Philippine *barangay*, or the Indian *panchayat*, people continue to live as they have done for centuries, deriving their livelihood from agriculture, relying on cooperative efforts during the planting and harvesting seasons, selecting their local leaders on the basis of age, social status or prestige, and using their own resources to deal with local

problems. The central government may intrude into these villages on special occasions, such as at election time, when the congressional representative inaugurates a public works project, or when there is a flood or other calamity. Otherwise, village life remains ruled by local traditions and the central government exerts its authority and power only occasionally. This tendency toward localism is reflected in the popular slogan still used in China when local officials talk about the central government in Beijing: "The mountains are high and the emperor is far away."

In some Asian countries, there has been a tendency to idealize this "home rule" practiced in the smallest rural governmental units as the manifestation of true "grass-roots democracy." Thus, a number of decentralization laws have been passed devolving authority and power to village councils and local districts. In Indonesia, for example, local leadership has been institutionalized in formal governmental structures like the *rukun tetanga,* a local governance unit for about 100 families in a village, which decides local affairs. In the Philippines, the Barrio Council Law also devolved responsibility and authority for dealing with local affairs to local community councils. In India, *panchayat* councils have been granted local authority. Under these pieces of legislation, decentralization at the grass-roots level has been effected in a number of Asian countries.

A second important factor enhancing decentralization in Asia is the great variety of ethnic identities found in fragmented societies. In South Asia, strong differences exist between Hindus and Muslims that not even the partition of the former British colonial territory into three countries (India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh) has managed to deal with effectively. Sri Lanka has had a violent civil war that has raged for years between the Buddhist Singhalese and the Muslim Tamils. In the southern Philippines, Islamic secessionists are engaged in a campaign for an Islamic republic in the region of Mindanao. Minority groups in China (Uyghur, Tibetan), especially those living in the border provinces, continue to be restive. In Indonesia, Islamic fundamentalists in places like Aceh confront the central government and have resorted to violence. Even in relatively westernized Malaysia, a resurgent movement of "political Islam" has resulted in two state assemblies passing *shariah* laws calling for cutting off the hands of convicted thieves and the stoning to death of unfaithful wives, actions that the federal government has ruled to be against the country's "modern" constitution.

In the face of these ethnic and religious identities that challenge the government, central government authorities have sometimes been forced to decentralize authority to local units dominated by specific ethnic groups. Thus, in the southern Philippines, the Autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) has been created as a local government unit. The ARMM, as constituted, has jurisdiction over all governmental functions except foreign affairs and national defense. In Sri Lanka, the national constitution has been revised to grant more decentralized authority to the Tamils in Jaffna and adjacent territories. In China, minority groups have been given special rights, such as exemption from strict family planning laws and authority to engage in cross-border trade. In some Asian countries, therefore, where the central government has been challenged by threats of secession or rebellion, government authorities have tried to achieve stability by decentralizing authority and power to local groups.

A third factor enhancing decentralization in Asia has been the rapid pace of globalization that has swept into Asia from its Western sources. In particular, an important ingredient of globalization has been the ideological push from the West and from international agencies for liberal democracy and civil society. After the collapse of the former Soviet Union and the economic and political reforms in China and Vietnam adopting a more market-oriented system, the United States and Europe have waged a not-so-subtle campaign to propagate liberal democracy in Asia and elsewhere. Thus, local government reform has been used as one of the "conditionalities" for project loans or technical assistance grants by Western governments and the international finance institutions they dominate. In recent years, the global war against terrorism has turned, more and more, into a campaign to export American ideals of democracy to developing countries. Key elements in the spread of this so-called "Washington consensus" include noninterference in the workings of the market, unfettered commerce and trade, basic human rights, decentralization, and popular participation.

A fourth factor enhancing decentralization in Asia has been the rapid expansion of economic growth, especially in the newly industrializing countries or "Asian tigers" that have been responsible for the so-called "Asian economic miracle." The demands of effective planning and governance to usher in and maintain such high rates of economic development made it extremely difficult for central government bureaucrats from a national capital to manage expanding economies. In China, for example, the central

government officials in Beijing had to give city mayors and provincial governors more authority to manage local affairs to enable these local officials to respond more effectively and efficiently to local economic development needs. In the Philippines, the Local Government Code of 1991 devolved authority and power to local officials from the village to the provincial levels to help accelerate economic development. In India, centrally appointed local officials in charge of progressive cities and municipalities were "superceded" by a revision of the constitution and made elective. All these decentralist moves were influenced by the fact that sustained economic development required empowerment of local officials to enable them to manage economic affairs effectively and efficiently.

Finally, high rates and levels of urbanization in many Asian countries served to accelerate the movement toward decentralization as local government units started proving that they had the financial, managerial, and institutional capabilities to handle their own affairs. As towns became cities and cities turned into metropolitan regions, the problems faced by such expanding agglomerations became too burdensome for central government authorities. Better-educated and well-informed urban citizens asked for and expected better urban services. They became more actively involved in public affairs, and they demanded more power to manage their own affairs. The growth of nongovernmental organizations, civic associations, and other elements of civil society in many Asian cities served to encourage greater decentralization.

Among the five factors enhancing decentralization mentioned above, it is useful to focus on three that have a direct bearing on the decentralization process. These are urbanization, economic development, and the spread of liberal democracy.

Urbanization and Decentralization

The level of urbanization in Asia is relatively low (34.3 percent in 2002). This is lower than the urbanization level in Western Africa, which was 39.3 percent in 2000. Furthermore, the annual growth rate of urbanization in Western Africa, which is expected to reach 3.58 percent between 2000 and 2030, is much higher than the urban growth rate in Asia, estimated at 2.27 percent. These levels of urbanization and urban growth rates, however, need to be considered in the context of total population size. While the whole of Africa had a total population of 819.9 million in 2000, Asia had 3.7 billion,

about 60 percent of the total world population. Western Africa's total population of 241 million is relatively modest compared with Eastern Asia's 1.4 billion (United Nations 2001b). This aspect of population size is important because even a modest increase in the urbanization growth rate in Asia adds hundreds of millions to the population of towns and cities

The level of urbanization and annual rate of urban growth in Asia mask a very large diversity in country conditions. For example, highly urbanized countries such as Japan and South Korea have very low annual urban growth rates. Other large countries in South Central Asia have low levels of urbanization but relatively high rates of annual urban growth. India, for example, is only 29.5 percent urban but its towns and cities are growing at 2.41 percent per year. Similarly, Bangladesh is still largely rural (25.6 percent urban) but its annual urban population growth rate is 3.51 percent. Other Asian countries with high annual urban growth rates are Pakistan (3.49 percent), Vietnam (2.94), Indonesia (2.43), China (2.20), and the Philippines (2.15) (United Nations 2001b, 64).

Table 1. Urbanization Patterns in Asia and Western Africa

Major Area/Region	Urban Pop 2000 Millions	Urban Pop 2030 Millions	Percent Urban 2000	Annual Urban Growth Rate 2000–2030
Eastern Asia	617	1,065	41.6	1.82
South Central Asia	441	969	29.8	2.62
South-eastern Asia	196	407	37.5	2.44
Western Asia	122	238	64.7	2.23
Western Africa	88	258	39.3	3.58

Source: United Nations 2001a.

As seen in Table 1, the urban population in the Asia-Pacific region is expected to reach more than a billion by the year 2030. In fact, quite a number of Asian countries are represented among those that account for more than 75 percent of the world's urban population. According to the

United Nations, the levels of urbanization among Asian countries are as follows: Republic of Korea, 81.9 percent urban; Japan, 78.8; Philippines, 58.6; Indonesia, 41.0; China, 35.8; Pakistan, 33.1; India, 27.7; and Bangladesh, 25.0. In Western Africa, only Nigeria, which is 44.1 percent urban, is counted among the world's major contributors to urban populations (ibid.).

The dualism of society in Asia (the majority of people living in rural villages but a significant number living in very large metropolitan areas) has encouraged two types of decentralization patterns. First, in countries with a low level of urbanization, there has emerged what can be called a pattern *of nonsustainable decentralized development.* This is a type of decentralization where authority and power have been devolved to the smallest unit of local governance, such as the village, the urban community, or the street or neighborhood committee. However, granting authority and power to these small local government units has not actually allowed them to pursue significant development projects because they lacked the financial, managerial, and institutional resources to do this. Thus, in many Asian countries, some so-called decentralization schemes were not actually sustainable because the local units that were granted autonomy did not have financial viability. This nonsustainable decentralization has actually resulted in the further strengthening of central governments because the powerless local units had to look to the center for most developmental resources (Laquian 2001).

In other Asian countries, rapid urbanization resulted in *sustainable decentralization* because authority and power were devolved to urban settlements that had the necessary financial, human, and institutional resources to actually make things work. In particular, large cities and extended metropolitan areas required adequate decentralized authority to deliver urban services effectively and efficiently. They had to be allowed by the central government to plan and manage economic affairs within their jurisdictions to encourage economic development and effectively manage urban services. New institutions for metropolitan and regional planning and governance had to be established by provincial and central governments to meet the challenges posed by urbanization. In Indonesia, for example, the governmental unit called *Jakarta Raya* was set up to manage urban affairs within the country's capital. A comprehensive regional plan encompassing regencies was established (the so-called JABOTABEK planning region) (Argo 1998; Firman and Dharmapatni 1995).

In Thailand, the Bangkok Metropolitan Authority was also set up to coordinate urban development (Kaothien 1992). In the Philippines, the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) was created to manage urban services like water, sewerage, garbage disposal, and traffic management (Laquian 2001). Although these metropolitan and regional bodies were set up by central government authority and initially functioned as instrumentalities of the central government, they are now evolving into decentralized governance structures that are becoming more and more responsive to local needs rather than to central government priorities. Even in Chinese cities like Shanghai and Guangzhou, which have been placed under the direct supervision and control of the central government, some degree of local autonomy is already being exercised by local officials because they have to quickly respond to urban development issues.

A very important factor linking urbanization and decentralization in some Asian countries has been the *privatization* of basic services demanded by rapidly growing cities. Typically, services like clean water provision, sewerage and drainage, and garbage collection and disposal were provided by government agencies. In many Asian cities, government-owned or government-controlled corporations were often established to carry out these functions. As very large cities came into being, however, government agencies became ineffective, inefficient, and too corrupt to carry out these services. In a number of Asian metropolitan areas, these urban services were privatized. The water and sewerage systems for Greater Jakarta and Metro Manila, for example, have been turned over to private companies managed by local entrepreneurs linked up with international corporations such as Suez Lyonnaise de Eaux and Ondeo Water Services. Other basic urban services such as electric generation and distribution, transportation systems, telecommunication, and solid waste collection and disposal have also been largely privatized in many cities. In many Asian countries, "private-public partnership" is fast becoming the preferred mode for decentralizing authority and power.

Does the perceived relationship between urbanization and decentralization in Asia provide any guidance for West African countries? As far as this issue is concerned, there are at least three lessons that can be learned from the Asian experience.

First, the level of local government at which authority and power are decentralized is very important. The old practice in some Asian countries of decentralizing authority to rural villages and small communities does not

work. The reason for this is obvious. The local rural units do not have the necessary human, financial, and organizational resources to make decentralization work. To make matters worse, the central government and higher levels of local governments often engage in "downloading" their responsibilities to the lowest-level governmental unit without decentralizing appropriate financial and institutional resources that would enable these local units to meet their responsibilities.

Second, high rates and levels of urbanization are positively related to successful decentralization schemes. Rapidly growing urban areas call for basic urban services that directly affect the quality of life of people. If local government units fail to respond to the needs of the people, local citizens start demanding more effectiveness and efficiency. Urban citizens tend to be more educated, have access to more information, and tend to articulate their demands. They may form political parties and pressure groups to influence local officials. They may mobilize people and resources to have their own leaders elected to political office.

Third, as towns turn into cities and cities into metropolitan areas, local governments are forced to cooperate with each other to solve common problems. The emergence of metropolitan governance structures in a number of Asian cities has had important impacts on sustainable decentralization. Logically, there are a number of factors that tend to make decentralization of authority to metropolitan governments more successful. Such metropolitan governments usually have a stronger tax base and therefore are able to mobilize enough financial resources to pay for their service needs. Individual local government units in a metropolitan area realize quite early that urban problems, such as air and water pollution, traffic congestion, crime and violence, and epidemics, do not respect local government boundaries. If they do not cooperate and act together, they will not be successful in making the lives of their citizens better. As they learn to cooperate and coordinate their actions and show their capabilities to carry out governance functions, the central government becomes more willing to decentralize authority to such metropolitan structures, thus achieving sustainable decentralization (Laquian 2005).

Economic Development and Decentralization

In Asia, as in other regions of the world, there is a positive correlation between economic development and decentralization. In general, the high-

er the level of economic development in a country, the greater is the degree of local autonomy exercised by local government units. Countries with lower levels of per-capita income, quite often, are faced with tremendous problems, and many citizens tend to look to the central government to solve them. On the other hand, many richer countries tend to have strong local government units that provide basic services and pursue policies that enhance economic growth.

The case of China clearly reveals the direct relationship between economic development and decentralization. In that country, at least three policy initiatives pursued by the central government have helped to accelerate decentralization: the contract responsibility system; the expansion of demand for housing and basic urban services; and institutional changes focused on land policy.

The economic reforms that made it possible for China to achieve an average annual gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate of 8.5 percent since 1979 were initiated by the *contract responsibility system.* Under this system, Chinese farmers were allowed to grow whatever crops they chose and to carry out other nonagricultural activities provided they met production quotas set by the authorities in annual contracts. This system triggered massive productivity among farmers who were freed from the rigid management of rural communes. The success of the system in agriculture encouraged the government to extend it to township and village enterprises, state enterprises, and local government units.

The success of the contract responsibility system, of course, was founded on the fact that local entrepreneurs, enterprise leaders, and government officials were given sufficient authority and power to make their own decisions. In other words, the central government was forced to relax and later do away with centrally planned quotas. It had to decentralize authority and power to local units to enable them to meet the responsibilities set by their productivity contracts. Thus, to make it easier for some mayors and governors to keep their local units productive, they were granted the authority by the central government to approve projects costing US$30 million or less. Local officials were also given powers to pursue very large infrastructure projects. To do this, they were allowed to borrow money from domestic and foreign sources without the prior approval of the central government (Li 2000, 165).

Under the socialist regime, China declared housing and basic urban services a basic human right. With economic reform, the government launched

massive housing programs designed to increase the average living space of every Chinese citizen from 4 sq. m. to 12 sq. m. A great deal of the responsibility for meeting this housing target was placed on local governments. The central government had to decentralize authority and power to local units to enable them to meet these housing and services targets. Municipal and provincial governments made their own investment plans and most of them created quasi-public "development companies" to build housing projects, construct urban infrastructures, and provide basic services (Wei 2002).

To pursue their economic development objectives, local governments in China relied heavily on the main resource available to them—land. Under the socialist regime, however, all land belonged to the state. To tap land values as a productive asset, the central government had to pass laws and regulations relaxing government control over land. Thus, long-term land leases were allowed by using the legal fiction that it was not land but "the right to use land" that was being conveyed to domestic and foreign entrepreneurs. Armed with this authority, many local officials offered land to private enterprises as their "counterpart resources" in joint ventures. So much land was used up for urban development by local enterprises that fears were expressed about the rapid loss of agricultural land that threatened China's ability to feed itself.

With rapid economic development requiring quick and well-informed decision making in China, the central government has had little choice but to decentralize authority to local officials. As Beijing's political power waned, it also lost the capacity to completely coordinate economic decision making. The Communist Party as a central instrument for decision making became less powerful. Political corruption cropped up at local levels. In recent years, observers of the Chinese situation sounded warnings about the emergence of so-called "dukedom economies" where all-powerful local officials have pursued policies and programs that were not in accordance with those set by the central government. With the shift to a more decentralized system in a market-oriented economy, the central government in China is finding it difficult to find a balance between local initiative and power and central government coordination and control (Li 2000).

In the Philippines, the Local Government Code of 1991 decentralized authority and power to provincial, city, and municipal governments. Specifically, the central government transferred responsibility and authority to local government units for public works, health, education, and environ-

mental protection (Tapales 1993). In the 12 years since the passage of the law, however, it has been observed that local units with the highest levels of economic growth, such as Cebu, Davao, Iloilo, Cagayan de Oro, Naga, and others, were the ones that successfully implemented programs in the functions decentralized to them. These so-called first-class cities and municipalities raised sufficient tax revenues, constructed needed urban infrastructure, and provided housing and basic urban services. Most of them even floated bonds and borrowed from domestic and foreign sources to finance big projects. On the other hand, the poorer cities and municipalities found it difficult to assume responsibility for the decentralized functions. Elected mayors and governors had problems with former central government officials whose positions were decentralized because these officials had higher salaries and benefits than the local executives and were not willing to have these reduced. More than a decade after the passage of the decentralization law, quite a number of poorer local government units are still finding great difficulty in carrying out the functions decentralized to them.

Liberal Democracy and Decentralization

Like other regions of the world, Asia is being subjected to global forces fostering the philosophy and practice of liberal democracy. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the "transition" of socialist countries like China and Vietnam to more market-oriented systems have seen a concerted movement on the part of North American and European countries to export liberal democracy. In fact, in many instances, what is called "globalization" is actually a process of "Westernization." It is important, therefore, to analyze how the fostering of liberal democracy and decentralization has been pursued in Asia.

As generally understood by political scientists, liberal democracy is marked by a number of processes that include the following:

- Public participation in articulation of interests in policy formulation, program implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of public activities.
- Mobilization of people in electoral campaigns and selection of local leaders.
- Resource mobilization through taxation and other processes.
- People's participation in the operation of development programs.

The process by which these basic elements of liberal democracy as they are practiced in Asia are related to decentralization of authority and power in urban areas is briefly analyzed below.

Interest Articulation

There is strong evidence in Asian countries that urbanization enhances people's participation in articulating their interests in policy formulation, program implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of public activities. In many ways, this positive development is related to the information revolution in urban areas that enables people to know more about public affairs. In general, urbanization is directly correlated with higher levels of education, which also improves access to the mass media. Urbanization also results in expansion of employment in both the formal and informal sectors. As people's income increases from employment and entrepreneurial ventures, they tend to be less reliant on political leaders and their partisan influence. They are able to pay more taxes and, with this civic obligation, they learn to demand more from the government and ask where their taxes are going. A true middle class, the backbone of civil society, eventually emerges in urban areas and it is this civil society that tends to actively participate in public affairs (Laquian 2002).

Probably the most dramatic effect of decentralization on urban development in Asia is the rise of civil society groups. As important issues, such as poverty alleviation, gender-related development, conservation of the environment, protection of civil liberties, and upholding of human rights in rapidly urbanizing areas, became more pressing, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), popular organizations (POs), and community-based organizations (CBOs) rose up in many Asian cities and towns. In the Philippines, no less than 58,000 civil society groups were organized by the year 2000, almost all of these belonged to a confederation of NGOs called Code-NGO (Constantino-David 1998). In India, militant women's groups such as the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) engaged not only in income-generating activities but also protected the rights of women.

A main crusade of civil society groups involved the arbitrary exercise of power of political officials. In China, for example, mayors and governors often made economic decisions that did not conform to formally-adopted urban plans in order to favor certain individuals or groups. This abuse of authority by local officials was effectively dealt with in the city of Shenzhen,

the most successful special economic zone in China. In Shenzhen, the city government decided that the Urban Planning Committee should be composed of elected officials, urban planners, professional experts, and representatives of civil society groups. The Urban Planning Committee was given "absolute powers" to decide on the implementation of the city's plans to prevent political officials from changing the plan's provisions arbitrarily. The committee also made all plan provisions and formal decisions available to the public in order to enlighten public discussions (Yan, Jia, Li, and Weng 2001).

People's Mobilization

One of the most important developments in Asian countries has been the effective mobilization of people as they participate in public processes such as regular elections of leaders. Historically, elections have been held in many Asian countries even during the colonial period. In the Philippines municipal elections for mayors and city council members were held as early as 1903 as the American colonizers attempted to introduce local autonomy in an attempt to encourage grass-roots democracy. In the beginning, of course, the right to vote was confined to people who were literate, possessed real property, and paid their taxes. Later, universal suffrage was introduced, and people who had reached the age of 18 were given the right to vote.

Advocates of liberal democracy take it as an article of faith that decentralization will result in the election of leaders who are genuinely committed to improving the public welfare, are intellectually capable to carry out their tasks, possess the organizational and managerial skills to run the affairs of the local government, are not beholden to any private interest or interest groups, and are morally upright and not tainted by corruption. This hope is based on the assumption that local citizens know their leaders well, that few secrets are kept from them, and that they expect the leaders they choose to be transparent and accountable for their deeds.

Studies of local politics in many Asian countries reveal, however, that decentralization does not automatically result in a shift from pursuance of particularistic norms to universalistic ones. Local polities in Asian countries are usually fragmented along familial, linguistic, religious, ethnic, and socioeconomic lines. In India, for example, 150 million people belonging to the Islamic faith have been engaged in ethnic conflicts with the Hindu majority. Decentralization has exacerbated local political conflicts and erupted in violence. In February 2003, 50 Hindu pilgrims to the Ayodhya shrine

in Gujarat state (built on the ruins of a Muslim mosque razed by Hindus) were killed by Muslim militants. In retaliation, Hindu activists rioted, resulting in the killing of more than 2,000 *people.* The state government paid the relatives of each Muslim person killed $2,000. However, each Hindu person killed was compensated $4,000 (*The Manila Times,* 23 November 2003).

Deep religious schism also plagues local governance in Malaysia despite the commitment of the central government and the ruling party, the United Malays National Organization (UMNO), to principles of economic modernization, liberal democracy, and a secular constitution. In at least two states of the Malaysian federation, local officials belonging to the Pan Malaysia Islamic Party (PAS) passed legislation upholding the legality of traditional *shariah* law, challenging the secular mandate of the federal constitution. Under *shariah* law, adultery and illicit sex were criminalized (women found guilty of adultery were to be stoned to death) and draconian measures were imposed on theft (persons found guilty had their hands cut off). People who were caught drinking alcoholic beverages were severely fined and jailed. The central Malaysian government has questioned the legitimacy of these local laws but the state governments have argued for their local autonomy and are fighting the issue at the judicial and political levels (*The Manila Times,* 19 November 2003).

A particularly difficult problem in people's mobilization at the local level is the great importance of family, clan, and other ties in local politics. In the Philippines, for example, it has been estimated that no more than 60 political family "dynasties" actually control the whole national political process. The Philippine Constitution of 1987 outlawed "political dynasties" but the legislature has not passed any laws to actually implement this constitutional mandate. There are laws that limit the number of terms that an elected official can serve (a governor or mayor can be elected to a three-year term only three consecutive times); these laws, however, are easily circumvented by local officials who simply get their spouses or children to run for political office (Gutierrez, 1994).

From the Asian experience, it is clear that people's mobilization for political action at the local level is often influenced by familial, ethnic, religious, and other particularistic factors that do not necessarily enhance liberal democracy. Perhaps this is due to the fact that there is too much reliance on political office for achieving economic status and other benefits. Local governments, for example, are often regarded as mechanisms for employment

generation by local leaders. To some leaders, the economic returns on holding political office (often through corrupt means) serve as the main motivation for political involvement. In this regard, decentralization measures are still very weak mechanisms for achieving liberal democracy in Asia. Asian societies have to await the coming about of a true civil society where leaders and their followers pursue the public good rather than their own private interests to achieve true liberal democracy.

Resource Mobilization

People get the local government they deserve or, at least, what they are willing to pay for. A major argument for decentralization is that if local citizens see that their taxes are going to projects that enhance the public welfare, they will be willing to pay such taxes. Under the centralized system, local units collect taxes and then transfer the funds to the central government. They then get their financial allocations from the center in accordance with formulas based on total population, size of the territory, number of elected representatives, class of municipality, and so on. With a disjoint between taxes paid and benefits gained (and the suspicion that corruption at the central government level is wasting public funds), local citizens are naturally averse to paying taxes and other public charges.

To provide local government units the necessary resources to meet their responsibilities, many Asian governments have decentralized financial functions to local units. In India, close to half of the municipal governments in the 1990s were under "supercession"—that is, state governments appointed all chiefs executive that managed local finances. The 1992 Indian Constitution amended this law and made local executives elective and strengthened local autonomy.

The Decentralization Law of 1991 in the Philippines went even farther in decentralizing fiscal management. Before the passage of the law, local units collected taxes and sent these to the national treasury in Manila. In turn, they were granted quarterly "internal revenue allotments." The process of releasing such allotments, however, was greatly politicized. Local officials who belonged to the same party or faction as the president and the ruling party elites got their funds but those who did not usually got nothing or very little. In recent years, the decentralization law was amended so that as soon as the national budget was passed and the national treasurer and the bureau of the budget certified that funds were available, the share

of each local government in internal revenue taxes was automatically transferred to the local treasury. In this way, the release of funds was taken away from political influence. Local officials were also able to make their financial plans knowing with certainty that the resources from their share of taxes would automatically come to them.

Direct Participation in Governmental Programs

Aside from articulation of public interest and mobilization of local resources, advocates of liberal democracy aspire for direct people's participation in the affairs of government. Participation is hoped for in all levels of processes, ranging from policy formulation to implementation and evaluation of the effects and impact of public programs.

In the Philippines, the 1987 Constitution mandated that at least 20 percent of the policy-making bodies of local governments should be drawn from "sectoral and civil society groups" representing labor, women, the youth, and cause-oriented organizations. Official NGOs, CBOs, and POs were registered with the election commission for each locality. People voted for these sectoral organizations and each organization that got more than 10 percent of the votes was entitled to a representative in the local legislature, up to a maximum of three representatives per winning NGO. Since 1998, it has been found that this effort to ensure civil society participation in policy-making was beset with difficulties. For one, it was extremely difficult to define what a civil society group was. Some political parties attempted to register their "youth wings" or "women's auxiliaries" as civil society groups. Also, ordinary voters did not fully understand the voting procedure, as they were accustomed to voting for individuals rather than groups. Many of the civil society groups were unknown to the voters. As a result, not that many civil society representatives were elected to participate in local policy-making. It was also observed that, after a number of years, some of the elected civil society representatives started behaving like traditional politicians.

In some Asian countries, local governments have tried to encourage people to participate directly in governmental programs. In Pakistan, for example, residents in slum areas have been mobilized to carry out public works projects such as digging drainage ditches and the construction of sanitary latrines. Some slum upgrading programs have achieved considerable success because the direct participation of people in construction activities has lowered project costs. Low-income communities have also been able to meet

repair and maintenance costs for aided self-help projects, with central and local governments putting up the cost for materials and the people themselves taking care of construction, repair and maintenance.

In some projects, however, the tendency of local governments to look at people's participation as merely a way of saving money has not produced positive results. In too many cases, self-built projects have failed to maintain construction and operational standards because local people did not have the necessary knowledge and skills to do the jobs properly. Considerable delays have also been encountered because volunteers worked on the project only in their spare time. Training unskilled people to do their jobs properly was an additional expense. Most serious of all, the result of aided self-help projects often failed to match the output of professionally managed public and private contractors and this disjoint caused significant financial and time costs.

Despite some of the problems noted above, considerable success has been achieved in some Asian cities in the monitoring and evaluation of government projects and programs. In Indonesia, for example, local leaders and communities were given the responsibility of monitoring progress in infrastructure projects. Local government officials set up periodic targets and performance standards for activities such as road construction, digging drainage ditches and canals, and other activities where progress could be quantifiably measured. Community leaders were then given the responsibility of regularly reporting actual accomplishments of the construction crews on a regular basis. In the Philippines, the socioeconomic conditions in a number of chosen pilot communities were regularly monitored through periodic surveys to see the effects and impact of housing projects on family income, health of family members, education of children, and household expenditures. This direct participation of people in the monitoring and evaluation of project activities provided accurate quantitative and qualitative information on the effects and impacts of local projects.

From an analysis of the situation in a number of Asian countries, it is apparent that the hoped-for relationship between decentralization and the growth of liberal democracy is not linear. In some countries, decentralization has contributed significantly to the enhancement of liberal democracy. Certainly, the opportunity given to local citizens to directly elect their local officials has, in some countries, resulted in the coming into office of honest, hard-working, and dedicated leaders. In other countries, however, the

fragmentation of local society along ethnic, religious, linguistic, and socioeconomic lines has contributed to messy and corrupt local politics. Instead of decentralization contributing to liberal democracy, it has, in some instances, resulted mainly in replacing control and dominance by central governments with the tyrannical rule of local despots and family dynasties.

In this regard, the main lesson that can be learned from the Asian situation is that the enhancement of liberal democracy cannot be separated from the effects and impact of urbanization and economic development. In other words, for decentralization to contribute to the growth of liberal democracy, a certain level of economic development is required. This economic development, in turn, is directly correlated with urban development. As far as some Asian countries are concerned, therefore, urbanization, economic development, and liberal democracy all go together. When appropriate authority and power are decentralized to urban communities that have the economic, managerial, and institutional capabilities, liberal democracy can also be achieved.

Liberal democracy, however, will probably not be achieved across the board. More urbanized settlements with higher levels of economic development will achieve liberal democracy faster than those that do not have such advantages. One immediate effect of decentralization measures, in fact, is usually a widening gap between richer local government units and poorer ones. This disparity will be more marked if the poorer local units also suffer from political instability arising from ethnic, religious, linguistic, and ideological differences that lead to secessionist movements and rebellions. Thus, the level and pace of urbanization in local government units, related as it is to levels of economic development, is a significant indicator of whether decentralization policies will succeed or not. Many centuries ago, Aristotle said that "City air makes man free." In Asia, and in other parts of the world, urbanization and economic development serve as key indicators of the viability of liberal democracy.

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V. VOICES OF STATE AND CIVIL SOCIETY

THE ROLE AND PLACE OF MAYORS IN THE PROCESS OF DECENTRALIZATION AND MUNICIPAL MANAGEMENT IN SENEGAL

Mamadou Diop

Introduction

In a democratic regime, government belongs to the people, who can exercise it directly or through elected members. In that form, the notion of democratic government necessarily includes that of local government. Indeed, if state power, which corresponds to the inherited powers of the kings of yesteryear, comes from above, true democratic government, which aims to meet people's needs with their full participation, comes from below. This therefore draws in local government; indeed it constitutes the institutional framework of citizens' participation in local life. It grants them free expression in their diversity. It guarantees both citizens' rights to participate in the management of their own affairs, and political and social equality in the framework of direct and semidirect democratic institutions. These institutions rest essentially on the election of local bodies, which nowadays is the criterion defining free administration. Its aim is to stress general interest through the representation of all citizens who constitute the municipality. Consequently, it is the constitutional foundation for the legitimacy of representative bodies.

Local governments are therefore an important element of the body politic. The analysis of various French constitutions establishes clearly that municipalities entered into constitutional law and were integrated into the nation's political system to become a counterweight to the state's omnipotence. Title X of the French Constitution of 28 October 1946 gives local governments the constitutional dimension they retained in the Constitution of the Fifth Republic. This constitutionalization of collectivities aims to ensure the development of what Anglo-Saxons call local government. Along with state power, there is a local power coming directly from below, expressed in the exercise of direct or indirect democracy. The exercise of this power presupposes three essential conditions: the acknowledgement of a category of local affairs unrelated to national affairs; the use of law that has financial autonomy as a corol-

lary; and autonomy, in relation to the state, of the bodies responsible for the management of local affairs, which generally implies their local election. In practice, decentralization is subject to various modalities able to influence its degree of autonomy. The notion of local affairs may be understood more or less widely; financial means may be granted liberally or in a restrictive fashion; and elections may be planned for all local bodies or for only a few. In the same way, control exercised by the state may be strict or more flexible.

In Senegal, decentralization was conceived during colonial times as a way to attain two objectives: to achieve economic administration by representing the particular interests of secondary municipalities; and to constitute a French-style school of democracy. This is an already old movement: indeed, since as early as 1878, Saint-Louis had an elected mayor. Among all French-speaking African states, Senegal is the one with the oldest experience in matters of decentralized local administration.

The communal movement went through three successive stages: the first, a period of trial and error, went from the creation of the first four communes with full powers in the second half of the nineteenth century to the municipal reform of 18 November 1955. After that, the municipal movement experienced a development never seen before. The structures, better adapted to local realities, became more balanced. New communes were born. In addition to those with full powers, the number of which increased, and the so-called mixed communes, a new type of municipality was created—the commune with a medium range of powers. The three models coexisted until national independence in 1960. After February of that same year, a fundamental reform intervened to unify the communes' regimes, transforming them all into communes with full powers and increasing their number significantly. Thus, after Gorée was incorporated into Dakar in 1961, there were 33 communes with full powers in Senegal, all of them subject to the dispositions of the 18 November 1955 law. Two other stages in the evolution of the decentralization movement followed—in 1972, with the creation of the rural community, and in 1996, with regionalization. This latter institutional reform involved not only the regions, which it made into territorial governments, but also granted both municipalities and rural communities new powers that, until then, had been exercised by the central government.

The range of action of communes was therefore increased and strengthened. The current regime of the municipalities, established by Law 96-06 of 22 March 1996, concerning local governments, represents significant progress

compared with that instituted by the 30 June 1966 law, concerning municipal administration, modified by the 26 July 1972 law. The fundamental principle remains the management of municipal affairs by its elected bodies. These bodies, which constitute the municipality, have at their disposal the means of local governments and undertake actions on a daily basis to meet the general needs of the local community.

The municipality is made up of the municipal council, elected for five years by universal suffrage, and the mayor, elected indirectly by the municipal council, once it has been put in place, for the same length of time. Their respective powers and functions are defined in the Local Government Code (LGC). But, despite the statutory preeminence of the municipal council, it seems to be the mayor who is the real leader because of his personal stature, because of his important and multiple functions, and because he is free from accountability to the council that elects him.

The Legal Requirements for Mayor

The mayor must officially be 21 years of age. He is elected by the members of the municipal council (who can read and write). The election takes place during the first meeting following the election of the municipal council or the end of the outgoing mayor's term. The election is by secret ballot and requires an absolute majority. If, after two ballots, no candidate has obtained an absolute majority, a third ballot is allowed and the election is by relative majority; in the case of an equal number of votes, the older is declared the winner.

Article 106 of the LGC specifies that employees and financial agents cannot be mayors of the municipality in which they work. One particular case of ineligibility is that a mayor who had been dismissed from office must wait one year to stand for reelection.

In principle, the mayor does not get a salary. However, the accepted idea is that, if the elected members may not benefit from their function, neither should they have to pay local fees. Thus, the mayor and his deputies are granted "indemnities." The scale applied to the amount attached to a particular indemnity takes into account the size of the population of the commune or the municipality. The mayor and his deputies are entitled to reimbursement of their expenses when on mission. The municipality also pays for the reparation of any prejudice of a material or moral nature that might result from an accident the mayor or his deputies might suffer while in the exercise of their duties.

The Political Dimensions of the Mayor

The mayor is generally at the head of the list of candidates running for municipal council. Once elected, he enjoys a political majority that allows him to further consolidate his position. This is reinforced by the absence of direct accountability of the mayor to the municipal council.

The mayor's absence of responsibility before the municipal council is primarily justified by the necessity to avoid political and personal reversals of alliances, which always translate into questioning local executive power. This, in turn, would create instability in the management of local affairs. However, it is indispensable for the decentralization movement to depend on strong and stable institutions, so as not to lose momentum. There are two consequences of the mayor's lack of responsibility before the municipal council.

The first is a result of the situation between the mayor and the majority in the council. Political reclassifying may happen, which leads to changes in the majority within the assembly. Then the mayor may have to face a majority that does not share his political opinion, a situation that occurs frequently. But since nothing can force the mayor to resign, local government operation may well experience stoppages. If these persist, the only solution is the ability granted to the government to dissolve the council, in accordance with article 173 of the LGC.

The second consequence of the mayor not being accountable to the municipal council is that it reinforces his place and weight within the municipal institution. The problems this posed were few before the 1996 reform, because the mechanisms of administrative supervision allowed strict control of the state over local governments and the direction taken by municipal policies. Now, with the abolition of supervision and the emancipation of local government, the issue of acknowledgement or nonacknowledgement of the mayor's responsibility may be seen in a context of the reinforcement of decentralization; for example, the current organization of territorial municipality in Corsica considers the possibility of reversing the executive through a vote of no-confidence passed by absolute majority of the members in the assembly.

But in fact, the preeminence of the mayor is a reality in every democratic political system. The determining factors are the complexity of the problems tackled, the increasing number of management tasks, and a greater personalization granted in the exercise of political power. At the municipal

level, the absence of responsibility of the local executive board to the deliberating assembly reinforces even more the mayor's authority in the exercise of his multiple functions.

The Political Leadership of the Mayor

The mayor actually exercises a real "municipal magistracy." The municipality's traditional authority, in particular that presented in article 88 of the LGC, is granted to the municipal council. This goes back to the general clause on authority expressed in the French municipal law of 1884. Nevertheless, the mayor's powers are characteristic of the Senegalese system, which foreshadows a kind of municipal presidentialism. Such preeminence of the mayor, which appears in numerous articles of the LGC, has always been tolerated by political actors from all parties.

The idea of municipal leadership exercised by the mayor is therefore clearly delineated and anchored in the history of the communal system. Since the 1996 reform of the local and territorial administration, other local leaderships imitating that model have appeared both at the rural and regional levels. The mayor's personalized authority is illustrated in articles 112, 116, 117, and 124 to 128, which enumerate the administrative and operational powers and functions that make the mayor the keystone of the municipal system. The proper powers and the powers delegated by the state and the municipal council, of which the mayor is the exclusive recipient, make him a kind of "territorial harlequin," because he becomes all things at once: political leader, administrator and executor, entrepreneur, negotiator, planner, and guarantor of public security. These attributes make him an indispensable figure, often supported by a national as well as an international audience.

The Mayor's Double Function

The Senegalese municipal system, in the image of the French system, is founded on the hypothesis of "function splitting." This happens when the administrative authority acts simultaneously as two separate public officials. The characteristic example is that of Dakar's governor who, under the 1964 law on the reorganization of the Dakar municipality, was both governor of the region, representing the President of the Republic and the ministers in his jurisdiction, and administrator of the municipality. The 1996 reform of

local administration put the position of mayor in this double function. Most frequently he acts on behalf of the municipality; sometimes he intervenes on behalf of the state.

The Mayor as Agent of the Municipality

The Mayor as President of the Municipal Council

In this function the mayor is preeminent. To understand the problem presented by this, we must review the various areas in which the municipal council can intervene. Article 88 of the LGC says that the municipal council, whose primary mission is to "ensure the best living conditions possible to the whole population, without discrimination, intervenes in the areas of planning and programming local development and the harmonizing of this programming with regional and national orientations." It can offer its opinion whenever it is required by rules and regulations or upon the state representative's request. The municipal council may also express its wishes in writing on any issues of local interest, particularly those concerning the economic and social development of the municipality (article 88, para. 4).

Thus, the municipal council is invested with important and diverse prerogatives. We can therefore better appreciate the role granted its president; among other things, he is expected to:

- Convene the municipal council in regular or extraordinary sessions;
- Set the agenda of the municipal council's various meetings (he may ask to be replaced by one of his deputies);
- Enforce order in the municipal council's sessions (article 158 of the LGC);
- Post the report of the municipal council's meetings and the attestation of that posting, which must be recorded in the minute book; and
- Be president by law of all commissions formed within the municipal council (article 162 of the LGC).

In the Anglo-Saxon systems, the distinction is generally made between the functions of the president of the local assembly and those of the chief executive; these distinct functions are handled by two separate individuals. It is totally different in the current system in Francophone countries like Senegal. According to the terms of article 155 of the LGC, "the mayor or the

person replacing him chairs the municipal council." Paragraph 14 of article 116 of the same code specifies that the mayor is in charge of "implementing the policies of the municipal council." As a result of combining these two articles, the powers of the mayor as representative of the local community and as chief executive are extremely broad and varied.

The Mayor as Chief Municipal Executive

The mayor, kingpin of the municipal system, is chief of the local executive. He is assisted by deputies whose number varies according to the number of people in the municipality. The city of Dakar has 18 deputies in addition to the special deputy of Gorée. The term "municipality" is used familiarly to mean the group formed by the mayor and his deputies. However, the municipal executive is embodied in one person, the mayor; it is not a college. Even if the law meant to create a feeling of solidarity between the mayor and his deputies (they hold elections at the same time), the preponderance of the mayor is unquestionable. Indeed, the deputies have no attributes of their own. The mayor may only delegate to them, under his responsibility, some part of his powers. This gives a somewhat "presidential" character to the municipal regime.

The mayor is the supreme administrative authority. He is invested with the power of passing judicial acts on behalf of the institution. His attributions as administrator of the municipality grant him prerogatives that he exercises under the surveillance of the municipal council. Moreover, he may receive other attributions from the municipal council.

Powers and Functions under the Control of the Municipal Council

Article 116 of the LGC establishes a long list of these functions. As a representative of local government, the mayor must:

1. Keep, maintain, and administer the municipality's properties and assets and consequently create legal instruments upholding these rights;
2. Manage revenues, supervise municipal services and municipal accounting;
3. Prepare and propose the budget, organize the expenses, and prescribe the execution of receipts;
4. Organize public works;

5. See to the execution of development programs, financed by the municipality or realized with its participation;
6. Provide measures related to municipal roads;
7. Sign contracts, draw up leases for properties and adjudications of municipal works, according to the rules set by laws and regulations;
8. Draw up, according to the same rules, bills of sale, exchange, sharing, acceptance of donations and inheritances, acquisitions, and transactions, when these bills have been authorized by the municipal council;
9. Represent the municipality in court;
10. Take all measures necessary for the destruction of animals specified by laws and regulations if the owners or possessors of hunting rights remain elusive; ensure the protection of green spaces; and, contribute to the beautification of the municipality;
11. Appoint employees of the municipality;
12. Provide assistance when necessary;
13. Implement municipal council decisions.

This partial list reveals that the extreme diversity of the functions the mayor exercises under the control of the municipal council. They embrace all areas of municipal activity. In this framework, the mayor is obliged to abide by the municipal council's decisions. Thus, he cannot in any way modify a contracted project already approved by the council. All decisions taken by the mayor in the execution of the municipal assembly's deliberations may be subject to recourse before the council of state (at the national level), when they are marred by illegality.

Powers Independent of the Municipal Council

In his role as chief municipal executive, the mayor has personal powers that are independent of those he exercises under the control of the municipal council. These powers involve, among other things, the municipal police and leadership of the municipal administration.

According to the terms of article 124 of the LGC, "Under the representative of the state, the mayor is responsible for the **municipal police** and for the implementation of the legislation of the state which relates to it." The mayor's powers with respect to the municipal police thus defined take on two dimensions. The mayor is considered both the head of the police and

a special police authority. Article 124 of the LGC provides that the mayor is invested with the power of municipal police and article 125 gives the mayor general authority to ensure "law and order, safety, peace, political security and health." In this last case, his concerns are:

- The security of and normal circulation in the streets, quays, public places, and roads;
- The mode of transport for deceased people, burials, and exhumations;
- The control of drinking establishments;
- The prevention of accidents, through suitable precautions and intervention and through the distribution of necessary help in cases of accidents and calamities;
- Necessary measures against the insane as well as the population's security and the preservation of properties;
- Animal control

These various measures are supplemented by others related to traffic and parking police in the cities (article 127), dangers to public health (article 128 of the code), and policies related to the supervision of swimming and light nautical activities practiced from the shore. Article 132 of the LGC establishes that, among other things, the mayor may appoint sworn agents under the control of the health services to carry out functions involving the municipality's health policies.

The mayor's powers do not hinder the right of the state to take measures involving public order, security, health, safety, and tranquility, for all the municipalities of a circumscription, or for one or several of them. Bear in mind that the central government is more particularly responsible for (1) repressing attempts to disturb public tranquility, tumult, crowds, night gatherings that may trouble people's rest; and (2) maintaining good order in places where and when people gather: fairs, markets, public ceremonies, shows, games, cafes, and religious gatherings.

In the exercise of his policy-making authority the mayor is restrained in two ways: he must submit to traditional rules of hierarchy in matters of policy and strict control of administrative jurisdiction; and the Council of State keeps an eye particularly on the proportionality of breaches to public freedoms, in relation to the objective of the measures adopted.

In his capacity as **municipal administrator**, the mayor is invested with the power to pass legal bills on behalf of the municipality. He is the hierarchical chief of municipal public services. He appoints agents, evaluates them, and directs their action. He assigns and manages the personnel placed under his authority.

The municipality has local public services at its disposal to ensure its mission, which is commonly called "municipal administration." They are the important services through which the will of the municipal authorities is executed: municipal roads, cemeteries and funeral parlors, markets, abattoirs, pick up and disposal of household garbage, registry office, and the like. The various municipal services can be put into two categories.

1. Administrative public services and industrial and commercial public services. The former are governed by administrative law, which results in putting users and proposed users in a legal and statutory situation; the latter are subject to public law in matters of organization, but the relationship with users and aspiring users are of a contractual nature—in other words, they are subject to private law.

2. Services managed directly by the municipality (local government control) and services managed by operators outside the municipality. The service assigned to a concessionary is subject to a legal, statutory regime; the relationship with local government is defined in a concession contract. By contrast, in the case of a company under government control, the municipality is responsible for the creation and the operation of the service.

As a general rule, the local government has freedom of choice when it comes to the management of its public services, which must absolutely be managed directly: municipal roads, social assistance, education. Some public services cannot be delegated by the local government: all the functions related to justice, police, defense, or foreign relations. By contrast, some services must absolutely be contracted out: water, electricity, and gas distribution.

In order to ensure the supervision of the various municipal services, the mayor may delegate, by decree, some of his functions to one or several deputies, and, in the absence of deputies, or if the deputies are not in a position to accept, to members of the municipal council. The delegations thus created subsist until their termination. However, they dissolve without being expressly canceled, when the mayor who set them up dies, is suspended, revoked, or declared as having resigned.

The Mayor as Agent of the State

The functions assumed by the mayor as agent of the state are essentially of an administrative and legal nature. His powers include:

- The publication and implementation of the state's laws and regulations and, particularly, the policy regulations and measures set up by state authorities;
- The functions of registry officer. In that capacity, he is responsible for the registry office under the control of the state prosecutor;
- Being officer of judicial policy according to the terms of criminal procedure.

He is responsible for the legalization of signatures, national (civil) defense, the delivery of authorizations, the supervising of primary school education, and so on.

Thus invested of all his functions, the mayor is a rung in the state territorial administration that he represents in his constituency. All the measures he is required to take involve the responsibility of the state, not that of the municipality. He is subject to the hierarchic power of the authority of the state, which, as such, can give him the necessary instructions that he must execute. In this case, he is not under the supervision of the representatives of the state (power of supervision) but really under their authority (hierarchical power).

Conclusion

In Senegal, the municipal movement has experienced a long period of maturation. Born in the second half of the nineteenth century with the creation of four municipalities granted full powers, it was strengthened as time went by to become an example for Africa today. The country's accession to national independence in 1960 has not broken from the tradition of local democracy instituted by the French colonial authorities.

Thus, in the image of the municipalities created on the territory of the old French metropolis, the Senegalese municipal system places the mayor at the center of an organization in which he is the main actor. As president of the municipal council and having at the same time executive power, the

mayor assumes a political and administrative leadership that cannot be superseded. The problem then is whether or not he has the actual means to realize his ambitions.

The current state of decentralization in Senegal does reveal significant progress in the area of local democracy. Unquestionably, the 1996 reform of the administration, which turned the region into a territorial municipality, has widened the range of activities and the freedom of intervention for the local authorities. All local governments, in particular municipalities, are encountering difficulties as a result of a lack of resources. Facing this dilemma, the mayors, always planning ambitious projects, are generally reduced to total powerlessness. It is therefore urgent and necessary to undertake a real reform of local taxation, in order to give municipalities the means to act. Such reform, which must open new perspectives for the financing of local projects, will thus serve to complete the important 1996 administrative reform of the municipalities.

In addition, it is no less urgent to wonder about the opportunity to break from the French tradition of the mayor elected by the municipal council. Logic would require having the mayor elected directly by the people, as in presidential systems. Such an evolution would allow the mayor's current position to be clarified and to reinforce his popular legitimacy. The system already exists in Anglophone countries where it has proven very efficient. Undeniably this is something to reflect on in the last phase of the expanding decentralization process in Senegal.

LOCAL ASSOCIATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: A FRAMEWORK OF INTERVENTION AND OPERATIONAL LOGISTICS IN URBAN AREAS

El Housseynou Ly

This text is a collection of critical thoughts and questions on the workings of local associations in the context of decentralization in Senegal and, more specifically, on the partnership between municipal institutions and the associations through two initiatives dealing with research, training, and planning.

The first initiative, called the "social development of neighborhoods" (DSQ), involved Yeumbeul and Malika in the Dakar suburbs. The DSQ is part of a process of concerted strategic planning undertaken by ENDA Ecopop in the town of Pikine. In concrete terms, it meant setting up, in a first phase, a framework of social dialogue between the municipalities that were to benefit and the basic associations. In a second phase, the idea was to consolidate the practice of activities related to Alimentation en Eau Potable (AEP), the support and strengthening of the organizations' capacities, the promotion of hygiene, and the establishment of multipurpose centers. For all these initiatives, there was a process of consultation and participative planning between municipalities and associations that will eventually be responsible for setting up and organizing the activities.

The second initiative is the result of research conducted by the Réseau de recherches sur les politiques sociales au Sénégal [Research network on social policies in Senegal] (RRPS) set up at the Institut Africain de Gestion Urbaine [African Institute of Urban Management] (IAGU), dealing with the decentralization of health services in Senegal. This research, financed by the International Development Research Center (IDRC), pays particular attention to the health committees. The health committees are officially recognized associative structures in charge of the management of people's participation in the health effort. These legally recognized committees, made up of members elected by the community, collect participation fees, supply medical establishments with drugs, take

responsibility for community health agents, look after current expenses, and sometimes hire technical personnel (doctors, nurses, midwives, and so on). These committees exist at every level of the pyramidal structure of the health system in Senegal (hospitals, sanitary districts, health huts, health posts, etc.).

There are three issues regarding the functionality of the health committees in Senegal. (1) Law 96-07 of 22 March 1996 transfers to local governments nine specialized policy areas, of which health is one. (2) The health committees are legally recognized community structures, but are not controlled by the elected members; often, they collide with them. The interaction between and among these committees, health agents, the people, and politicians is one of conflict. (3) There is a certain perversion with respect to the timing of leadership turnover, and the management of collected financial resources remains opaque, as do the dynamics of political takeover and sometimes the important takeover by the traditional peripheral authorities (marabouts, neighborhood chiefs, customary authorities, important noble families, and so on).

The role and place of the associations in the new political changeover in Senegal brought out some of the issues, particularly about the social retraining of the associations' leaders, after the local consultations in 2001. These consultations represented a significant renewal of political personnel at the municipal council level.

In this paper, I will question the operational modes of interaction of the NGOs, basic (or local) associations, and other groups with actors involved in local development, in particular the municipal institutions and development partners, and examine the operations of organizational entities through several approaches in the context of decentralization and local governance. I also attempt to point out the underlying continuities as well as the major changes in order to expose the representations structuring developing initiatives of civil society in a Francophone urban context.

General Introduction

The strengthening of the capacities of so-called urban "development" organizations is a relatively complex issue because of the great diversity in their goals and histories, and the dynamics animating them. We are dealing as much with small associations operating on an informal and personal basis, as with large

structured associations with objectives of meeting the needs of the community (cleaning up the environment, infrastructure management, health, HIV-AIDS, supply of drinking water, culture, sports, improvement and organization of living quarters, and the like).

Their interventions have encouraged certain partners in development to strive for the strengthening of their capacities in order to ensure, on the one hand, the efficiency and the durability of the actions undertaken, and on the other, to turn these associations into levers of community participation. The "institutional participative diagnostic" (DIP) often marks the first movement in the strengthening process. The associations are led through tools and techniques to carry out a self-evaluation in order to better appreciate their strengths and weaknesses and to redefine their mode of organization and intervention in relation to the aims they intend to pursue. The DIP tracks and points to key elements related to their viability, sharing of expenses, members' level of commitment, the circulation of information, personnel conflicts, respect for basic texts, the topicality of the platform supporting the organization, the members' sense of equity, political and social considerations, and relations with the environment.

In what follows we will try to answer the following questions:

- What elements make up the analysis of the associations' capacity of intervention in the context of decentralization?
- How do these organizations interact with local governments?
- What are the practical aspects of the associations' social effectiveness?
- What are the logics by which goals become perverted from the outset with control and exercise of political power?
- How can the associations strive to learn local democracy and the rules of urban governance?
- How do the associations offer to become instruments of involvement in the social fabric as the catalysts for participative management of the "city," in the Roman sense of the term?

Seeking Elements of Organizational Capacity Building: Theoretical Criteria of Viability and Operational Logics

A systemic analysis of community-based associations from the point of view of their viability brings us to four key notions that measure and take

into account their capacities. Here we refer to reliability, equity, stability, and social utility.

Organizational Reliability: Solidity of Basic Features, Identification, and Motivation

An association's reliability is measured through the members' consistency and the level of commitment they concretely demonstrate. It is perceptible through organizational behaviors relative to the major principles that are at the basis of the group's identity. These elements constitute the basic features of the organization. This identity may be the one defined at the start or one acquired during the life of the association through lessons, experiences, and teachings. The elements that constitute the association's identity and therefore make it possible to evaluate its reliability depend on its origins as well as subsequent events. The permanency of the reference to this identity depends on the relevance and the balance of the elements underlying it.

An association's reliability depends also on the consistency, permanency, and functionality of its means on the one hand, and, on the other, on the quality of its human resources. When these means and resources evolve outside the control of the organizational structure, the association loses its reliability, because it loses some of its capacity of intervention and mastery of the environment. This is also the case when the association cannot easily mobilize means and resources. The existence of these means and control over them may be acquired from the start or, in the worst case, maybe delayed.

Since the environment can be unstable, constraints and opportunities can also vary rapidly. An organization's reliability may also depend on its capacity to adjust to its environment in order to attain its objectives at that time. Reliability may therefore manifest itself through the constancy of its reactions in given situations, in other words, through the foreseeable nature of its social reactions.

The city of Pikine, the site of the social experimentation with the DSQ profile, was born as part of the Projet de Ville (city project) initiative. With its population of 1,009,683, it is the largest city in Senegal. Its growth was a result of the combined effect of natural population growth and its role as an outlet for migrants. The real urban stratum of the city is less than 40 percent of the official urban space, and it remains strongly marked by settled zones that are liable to flooding. The local economy is characterized by a

dynamic informal sector alongside a few industrial establishments. In the city of Pikine we find the most structured forms of urban poverty.

Local-level associations are highly developed and they have the capacity to negotiate with public authorities, city hall, and the communes of the district (such as Yeumbeul and Malika), NGOs, and other development partners. The evidence of that is in the profusion of local initiatives trying to bring answers to the various problems in the communities (such as HIV/AIDS, access to basic services, AEP, garbage collection, and wastewater management groups).

Thanks to the reliability of some organizations, the associative movement has been able to assert itself more and more as an inescapable actor in local development and in good governance involved with the function of local leadership attempts to make people socially conscious, to spread ideals of justice and active solidarity, and to promote the ideals of partnership and social intermediation. Several associations draw their social legitimacy from the quality of their members, and mainly from the permanence of the ideals of their founding mandate. Respect for the timetable for the reelection of local authorities also plays a role. Confrontations with politicians are common and quite serious in all local elections as well as in the implementation of projects set up by the government, the NGOs, and other development partners.

It is easy to understand why Senegalese and foreign political scientists call this urban microcosm a thermometer of social tensions. Thus, an official in Yeumbeul-South, a commune of the district of Pikine, declared that: "the city of Pikine is both worrisome and reassuring with its rhythms, its tensions, its growth, its potential for progress, culture and active solidarity, its social fractures and its conflicts. It harbors extreme solitudes and nurtures collective commitments. It is violent and civilizing. It is a paradox."

The reliability of some organizations appears also in the commitment made by the members whose motivation is the development and improvement of the living environment, but above all, the defense of disadvantaged groups—the poor, women, and children. The latter experience their citizenship through the practice of local development.

Equity: Correct Rules and Justice in Practice

An association's sense of equity reflects the correctness of its rules and organizational practices. Equity does not exist when rules are discriminatory and

when practices are exclusive. The absence of equity, when resting on discriminatory rules and practices, is always the result either of the transposition to the association of collective standards of behavior that already exist in the cultural environment, or of an individual or collective attempt to protect its interests or to create or maintain positions of internal power.

When the absence of equity is the result of a cultural transfer, the autonomy of the entire association in relation to its environment is at stake; the structure cannot be considered a distinct entity, with specific realities. If, on the other hand, the lack of equity is caused by individual or collectively identified wishes, the unity and cohesion of the association are at stake, which antagonistic factions or opposing groups within it will then try to manipulate.

The problem of equity exists at three different levels:

- Transmission of information. Information may be totally or partially withheld or be distributed in a discriminatory way. Information not only allows gaining knowledge of the facts, it is also a form of power for the members of the association, since it allows the associations to formulate new strategies.
- Sharing the sacrifices to which the associations must agree. This can be divided according to questionable rules that bend the principles of members' equality. This occurs, for example, when leaders are asked to participate, through work or money, in taking more action than is required of simple members, when they already support, without compensation, their personal cost of volunteering.
- Sharing results or bonuses. Rules and practices for sharing, which are often too egalitarian, ignore the fact that there may be a strong differentiation in the level of personal commitment on the part of members when it comes to working in the association's interest. Thus, some "twiddle their thumbs" and quietly wait for others to struggle and operate the association and make it prosper.

When it comes to sharing sacrifices and bonuses, a real attempt at equity is made by an association when the efforts put in by a few members are magnified and rewarded (remuneration, bonuses). This is why, when the opportunity arises, the ones receiving a formal job offer from the organization are the most active members.

As for the manner in which they are administered and function, health committees in Senegal are made up of two major elements: the general assembly and the office. The composition of the general assembly varies according to the system of reference (health post, health center, and hospitals) and to location (rural or urban):

- For health committees in rural areas—village chiefs or their representative and representatives of women's groups;
- For health committees in urban areas—neighborhood delegates and representatives of women's groups and women's associations;
- For the committees of health districts—the representatives of health post committees and those of river-front sanitary committees; and
- For hospital committees—the representatives of district committees.

The general assembly, which meets twice a year, elects members of the office for two years; they are re-eligible twice. The office meets once a month upon notification from the president, who sets up the expenses. The treasurer receives the accounts, which he deposits in bank or postal accounts. With that aim, he signs checks with the president and the person in charge of the health structure (nurse, doctor, health agent). The people pay for consultations, buy drugs, participate financially in the costs associated with childbirth, and so on. A 1999 report presented by the Pikine sanitary district indicated that the health committee of that district had total receipts worth 83,119,508 CFA francs (US$156,829), while expenses reached a total of 43,366,302 CFA francs (US$81,823).

The results of research conducted by IAGU on health committees underlined the lack of transparency in the way the actors involved answered questions. This situation is as decried by health agents as by the people. The following declaration by a health agent who was questioned in Pikine confirms this: "Members of health committees are only interested in money…they take care of managing receipts and do whatever is required to remain a member of the office for as long as possible." Moreover, in 1999, three-quarters of all health committees had not renewed their official appointments for a decade, in defiance of laws and regulations. As a result of a deficit or even an absence of communication with the members of health committees, the people have great difficulty in participating in meetings or general assemblies, at which they could give health committees a new dynamic.

Analyzing the functioning of health committees through the notion of equity also allows us to see that equity between men and women, on the one hand, and between the young and the old, on the other, is not respected. Committees are still characterized by the obvious presence of both older people and men. Generally, the representatives of young people and women are not informed of the elections of the office of health committees.

In such a perspective, many actors have vehemently expressed the lack of social legitimacy of health committees. The common phrase is, "We are never told anything." This seemingly trivial remark shows the serious discrepancy that exists between the people and those who are supposed to represent them in health structures.

Stability: Internal Cohesion and Autonomy in Relation to the Environment

The stability of an association reflects a number of elements. First, it must be capable of reinforcing its autonomy in relation to its environment. For that, it needs to increase its resistance in relation to any outside forces wishing to control it. It must also be able to ensure its cohesion, its internal unity, and operations in a continuous manner. Often evolving in a strongly politicized environment, marked by ethnic or sectarian rivalries, associations of the subregion are exposed to the risks of interference in their operations and in the definition of their objectives.

These risks are the greater since their allies are politicians—particularly those belonging to dominant parties—and men of the cloth. Most often they are the ones controlling, at the local level, access to resources that may be needed by development associations. The existence of such a power of promotion or constraint that politics and religion, often acting together, can exert over the associative movement has led to two attitudes within it: *perversion of the objectives* and *financial dependency.*

Beside political, ethnic and religious considerations, other factors can destabilize associations. These may be internal. Struggles for leadership may oblige members to participate in opposing factions whose mutual, contradictory, and pernicious actions paralyze the structure. Interpersonal conflicts of a subjective nature can occur that may affect the operations of the association if they are not controlled early on (refusal of members to cooperate with each other, for example).

The same phenomenon of perversion of objectives exists when the association, without the means to realize its ambitions, is forced in its quest for resources to change its objectives, areas, and fields of intervention. Such associations will remain viable only as long as they do not find their identity and the internal means to ensure their autonomy in relation to the outside world (that is to say, financing outlets). Organizational stability delicately exposes the organizations' autonomy but it also underlines the ability of organizations to maintain their identity when facing the solicitations and logic of the political class, for example, in the context, of local development at the level of the municipality.

Community organizations in Yeumbeul and Malika have been very involved both in the development and improvement of their living environment and in the fight against urban poverty, even before the intervention of ENDA-Ecopop in the context of the DSQ. However, initiatives could not progress for lack of a permanent consultation and of coordination of the activities between sectors. The list of weaknesses also includes an absence of long-term vision, the perversion of founding principles, the conflicting relationships with elected members, the lack of means that has often led to "a diversion of the objectives," and lack of understanding among associations, local governments, public services, the public sector, and so on.

From the onset of the project, ENDA-Ecopop established a number of activities aiming to reinforce the organizational stability of the associations. Besides the implementation of consultation between organizations, ENDA conducted a series of exercises called "institutional participative diagnostic" (DIP) in the organizations concerned. The DIP is a self-evaluating exercise requiring a series of individual and collective meetings during which the members must address their weaknesses, their strengths and limitations, their abilities to reinforce the functionality of their interactions with the environment, and so on.

The DSQ has revealed obvious deficiencies particularly in the stability of associations, and ENDA has ventured to reinforce their ability to negotiate with the communes which, in this project, should be their partners in the areas of the AEP, household garbage collection, cleaning up, support for local economic initiatives, and the construction and rehabilitation of community infrastructure. Thus we have seen the emergence of rivalries between associations and elected members over the paternity of the DSQ's activities. Some associations have backed up in order to guarantee the

takeover by politicians of the social and operational aspects of the DSQ's operations. Some elected members had difficulty validating their institutional options and strategic choices during the consultation proceedings and denounced the exaggerated power of the associations (accusing ENDA of complicity). Some leaders of associations also alleged the insufficiency of some elected members and alerted the beneficiaries to attempts at political takeover.

Exasperated by the social legitimacy of the associations, one mayor tried both to dissolve the "neighborhood councils" through decree, because they had more viability than the municipal council, and to stop the intervention of associations within the whole municipal area.

ENDA has perfectly played its role of referee by conciliating the different agendas and interests of elected members and the associations, through a clear and transparent pedagogy.

Social Utility and the General Interest: Membership and Satisfaction in the Community

The social utility of an association reveals itself, first, in the social relevance of its intervention and the more or less strict adherence of its members or the community to its declared objectives: and second, in the more or less high degree of satisfaction that the results of its activities bring to the needs expressed by the members and/or the community.

The first level of social utility involves the needs expressed by the members of the association and/or the community and whose degree of satisfaction has motivated the collectivity to deal with them. This first level reveals the members' acknowledgment of their problems and their ability to conceive appropriate solutions. But beyond taking on the preoccupations of the members of the group, there should be a true declaration of intent to get involved in a battle for social self-promotion for the community at large. The association then benefits from a presumption of social utility.

The second level of social utility goes beyond declarations and can be appreciated through the concrete results achieved by the association, its ability to show its power of influence and change over its environment. If the results obtained are tangible and constitute a real source of promotion for the community or its members, the association increases in social legit-

imacy and becomes the object of an greater collective acknowledgment: the range for recruiting its members widens, its fame grows, and so on.

In the subregion today, more and more associations give first priority in the profits of their activities to their members, even when the stated objective is the promotion of the community. It becomes necessary, then, to judge the social utility of an association first with reference to who benefits from these results, as factors relating to promotion of the community.

Whatever their areas of intervention, associations bring benefits to their community when they obtain results more or less directly, either providing some of their members with employment (from which extended families benefit), or offering services free of charge or at affordable prices, which makes it possible to indirectly increase the buying power of local people.

If public interest means the municipality's exclusive interest, without any consideration for their members' interests, then the overwhelming majority of local associations do not operate in the public interest. Indeed, they all pursue objectives of economic, social, or cultural promotion for the benefit of their members or, outside the structure, for the benefit of clearly articulated social groups. Is it enough to *claim* to be defending the public interest? The notion of a general or public interest poses discreetly the problem of volunteers in associations in Senegal, where the crisis context makes the notion of volunteering even more obsolete. In the same way, actors have even less time available to invest in the associative movement, since they must occupy themselves with activities to generate income for themselves and their families. Beside, some young members of associations have a sense of being exploited by the NGOs; for that reason, they gradually tire of the local dynamics of development in the volunteer activities that are required by their partners.

On the other hand, the motivating elements and reticence—factors at play in local development activities—manifest themselves in various ways. They are based on a "play of actors" defined by a combination of altruistic logics and individual promotion. For some, it is a matter of solving the problems affecting their own neighborhoods, that is to say their direct environment. This attitude can be explained by the desire to experience their citizenship through a neighborhood logic, while at the same time internalizing the social usefulness of their activities. Beside, participating may be a way of seeking one's individual chances, enhancing one's authority, acquiring experience, developing a lucrative activity, or gaining legitimacy and authority in one's locality.

Elements in the Analysis of the Social Relevance of Associations in Local Urban Development

Articulation of the Internal and External Capacity and Degree of Organization

A strong rigidity in the hierarchical relationship among members of an organization may completely destroy their spirit of initiative and constitute a handicap when fast responses, appropriate in an environment that is occasionally very unstable, are expected of them. It seems more appropriate to make the various bodies (which have been granted "decisional" autonomy, working with objectives and evaluated on the basis of the results obtained) aware of their functional responsibilities. This offers the advantage of sparing both the development of collective initiative and a great ability of adaptation to external changes.

Generally speaking, associations aspiring to modernity from the point of view of operation adopt the model of the organigram, based on the following three major organs: the *general assembly,* the *management committee,* and the *office.*

The most serious constraint facing associations in their operation and development is the lack of funding for their activities. This leads most often to the de-motivation of the members in relation to their commitment, and, in the end, to the progressive lethargy of the association. Under these circumstances, the durability of the association depends very much on volunteerism, on the spirit of sacrifice and devotion to the central message of the leaders—who, alone and for a long period of time, will have to take on the operational costs of the structure. For such associations, the leaders' personality constitutes a determining variable when the structures have neither yet succeeded in convincing sponsors nor brought clear evidence of their social utility. This is the case of some rural organizations operating in urban areas, whose leaders interact with commercial lobbies.

The situation is different when the association's project gets funding. In general, this causes renewed interest among the members. All of a sudden, the structure begins to live again, becomes valuable in their eyes and in the eyes of the members of the community. All over again, it becomes the object of collective identification. In such situations, the association may experience many tensions and conflicts. Whether apparent or

masked, they are directly or indirectly related to competition between the members engaged in a race to position themselves favorably. The function of leader becomes attractive (again), after the period of sacrifices has passed. In this case, the danger is as real as with the lack of funding because the association runs the risk of being paralyzed as a result of poorly handled internal conflicts.

The issue of funding associations brings us back to another problematic, that of the local development associations' inability to self-finance their activities. This is particularly relevant when the proliferation and the success of *tontines* (informal savings groups particularly prominent in urban areas) show that endogenous financial resources can indeed be mobilized and used to create individual or collective self-promotion.

The funding of local development associations is concretely related to three main sources: (1) institutions, constituted by the state and its agencies and local governments; (2) organizations, which support development, constituted essentially by international sponsors and NGOs that finance associative projects. There may be indirect forms of financing, as when a service contract is signed, on the one hand, between a financial organization or some institution and, on the other hand, a local association; and (3) self-financing, constituted by the association itself and its resource personnel. These payments may take the shape of reimbursable credits, submitted to more or less flexible modalities, or of grants, financial contributions, or members' donations.

The lack of funding often structures the ties of dependency between associations and financial sources and also with lobbies, which invest in local development with the intention of winning over municipalities. Frequent cases demonstrate that associations run by people without resources are often subject to manipulation and their "reason becomes a captive of the esophagus" (to paraphrase Paul Hountondji).

Operational Modes of Interaction between the Associations and the Environment

Some institutional actors build through their practices and interactions their multiple forms of cooperative and collaborative relationships, a dynamic sphere of activity that gives a country's development its orientation. These actors are the state, with its sectoral policies; the international

sponsors, with their work programs defining their priorities; the local governments, with their local development plans; and the NGOs and other local associations, with their aspirations to participate in development.

In an organization in which each actor becomes an obligatory partner of the others, local development associations appear as legitimate intermediaries between the people and the institutions supporting development precisely because they have popular roots. They are often accused of trying to establish themselves as the "brokers of local development."

Local development associations, which most of the time are granted little institutional capacity, cannot have direct access to the international sponsors. It is the large foreign or national NGOs, the state, or local governments that are the direct negotiators with the international institutions. In this situation, these associations must lower their ambitions and gradually prove their utility in order, on the one hand, to assert and confirm their roles as intermediaries in the conception and implementation of local development projects, and on the other hand, to acquire the position of strategic partners vis-à-vis institutional actors and particularly NGOs. The latter, until now, considered them only as instruments of their intervention policies.

The state, local governments, NGOs, and local development associations each have a precise role to play in development. The state, through its government, defines sectoral policies and the general lines of development. Local governments are responsible for local development in whatever area the state has granted them control. NGOs bring technical and financial support to local groups, thus allowing them to create projects for community promotion in the sectors where there is a social demand. Local associations define their needs, which they translate into projects of community self-promotion, and they participate in the implementation of local projects initiated by the institutions.

These roles are not fixed and they evolve in relation to the dynamic of the power struggle between the actors in the area of development projects. For local associations, the evolution of their roles depends on the awareness of the sociopolitical force they represent or could represent; the extent of their technical expertise and the strengthening of their organizational capacity; and the significance of the social utility of the changes likely to be introduced by this change in roles.

The neighborhood dwellers represent an important factor if one is to appreciate the quality of the associations' relationship with their environment.

People are more likely to trust the leaders of the associative movement who really work in the interest of the community than the political class that they consider manipulators of conscience or givers of quickly dashed hopes. However, association leaders risk being rejected as well as the politicians, if their actions and calls to mobilization do not produce positive results.

Elements in the Analysis of the Social Relevance of Activities and Their Consequences on Members of the Community

The area in which an association interferes constitutes also, in some ways, a criterion of appreciation of its social utility. Indeed, the field of action reveals not only the particular interest the association accords its specific field of work but also, in a general way, the techno-professional profile—known or to come—of its members and the human resources it has at its disposal.

The field of activities reveals the sector of life wherein the association has or may acquire the necessary assets to become more useful to the community or its members. From this point of view, it is obvious that this area may change in time, to the extent that its abilities are revealed. The extent and diversity of the field of intervention may also be considered as variables of appreciation of an association's level of social utility, since they indicate the limits of its range of action and accessibility for the population, in terms of the benefits accruing from its actions.

Objectives, Areas of Activity: The Predominance of the Economic

The economic status of leaders and ordinary members of associations, the majority of which have no formal employment or regular resources, constitutes an important variable that will condition the result of the arbitration the association will have to perform between the priorities of a community extended to the neighborhood or the municipality, on the one hand, and, on the other, those preferred by the sponsors' programs (and for which they reserve their financing).

The projects, the financing of which allows both the development of activities, which in turn opens real employment possibilities for the members of the association, and the pursuit of objectives relating to the community are the ideal sought by most associations. This is all the more true insofar as these associations are made up of young people coming from

modest backgrounds, struggling with chronic unemployment and searching for status-enhancing social identity. It is important to consider the main economic objective of all of the associations' projects in this specific context. Since it is most often a matter of survival strategy rather than impressive economic production, the preoccupation with generating revenues prevails over economic and financial profitability, and sometimes even over social impact, at the level of the neighborhood or the municipality.

A Frequent Case of Perversion of Objectives: Political Takeover

Any political party aspiring to conquer and exercise political power aims to spread its influence and hegemony as rapidly as possible over a greater and greater part of the population. From this point of view, associations can turn out to be efficient instruments, able to secure the support of a certain fringe of civil society. In order to "take it over," a political group may proceed in a variety of ways: it may corrupt the associations' leaders by granting them hidden advantages; it may have active militants within the associative movement, who appear attractive to part of the disadvantaged population (giving speeches that address social issues); or it may incite the creation, within the associational movement, of new groups or new frameworks of collaboration whose support is a given.

However, if the state or its parts or even local governments may need civil society for reasons of "politics," the latter may also find itself needing the collaboration of the former to rise to the top and realize its objectives of participation in the development of the city. Indeed, most associations, in order to exist, that is to say, to function and carry on with activities corresponding to their present objectives, will need to receive a municipal grant or a contract. It may also be for them a matter of receiving administrative consent or backing from the municipality in order to obtain recognition they can use with donor agencies.

Associations without resources serious enough to function and seeking recognition within the community may become easy prey of politicians, in particular of that privileged fraction that has access to financial resources and local power. It is interesting to note that several associative leaders of the Dakar suburbs (Pikine and Guédiawaye) have become "mayors" or active members of councils in their municipalities, following the local elections of 2001. For most of them, their political legitimacy is the result of

their past activities in the area of development, but mainly of the concrete social results their activities have produced. The Parti Démocratique Sénégalais leader of the presidential majority in Senegal since February 2000 was right to bet on these leaders to win several municipal offices.

The excitement provoked by health committees when they first started led to a dynamic of takeovers on the part of politicians eager to turn them into political instruments. It was therefore not very surprising to hear a member of the health committee in Pikine declare: "I got here [into the health committee] by being a politician." Despite its triviality, this declaration is revealing of the importance of political determinants in influencing the composition of health committee officers in Senegal.

One study indicates that, in some cases, the traditional authorities in the outlying areas (marabouts, politicians, mayors, deputies in the assembly) are the ones proposing the creation of the committee secretariats with their own candidates. All the assembly has to do is approve the already constituted slate of officers.

Furthermore, the social status given by being a health committee's office member (or secretariat) is such that some do all they possibly can to become part of it. As a result, the various social categories in the assembly of the committee are not correctly represented.

Participation and Empowerment

Participation should not be considered a value in itself, a criterion of behavior one should respect only because somebody would have qualified it as morally good. The behaviors of participation or withdrawal reflect a state of mind, expectations, calculations, and prognoses. Each actor is going to act or react depending on both the opportunities s/he thinks exist in the experience s/he is living through and on his or her own abilities to seize them. In this sense, participation (and its opposite) is never selfless. It is always structured by motivating elements and factors of reticence. In this sense, it is rational behavior even if it does not give rise to explicit and formalized reasoning.

We must therefore question certain normative dimensions and models of participation at that level. In an interesting study by the World Bank (*Community Participation in Development Projects: The World Bank Experience, World Bank Discussion Paper No. 6* [Washington, DC: World Bank, 1987]), Samuel Paul uncovers four levels of intensity:

1. The exchange of information: the people responsible for the projects exchange information with the populations who benefit from them in order to facilitate the implementation of actions.
2. Consultation: the opportunity to give their opinion on the various aspects of the initiatives is granted to the beneficiaries, to make it possible for them to contribute to their realization.
3. Decision making: at this high level of participation, decisions are taken by the beneficiaries, alone or with the help of the people responsible for and the organizers of the projects.
4. The realization of projects: the beneficiaries not only make the decisions, they also undertake the actions themselves.

This proposition, which has the advantage of circumscribing and posing the normative axes of participation in a simplistic manner, does not offer any specific tools that would socialize the operational modes of interaction between the participants and the client-groups. Moreover, the analysis does not propose the boundaries between the various levels of intensity.

Empowerment is a much-used concept in recent development literature; this is to point out a participation level of the municipalities and groups, which confers on them power, responsibility, capacity of initiative, and the like.

But, it turns out that empowerment is a ubiquitous and multiform concept that cumulates various problematics, depending on participative logics, the nature of projects, and the level of interaction between client groups and outside agencies. The "empowerment" approach supposes an attitude able to guide intervention. Any discussion on empowerment starts with the acknowledgment that community groups are *disempowered.* This means that they cannot exercise any power over the resources they need in order to ensure their well-being. The approach is organized around the idea that people and groups have capacities to realize the necessary transformations to ensure their access to resources, even to control them.

There are generally four parts to the process of making empowerment an instrument:

1. Participation. Here we can detect a progression from the defense of purely individual interests to the control of collective resources. The approach centered around empowerment must stimulate and sustain

such a progression in order for everyone to exercise their rights and take their responsibilities, participating in the decisions that affect their lives (for example, the distribution of services, the revision of goals, the utilization of local resources and the strategic planning of activities). This vision is based on principles of cooperation and solidarity that are the foundations of an approach structured by the concepts of "equity," "transparency," and "good governance."

2. Communication. At this level, empowerment offers something of a supply and regulatory system for interactive communication between the different participants in the projects, but also with the poles of decision and the bodies responsible for the execution at the local level (municipalities, rural communities, suburban authorities, and sensitive groups, such as women and children). The basic supports are very wide. The various situations require specific communication responses: social communication, which favors thinking and awareness must be given great importance, as well as educational communication, which postulates perfect interaction between the projects' managers and the beneficiaries, in a direct, localized manner, all of which takes place in a participative direction.

3. Critical conscience. There are three levels: the development of a collective conscience; the development of a social conscience (individual and collective problems are influenced by the way a society is organized); and the development of a political conscience (the solutions to problems go through acts of social change).

4. Competence. The logic of competence is based on three capacities: to choose, to decide, and to implement.

The four dimensions of empowerment are interwoven like a cable made of several strands braided together, whereby each one reinforces the others while finding itself reinforced.

We can distinguish three types of empowerment. The first is individual, which takes place on four simultaneous fronts: participation, self-esteem, competence, and critical conscience. This is a passage from a condition without power, dis-empowerment, to a condition of having been "empowered,"

that is to say a condition capable of acting in relation to one's own choices. A second variance of empowerment is related to the community. It rests on the forces of the environment, a strategic orientation based on cooperation, the free and wide circulation of information, the strengthening of the sense of belonging to a community, and local democracy. The people make decisions or they delegate representatives to take part in the decisions that affect them directly or indirectly.

The third type is self-empowerment. It is a conservative current that denies the recourse of collective action in a Sartrian perspective and remains fundamentally passive and impervious to social change. The level of political conscience as a dimension of empowerment finds all its importance here.

We may wish to reflect on the various types of participation, in examining the forms of manipulation by client groups, via participative methods. One can distinguish, on the one hand, the forms of participation deriving from an endogenous dynamic and, on the other hand, those that are more like a machination by specialists anxious to reach, in a factual manner, the objectives assigned to an action of community development. At this level, participation is simply manipulative or passive. Individuals participate by being consulted or answering questions. The interaction process between project managers and client groups does not proceed from a logic of sharing the decision-making process, and the professionals are not obliged to adapt to local needs and collective expectations in the strategic planning of activities.

Interactive participation leads individuals in the groups to participate in the concept in its planning and in the follow up of the activities in a social development process. The frameworks of consultation and coordination between sectors of activities are often the objects of institutionalization.

Participation through material motivation is structured by immediate needs that are not anchored in a long-term temporal horizon. A demobilization process may occur as soon as the stimuli stop. Participation built on a self-mobilization structure is a matter of initiatives that are independent of outside institutions in order to bring changes into the social system. It supposes control over resources and an ability to mobilize additional outside resources.

Conclusions

The partnership between community associations and local governments maintains, teaches, and continues the debate on local development. It stresses

the necessity to remove the ambiguity that would exist, for example, between municipal and local development. If municipal development directly questions the organization, the management, and the means of the municipal institution as an apparatus, local development would be tied to community dynamics, whether or not this development is carried out by the municipality.

The basic community associations in Africa, south of the Sahara, have turned out to be real levers of development initiatives in the last few years. The institutionalization of spaces of consultation and social dialogue they have helped set up may secure the structural bases of a real participative management of the city.

The efficiency of local associations may be seen in their positioning of official social development programs as poles of social intermediation; but they are seriously handicapped by the informal and personal character of their operations, and they have difficulty keeping their identity when confronted with the solicitations and logics of politicians at the local government level.

VI. ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

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This publication is made possible through support provided by the Urban Programs Team of the Office of Poverty Reduction in the Bureau of Economic Growth, Agriculture and Trade, U.S. Agency for International Development under the terms of the Cooperative Agreement No. GEW-A-00-02-00023-00. The opinions expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Agency for International Development or the Woodrow Wilson Center.

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