

DECENTRALISATION, LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND PATH DEPENDENCY THEORY

Ambrose T. Kessy¹

Abstract

Tanzania has embarked on several radical measures to restructure its economy and governance structures, including local governments. For more than four decades, Tanzania has been striving relentlessly for effective decentralisation measures, yet the progress has been slow. The country has passed through several phases of decentralisation, with each phase inheriting some criticised characteristics that have been difficult to dismantle in the successive phases. For example, previously recognised mistakes have continued to block any attempts to diverge from the direction set by the Ujamaa policies. It is argued here that various attempts at decentralisation by the central government since the 1960s in Tanzania have fallen short of the government's intentions to establish effective local governance. This being the case, two important questions prevail: Why has Tanzania made little progress towards effective decentralisation, despite various attempts to devolve powers from the centre? Why has Tanzania not fully decentralised, as echoed in the policy paper on Decentralisation-by-Devolution (D-by-D)? There have been a number of explanations for this retardation along the path to decentralisation. This article reflects upon the tenability of path dependency theory which posits that the longer an institution has been in place, the more resilient it is to change.

Key Words: *decentralisation, path dependency, local autonomy, citizen participation, accountability and transparency*

Introduction and background

The past decentralisation policies in Tanzania have been shaped by a number of historical influences. The culture of centralism inherited from colonial local administration, followed by the philosophy of *Ujamaa*, dominated the thinking of political leaders and local bureaucrats in realizing local governance (Kessy 2008, 2011). The culture of centralism also weakened local government institutions, rendering them incapable to deliver services (Mutahaba and Pastory 2015). Given also the country's weak economic base and scarce financial resources available to the local authorities, the likelihood that reforms have been implemented so far would have broken from the past attempts (1970s-1980s) which were characterised by a

¹ Department of Political Science and Public Administration, University of Dar es Salaam

lack of effective citizen participation, weak mechanisms of accountability, a lack of transparency, and a loss of local autonomy (Kessy and McCourt 2010).

Accordingly, this article begins with a review of path dependency theory and later sketches the background of decentralisation in Tanzania. The key objective is to reveal a *critical juncture* created under various attempts of decentralisation in Tanzania which has continued to lock in the process of further reforms. By critical juncture, this refers to a particular point in the history of an institution, when a particular decision is made which will continue to influence the future outcomes of its policies and these become hard to change. In short, “the form taken by present-day policies and institutions is, in some instances, highly conditioned by seemingly contingent events in the distant past” (Rast, 2012: 7).

In order to make a strong case that decentralisation attempts in Tanzania have been ‘path dependent’, there is the need to first establish the various attempts of decentralisation reforms that have been implemented since 1961. Secondly, there is the need to demonstrate the motives for these reforms and the sequence of decentralisation policies. This article tries to explain the path of decentralisation that has been implemented in Tanzania using path dependency theoretical analysis to identify the reasons for the retarded decentralisation.

Path dependency theory

Path dependency theory has dominated the literature on institutional change for two decades (Krasner 1994 cited by Gains et al. 2005). Essentially, the thesis asserts that a return to policy development and implementation occurs because a committed critical juncture emerges at a particular time in a political system (McCourt 2005, 2006; Stoker 2004, David 1994, Mahoney 2001, Greener 2002). To show that a particular political institution or policy has been path dependent, one has to identify the circumstances which prevailed before a critical juncture was made. Botticini and Eckstein (2006: 1) agree:

To show that there is path dependency . . . one has to describe the exact sequencing of events related to the initial change and show that they had a permanent effect on the choice and distribution observed later.

This point underlines the significant differences between a path dependency analysis and an historical approach: the latter seeks to group a number of causal factors into a single cause, while the former deals separately with a number of causes. Path dependency refers to a confluence of social and economic factors which “coalesce into a single cause” (McCourt 2006: 161). Accordingly, the further the initial point of some event occurs from the process, the harder it becomes to shift from one path

to another (cf. Gorges 2001). This means that any change after a critical juncture is unlikely because after new policies have become the established norm, it is difficult to reverse back from what is now the standard practice and return to a previous arrangement that prevailed prior to a difficult period in the past.

Path dependency theory has three main phases:

- a) Critical juncture: events trigger a move toward a particular path as one of two possibilities.
- b) The period of reproduction: in which positive feedback mechanisms reinforce the movement along one path.
- c) The path comes to an end when new events discharge the long-lasting equilibrium.

Similarly, McCourt observes that path dependency has three stages:

- a') an initial critical juncture when the path is embedded;
- b') increasing returns after adoption of the path; and
- c') "lock in" as each step down the path increases commitment to the initial choice and reluctance to change (McCourt 2006: 159-160).

All three stages or phases offered by these two scholars overlap in explaining path dependency.

However, a more elaborate analytical explanation is provided by Mahoney (2001) who lists five components of theory. The first component, referred to as antecedent historical conditions, defines the range of options which are available to actors at the key choice point. This is similar to what David (1994) calls the initial point condition, where political decision makers make a choice which will become a reference point for the future. The second component is a critical juncture, where a particular option such as policy, coalition of institutions or government is selected from among two or more alternatives (Mahoney 2001). The third component is institutional or structural persistence, which triggers the fourth component, reactive sequence. In this component, the actors respond to prevailing arrangements through a series of predictable responses and counter-responses. Finally, the reactions which are produced in this component are channelled to the point of a final outcome which is regarded as a resolution of the conflict (Mahoney 2001). In short, the key argument from the path-dependence arguments is that we "usually see the weight of past policies as positively reinforcing existing institutions and programs" (Levy 2005: 134). This being the case, "the weight of the past can also lead to rupture if the past is seen as a bad thing" (ibid).

Criticisms of path dependency theory

Despite theoretical soundness in the study of institutional change, the applicability of path dependency to the study of local government per se yet to be widely recognized in local governance studies. To some extent the theory has been used, for example, in the study of public sector reforms in developing countries including Malaysia (see McCourt 2005, 2006) and recently in the study of local government reform programmes [hereafter LGRP] in Britain (Gains et al. 2005). These authors agree that “factors other than increasing returns are often at play in policy and institutional processes. These factors explain how policies and institutions change in a way that the path dependency argument tends to overlook” (Gains et al. 2005: 25). Using the United Kingdom Local Government Act 2000, the authors argue against the theoretical underpinnings of path dependency because the legislation broke away from the path followed by previous policies; the Labour Government which came into power in 1997 had been able to introduce major changes in the way local government authorities made their decisions.

Additionally, the theory does not explain clearly how institutions work and interact with their environments. In this vein, McCourt (2006) sees path dependency as facing three unsolved problems when explaining institutional changes: (1) it rejects an incremental view of the historical approach; (2) it neglects the role of varied yet important causal factors and relies on a single cause; and (3) the role of political agency such as particular individuals and groups is totally neglected, to the extent of treating them as if they were machine minders on a political assembly line. This latter problem is emphasised by Deeg (2001:8) who argues that “increasing returns must often (or perhaps usually) be cultivated by actors” (i.e. they do not happen automatically).

A final criticism on path dependency concerns its inability to unlock once it has locked into the path. Moreover, the theory fails to provide clear explanations on when there is a transition from an old path to a new one. Other scholars have gone even further, arguing that the so-called critical juncture can be broken once economic or social crises, for example, provide leaders with new options to develop new policy and hence break away from the path. For example, Gains et al. (2005) argue that a society can break the bond of the path when there is pressure within the organizations themselves, as in the case of strong leadership in English local government. They make a strong point that the policy introduced by the current Labour government was ‘a radical break from past policy approaches both in the willingness to impose change and its form’.

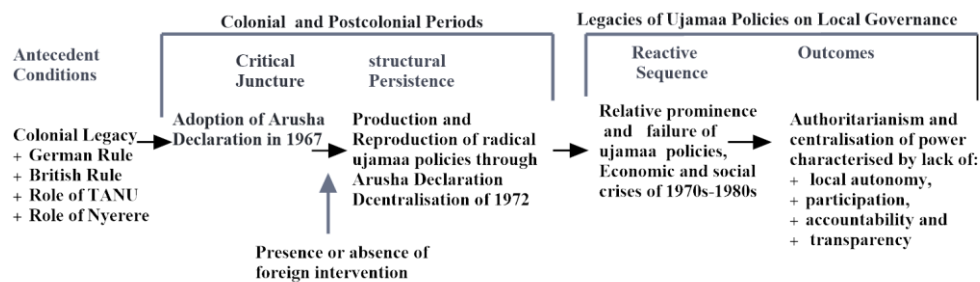
The criticisms above suggest that under some conditions, the glue determining the direction of the path can be softened to allow some deviation. However, the question

is: will those deviations be sustainable for a long time and under what conditions? For example, in the case of the executive-mayor model in the United Kingdom, the role of mayor being accorded executive powers for some mayoral seats but not others is a practice still under pressure, because not all local government authorities have voted for it. Similarly, the fact that governments may rely on a single policy does not seem to weaken the power of path dependency theory, as from that perspective it is anticipated that some cosmetic changes will be permissible at a particular point in time, yet in the long run the policy or institution is likely to return and go back to following the same path again. In other words, what can be seen as new forces or changes could be sporadic and short-lived, since the increasing positive returns gained initially are not wiped out altogether during the pressure for change. In fact, some institutions that have tried to break away from a path for some time, do come back again to the initial policy trajectory, as seen in the case of decentralisation policies in Tanzania (Kessy and McCourt 2010).

Conceptual model of path dependency in the study of decentralisation in Tanzania

Using the Mahoney’s model to explain path dependency, the following model is derived to account for the path of decentralisation in Tanzania (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Path-Dependency Explanation of Decentralisation Policies in Tanzania



Source: Adapted from Mahoney (2001)

This model of path decentralisation essentially shows that there have been a number of antecedent conditions prior to the critical juncture in 1967. These include the local legacy under both Germany and Britain, accompanied by the roles of the first President of Tanganyika and later Tanzania (Julius K. Nyerere), and the ruling party after independence, Tanganyika African National Union (TANU). All these antecedent factors created strong elements of central government with a weak local government system regarding local autonomy, citizens’ participation, accountability and transparency.

The confluence of these factors led to the adoption of the Arusha Declaration in 1967, which produced several *Ujamaa* policies aimed at maintaining central authority. As discussed in the next sections, the ruling party and government had two options from which to choose their direction forward: a liberal or a socialist approach. In this case, the latter that was adopted, leading to the production and reproduction of *Ujamaa* policies in the 1970s, which eventually led to the abolition of local governments in 1972 in favour of a strong central government. This was followed by a reactive sequence of several policies, particularly on the relative prominence of *Ujamaa* policies which again culminated in the economic and social crises in the 1970s, as has been widely recognised. The outcome of these reactive sequences of policies was the introduction of local governments in the early 1980s; according to some observers, this was the breaking away from the path of decentralisation inherited in beginning of the 1970s (Mollel and Tollenaar 2013). However, the outcome was the establishment of authoritarian government which still maintained many powers at the centre, despite the call for ‘decentralisation by devolution’ (D-by-D) as pronounced through the Local Government Policy Paper (1998), Local Government Reform Programmes (LGRP) I and II (1999-2008 and 2008-2014, respectively).

Under the fifth phase of government, the place of local governments’ autonomy in Tanzania has further shrunk. This can be observed through the initiatives taken by the President of Tanzania, John Magufuli, to appoint all the Executive Directors of city and district councils who were used to be appointed by the Minister for Local Government. This implies that the officers will be more upwardly accountable to central government rather than to the elected members of their respective councils. Moreover, concerning the Regional and District Commissioners, who are the central government representatives at the level of the regions and districts, their executive powers have been increased over the local councils. This move appears to undermine the spirit of the D-by-D, as stipulated in the Policy Paper on Local Government Reforms in Tanzania.

The following sections provide an overview of the path that decentralisation has passed in Tanzania before and after independence.

Overview of decentralisation trajectories in Tanzania and path dependency explanations

Efforts for decentralisation in Tanzania date back to 1926 when the British colonial administration introduced its policy of ‘indirect rule’ in some districts in (then) Tanganyika. The policy created Native Authorities which were to be administered through nominated traditional leaders with limited administrative, legislative and judicial powers over the native population. This form of local administration was essentially aimed at empowering local people in a few selected areas to facilitate

collection of taxes and keeping law and order. The post-colonial state maintained and continued to use almost all the local administrative structures that were inherited from the colonial period (Kessy 2011, Max 1991).

From the 1960s to the early 1970s, the newly appointed officers in central and local government inherited almost all their predecessors' attitudes and administrative style which were incompatible with the vision of the new government envisioned by Nyerere (Pratt 1976). During this period, traditional chiefs' powers were curtailed under the banner of creating a more representative system of local government. However, this appeared to be essentially a move towards establishing central power consolidation all the way down to the grassroots level of the citizenry by means of 'deconcentration'.

Accordingly, three categories of local government were created: 1) the native authorities, 2) the district and 3) town councils and one municipality. These local institutions appeared to carry characteristics that to a great extent were the same as those experienced during the colonial period, especially in regard to the lack of citizens' participation, weak mechanisms of accountability, and a general absence of transparency. Further attempts were also made to repeal the Native Authority Ordinance (Cap.72) of 1953. These changes resulted in the formation two categories of local authorities (Max 1991): the district and town council (these were established under Cap.333) and municipal councils of Dar-es-Salaam (established under Cap.105).

From the early 1970s to early 1980s, Tanzania experienced more serious and radical changes on its path of decentralisation, which were reinforced by the policies of *Ujamaa* initiated in 1967. For example, the year 1972 will be remembered as a turning point for a serious attempt to restructure local government in Tanzania. However, while many enthusiasts of local governance were expecting to see devolution of powers to the local levels, their expectations were dashed when the system turned into a deconcentration of powers with the dissolution of local government authorities. This was followed by replacement of local government officers with highly qualified and experts from the central government (Mwaikusa 1996).

A dramatic turnaround for decentralisation policy development occurred during the period of 1982-1990. During this time, local government authorities were re-introduced in 1982, after the country experienced severe social and economic crises. The re-introduction of local government authorities was apparently due to some discouraging lessons gained from the decentralisation reforms of 1972. Moreover, due to economic and social problems that urban and rural councils were facing in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Tanzania had no alternative other than to reintroduce

local governments (Mukandala 1994a, 1998; Hyden and Kalstrom 1993, Therkildsen 2000, Mogella 1987, Ngware and Chamungwana 1996, Mukandala 1994b, Hyden 1999). However, these changes which were brought under the new system of local governance in 1980s were still the same as the previous ones (Mutizwa-Mangiza 2001).

Critical juncture toward Tanzania's decentralisation policies: The Arusha Declaration (1967)

The overview of decentralisation in Tanzania just sketched provides a good stepping stone for explaining the path of decentralisation in Tanzania under the umbrella of path dependency theory. The review shows that the past four decades of decentralisation under various schemes have yielded virtually the same results with regard to local autonomy, citizens' participation, accountability and transparency. But why is this? Applying path dependency theory in the study over four decades, one can clearly identify the confluence of various forces and options that led to the critical juncture in 1967 and adoption of a new policy in the form of the Arusha Declaration. The major events of this period are summarised in Table 1 on the following page for greater clarity of the development of a critical juncture which seems to have locked in all the major phases of decentralisation so far attempted. Table 1 provides a time framework for the path that decentralisation has taken in Tanganyika (now Tanzania) from the colonial period to the present and the critical juncture.

Accordingly, the adoption of Arusha Declaration in 1967 seems to be the critical juncture during the postcolonial state, as by that particular time the newly independent regime was facing myriad challenges in establishing an effective local government, coupled with pressure from the nationalist political party, Tanganyika African National Union (TANU). As a consequence, the structure of local government created after the declaration appeared to be the bedrock for future attempts to decentralise central authority in Tanzania.

Table 1: Timeline for Decentralisation in Tanzania

Year	Event	Comment
[1926]	Enactment of the Native Authority Ordinance (Cap.72) and the Establishment of Native Authorities	Indirect Rule established
[1939]	The Second World War: British Secretary of State for the Colonies, Creech-Jones, announced “a democratic and efficient system of local government was to be set up”	New elements of nationalism reinforced after WWII
[1945]	Enactment of the Local Government Ordinance, 1953 (Cap.333)	Repealed Native Authority (1926)
[1954]	The birth of Tanganyika African National Union (TANU)	The dominant political party which later became state-party
[1961]	Independence: inherited Westminster model First Government starts	Transition of political power from colonial (British) to Tanganyika government under Nyerere
[1962]	Republic form of Government Abolition of Local Chiefs’ Powers	Restructuring of local government authorities, loss of autonomy. Centralisation of power
[1965]	Adoption of One-Party State	Party supremacy
[1967]	Arusha Declaration (<i>Ujamaa</i> Policy)	The birth of <i>Ujamaa</i> ideology- This is seen as a critical juncture
[1972]	Abolition of local governments (Madaraka Mikoani)	Deconcentration form of decentralisation established
[1973-76]	Villagization Policy (<i>Ujamaa</i> Villages)	Community participation through self-help projects emphasized
[1979]	Local Government (Elections) Act, 1979	First local elections held
[1982]	Enactment of Local Government Laws No. 7,8,9, 10 & 12	Reactive Sequence
[1984]	Re-introduction of local government	New phase of local government established
[1985]	Second Phase of Government starts	Liberal policies introduced but weaker local government authorities

[1986]	Introduction of Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP)	Tanzania officially signed IMF and World Bank conditions
[1991]	Nyalali Commission on whether to adopt one party or multiparty system	Important commission which among other things recommended an effective system of local government
[1992]	Introduction of Multiparty Politics	Liberal Politics introduced
[1995]	First Multiparty Elections Third Phase of Government starts	For the first time in Tanzanian history strong opposition parties formed
[1996]	LGR Agenda (1996-2000)	Laid foundation for local government Policy Paper
[1997]	Establishment of LGRP Programme (LGRP) Local Administration Act, 1997	This is overall in charge of LGRP implementation
[1998]	Policy Paper on LGRP	Key local government policy document
[1999]	Formal Preparation for Phase 1 began Neighbourhood, Hamlet and Village Multiparty Elections	37 councils included in the first phase of restructuring of councils
[2000]	Amendment of Principal Local Government Acts Implementation of Phase 1 of LGRP started	Local Government Acts of 1982 amended.
[2001]	LGRP Medium Term Plan and Budget (MTP) (2002-2005) endorsed	Donor basket fund approved LGRP budget
[2005]	LGRP Medium Term Plan and Budget (MTP) Fourth Phase of Government starts	The second LGRP budget approved
[2008]	End of LGRP (to be streamlined into the Ministry)	Official ending of LGRP
[2008]	Start of Local Government Reform Programme II	Ended in 2014
[2015]		

Source: Compiled by the Author (2017) from Local Government documents in Tanzania

Assessment decentralisation and local governance in Tanzania

There are several accepted theories available in the literature that can help us to analyse the performance of decentralisation in Tanzania over the last five decades regarding whether decentralisation efforts attempted so far have resulted in an effective system of local governance. These theories provide tools of analysis that presuppose the value of a decentralised system of governance leading to a strong decentralised decision making platform, citizens' participation, accountability, transparency, and human resource autonomy.

These principles are well summarised by Shah (2006): The first of these theorems is *Stigler's menu* (1957) which identifies two principles of jurisdictional design: (i) the closer a representative government is to the people, the better it works; and (ii) citizens should have the right to vote for the kind and amount of public services they want. These two principles suggest that decision making should be moved to the lowest structures of governance consistent with achieving maximal efficiency in the allocation of resources and duties. The second of these theoretical results is the *decentralisation* theorem, which was advanced by Oates (1972: 55), stating that: "each public service should be provided by the jurisdiction having control over the minimum geographic area that would internalise benefits and costs of such provision."

In light of these principles, we now turn to assess the effectiveness of local governance in Tanzania through three dimensions of local governance; these are: (i) local autonomy (with respect to human resources, financial capacities, and decision-making powers); (ii) citizens' participation; and (iii) accountability and transparency. These dimensions of local governance assessment are based on the extensive literature of decentralisation and local governance (Shah, 2006, Turner and Hulme 1997, Grindle and Thomas 1991, Kent et al. 2010, Ghazia 2010, Oxhorn 2004).

(i) Local autonomy

In principle, decentralisation does not mean total independence of local government from the state, but the specification of the powers that are delegated by central government. The doctrine of *ultra vires* (beyond its/their authority) as it applies to the local administration is that "local authorities have no powers except such as defined by the statute" (Page and Goldsmith 1987: 6-7, cf. Byrne 1990 and Elcock 1994). It implies that central government has the right to monitor local authorities to ensure that they comply with the laws of the state. The obligation placed on central government to delegate power while retaining oversight creates a basic structural tension (Kessy and McCourt 2010). In line with the call for local autonomy as one of the fundamental tenets of local governance, three key components are assessed here about Tanzania: Human resource, financial and decision-making powers.

Human resource power. Human resource policies in local government have remained contradictory with the principal legalization guiding decentralisation policies. At the onset of the LGRP I, contradictions arose between the decentralisation policy (1998) and the public service regulations over recruitment of local government staff. The policy paper on decentralisation stipulated that all human resources functions would be devolved to local authorities. On the contrary, the Public Service Regulations (2002) stated that the Public Service Commission (PSC) at national level should be in charge of all human resources issues in local governments. This contradiction paved the way for a revision of the Public Service Regulations (finalised in 2003) which again did not clear out the existing contradictions and instead added that “every local council shall have a Council Employment Board (CEB) which will facilitate the appointment of public servants of the local government authorities . . . working under directives issued by the PSC” (URT 2003: 127). Ironically, all the powers of recruitment appeared to lie with the CEB but actually it is the PSC which was controlling the scene. Even now, the same regulations oblige the local governments to ask for permission from the PSC to recruit their own staff, and the worst of all; they still have no formal powers to discipline their directors. There have been some attempts to establish a legal framework for recruitment in local authorities and to improve human resource management at the local level (Pallangyo and Rees 2010, Kessy 2008).

In practice, however, the powers which have been granted to local authorities in this area remain limited. Human resource powers seem to be granted to the local authorities, when it comes to recruitment, promotion, discipline and other human resource activities. But in reality, however, the Local Government Authorities [hereafter LGAs] cannot recruit any council staff without the approval of the President Office - Public Service Management (PO-PSM). The practice is that the central government is the one in charge of the allocation of resources and staffing for core public services; staff recruitment and deployment remains largely centralised. In 2003, the President’s Office-Public Service Management (PO-PSM) issued the Public Regulations that currently guide personnel management in Local Government Authorities (United Republic of Tanzania 2009 [hereafter URT]). These regulations were based on the Public Service Act No. 8 of 2002 and the Public Service Regulations of 2003 and maintained the powers of central government to transfer staff across ministries, regions and local government authorities when in the public interest (URT 2003: 127). Furthermore, personnel for the health and education sectors were explicitly exempted by President’s Office-Public Service Management from the decentralised and merit-based procedures for recruitment on the basis of ensuring quality control (Shangali 2009).

Local financial powers. The financial powers of LGAs in Tanzania are limited. For example, the Local Government Finance Act No. 9, 1982 defines the revenue sources of local government authorities. The Act provides that the revenue sources consist of the main categories of local government authorities' own revenue sources, shared taxes, central government grants, and donor funding. The Local Government Finance Act 1982 has been amended several times, and for example, some of the own revenue sources that used be provided by the Act, such as the development levy, have been abolished during years 2003-2004. In addition to the amendments to the Act, the revenue sources of the local government authorities are also regulated by regulations made by the Minister responsible for local government. For example, the Minister can, after consultations with stakeholders, make a regulation specifying the distribution of resources of revenue among various levels of local government authorities (Local Government Finances Act, 1982, Section 9A:2). Reforms initiated within reform programmes such as the Local Government Reform Programme (LGRP) play an important part in defining the revenue sources base of the local authorities (Kuusi 2009).

The local government authorities have powers to tax and set rates for levies, fees and charges by making by-laws prescribing them (Local Government Finances Act 1982, Sections 13:1, 14-15). The contents of the bylaws have to be set within the limits established by the Minister responsible for local government. The Minister can, after consultation with the Minister for Finance, make regulations called *rating rules* which prescribe the limitations and impose conditions upon which any local authority or category of local government may make legislation-imposing rates. Using these regulations, the Minister may also provide for procedures that the local authorities have to follow in imposing and collecting rates in their respective areas (Local Government Finances Act 1982, Section 13:2-3). According to PMO-RALG, the rating rules prescribed in the Local Government Finances Act 1982 have not been developed or put in place. Instead, PMO-RALG and Ministry of Finance have periodically issued circulars or guidelines to direct the local government authorities in revenue practices. The lack of standardised rating rules and the irregularity of the instructions fail to provide a transparent and consistent local revenue administration process.

Decision making powers. With regard to decision-making powers, Local Government Authorities implement central government policies, plans and priorities. There are statutory provisions for citizens under their Local Government Authorities to meet regularly in order to deliberate and decide on any matters which affect them. For instance, the Local Government (District Authorities) Act No.7 of 1982 as amended by Act No.6 of 1999 provides a framework for village assemblies to conduct public hearings and take the resolutions to the Ward Development

Committee which are later to be considered at the District Council level. However, no decision is legally enforceable without the consent of some central government executive (Kabagile, 2006). Furthermore, apart from casual labourers, Local Government Authorities have no powers of even effectively disciplining their apparent workforce. The Local Government Service Commission is the appointing and disciplining authority in respect of all employees. However, the Commission is hardly close to the Local Authorities. In this regard, reservations are not that the central government controls the employees as such, but rather that local governments are denied the right of even deciding whether they like, or even need, a particular employee (Ngware and Haule 1992). What is seen in practice is that the local authorities are constantly receiving a chain of orders and directives from above. Hence, the failure of implementing decisions depends, to a large degree, on the nature of the command developed from the top.

(ii) Citizens' participation

Democratic local governance presupposes that people must be fully engaged in politics not only at elections times but also in other spheres which influence policy formulation. As our case councils have shown, local people have access to local governance only at the implementation stage of a particular programme or decision by local or central government, rather than having their voices heard in the setting of the policy agenda. On the other hand, it is not surprising to find that local people are less interested in having direct participation in local decision making bodies in Tanzania's political landscape today as the system was once tightly closed under the *Ujamaa* period where participation in the form of representation through political rallies, attending village meetings and community projects was emphasized, while direct participation in decision making bodies such as in council meetings was altogether discouraged. In fact, the ruling elites in most post-colonial governments in Africa, Tanzania in particular, confused popular participation with compulsory mobilization. Ultimately, people were asked to participate in development projects, but not given the opportunity to take part in the process of determining policies or modifying them. Moreover, compulsory communal participation during *Ujamaa villagization* was taken as citizens' participation to legitimize centrally designed policies. Consequently, participation was equated with casting ballots in elections, participating in political party activities, and self-help projects. In short, this meant that the state-party organs engineered all these forms of participation to the extent that it became mandatory for everyone to participate in these arenas (Max 1991; Warioba, 1999 and Mukandala, 1998). This is not unique to Tanzania, as even in some successfully decentralised countries such as Uganda, increase in non-electoral participation has been limited (Dauda, 2006; Saito, 2003). Breakdown of

communication between local officials and citizens has likely resulted in a lack of awareness about the opportunities offered by decentralisation. Nonetheless, these forms of participation were heralded as good avenues for building social bond and rural development in Tanzania (Mogella 1987, Mollel and Tollenaar 2013).

Looking at structures of participation in Tanzania, one can observe that local citizens have been provided with a wide scope of participatory opportunities. In practical terms, the hamlets and villages councils can be regarded as ideal institutions for direct citizens' participation, while participation in the Ward Development Committee (WDC) and councils is more indirect. In general, legal provisions guarantee citizens the right to obtain information from their local government, notably the local budget and overviews of decisions taken by the council. These participatory structures have been established at the most local level in Tanzania, although their functioning in practice appears to be problematic (see case studies below). Finally, legal texts guiding the information provision by LGA's appear to be relatively weak as well as formal answerability obligations towards ordinary citizens. Sanction mechanisms still center very much on elections. Recent government reform programs, however, do seem to recognize and address some of these legal flaws.

(iii) Accountability and transparency

It is commonly argued that decentralisation significantly opens up more avenues for transparency and accountability at the local level, and thus the voters who elect their representatives to public office will have strict control over what they do and how they should be sanctioned when they fail to meet expected roles (Dillinger 1994, Manor 1999, Smoke, 2003). The traditional mechanism for controlling such elected leaders has been through regular free and fair elections. It is also assumed that the appointed officers will have full control over their own actions through managerial procedures such as adhering to rules and regulations, pressure from media, NGOs and the central authority which will make these appointed officers more accountable, responsive and transparent in executing their primary functions. In this case, transparency and accountability are closely related in the establishment of effective local governance. For example, "access to information is essential for citizen empowerment. Citizens entrust their governments with power through elections, and with resources through the payment of taxes. Those who are entrusted with this power bear a responsibility not only to serve, but also to inform citizens and encourage the public to participate in their decisions and actions" (Transparency International Annual Report, 2007:11). On the other hand, "the exercise of the right to information enables citizens to keep their governments and public bodies accountable. This can hinder corrupt practices that benefit from opaque or obscure

regimes. It is citizens who should ultimately be the source of power, as they bear the consequences of its abuse” (ibid).

However, given the experience from Tanzania (See Kessy, 2008; Kessy and McCourt, 2010), and despite a number of attempts made by government of Tanzania to make the system more transparent and accountable, the evidence suggests that the majority of local councils in Tanzania have become less accountable and open to the public. One obvious reason noted by the authors above is that even though there is a high turnout in both local and general elections, (except for the 2010 general elections which recorded a low turnout of 42%) and some efforts made by councils to post information on notice boards, their effect on accountability and transparency is yet to be clearly established. The studies so far conducted in Tanzania’s local government show that even the posting of financial information on notice boards is not evidence that councils are more transparent than before the previous reforms (Kessy 2008, Kessy and McCourt 2010). As long as other council information, such as the minutes of the councils and committee meetings, decisions about the budget process, and corruption issues, is still kept secret, the process of establishing effective mechanisms for accountability and transparency is unlikely to bear any positive results.

Factors responsible for the retarded decentralisation in Tanzania

There are a number of factors responsible for the retarded decentralisation policies in Tanzania. The following factors, which are not exhaustive, may provide some more realistic understanding of why Tanzania has chosen decentralisation policies and practices that have provided restricted authority and resources to LGAs. They also shed some light on the possibilities that recentralization and further weakening of LGAs is likely to continue in Tanzania because of the initial path of decentralisation created during Ujamaa policies.

Resistance from vested interests

A long-centralized administration tends to create some vested interests in both national and local bureaucrats (Kessy and McCourt 2010). The experience from Tanzania suggests that central government has a long-held vested interest of maintaining central control over local governments through its Regional Commissioners [RCs] and District Commissioners [DCs] (Max 1991, Kessy 2008). In the same vein, citizens’ participation is about power and control and it is unlikely that central and local bureaucrats will surrender some of the powers that they have been enjoying since independence. Participation through consultation is likely to continue for a long time unless radical measures are taken to genuinely inform and involve local citizens in all local decision-making bodies. Thus, while LGRP II

seemed to have new vigour in restoring the concept of D-by-D, changing the old-fashioned mindset of both the national and local bureaucrats seems to be the biggest challenge (Kessy 2011).

Implementation problems

Implementation of public policy is perhaps the most difficult part of the policy cycle (Hill 2005, Grindle and Thomas 1991). Indeed, introducing a reformist initiative to change a long-established system of centralization is fraught with difficulty and risk. In the normal circumstances, policy makers and analysts of decentralisation often assume that once the formulation of the policy, accompanied by some pieces of legislation, has been made, this is the end of the policy process; in fact, it may be just the beginning. Leach et al. (2006) briefly list some of the problems associated with policy implementation: 1) Resources: this is perhaps the biggest obstacle for policy implementation; for example, governments often specify the means but do not provide adequate resources; 2) Coordination: without effective coordination between various sectoral policies, different levels of government and actors, the language of the policy concerned is likely to fail to achieve its objectives; 3) Policy has both intended and unintended effects; applied to the case of decentralisation policies, the intended effects are normally to transfer power and resources from the centre to the lower levels of government, but the unintended effects could be creation of more loopholes for local elite capture, corruption, and problems of accountability (Kessy 2008).

The role of Nyerere

Decentralisation relies heavily on the nature of central government's leadership. Successful implementation of decentralisation is also a product of complementary institutions of governance. In this sense, the drivers for decentralisation are the central government bureaucrats who have the power to interfere with the trend of decentralisation at the local level (Initiative for Policy Dialogue 2003).

While some problems of effective establishment of local governance in Tanzania can be linked to path dependency and the weakness in the design and implementation of the reform, others can be related to the role of national leadership and political party in power (TANU and later CCM). For example, the role of national leadership, particularly that of Nyerere (who was the leading architect of designing the past decentralisation policies 1961-1980s) cannot be disregarded. Moreover, the legacy of *Ujamaa* policy (African Socialism), which was characterised by centralism and non-transparency in the management of government affairs and passivity of the citizens which was created during the compulsory participation in community work can be another important explanatory for the failure of the past decentralisation in

Tanzania. Currently, the role of Magufuli in defining central-local relations seems to embody many of the key characteristics observed under Nyerere's era.

Path dependency as an explanatory framework

While other factors could have played a role in the retarded decentralisation in Tanzania, path dependency provides a better theoretical explanation about the nature of decentralisation policies in Tanzania. The review of various phases of decentralisation in Tanzania paints a clumsy picture about the impact of these reforms on local governance on the three dimensions of good local governance discussed in the previous section (local autonomy, citizens' participation, accountability and transparency). Some elements of resistance to change are evident. For example, the reluctance of central government to change the constitution and local government legislation to be in line with the reforms (these issues are currently debated in the new constitution). One is limited autonomy on finance and human resources, another is continuing intervention from central bureaucrats in the affairs of the local authorities, and a third is the persistent problem of upward transparency and accountability at both council and sub-council levels. Added together, the impression given here suggests that some elements of the past decentralisation policies were clearly present in the LGRP II; and it underscores the point stressed by path dependency theory, viz. that once a particular course of action has been introduced in the past, it can be virtually impossible to reverse.

Looking again at the LGRP II and its goals, objectives and modalities for implementation (especially the problems and solutions it identified) there was no evidence of any serious attempt to solve the fundamental problems inhibiting successful implementation of local government reforms. The lack of tangible results was not due to lack of commitment and effort on the part of PMO-RALG but was due in part to the sheer scale and complexity of the undertaking. It must be said that it was also due in part to the reluctance or at least the lack of enthusiasm in central government and the sectors for harmonisation and the changes that will evolve.

Conclusion

This article has discussed some key variables that have influenced the path which decentralisation has taken in Tanzania. The analysis has described how central-local relations in Tanzania in each period since the 1960s have made an impact in the way these influences shaped the power relations between the centre and localities.

The path of decentralisation in Tanzania has been affected by various factors. These include colonial intervention, the effects of the post-colonial local administration, the economic crises that engulfed the country in the 1970s to early 1980s, and the uneven implementation of various decentralisation policies. All of these processes have

contributed somewhat to shaping the path of decentralisation in Tanzania. However, one significant observation that can be derived from all these considerations is that stressing the role of path dependency itself has greater explanatory power than merely drawing attention to these other influential factors. Unlike other explanatory models e.g. historical determinism, path dependency allows that some marginal changes will occur down the road, but ultimately, they end up reinforcing the direction or the path of the original course of action. As was brought to light in this discussion, at one time the route of decentralisation seemed to be broken during the late 1980s and early 1990s, but later the process went back to its original path. In reality, the phenomenon of path dependency tends to limit the options that decision makers have at their disposal in practical terms; it is this which renders them resistant to fundamental change.

The LGRP II also showed some similar trends to the earlier decentralisation policies in Tanzania in terms of proving local governments with more powers especially on finance and human resources. What does this imply in terms of policy implementation? This seems to suggest that the slow progress of LGRP II on two dimensions of local governance can be linked to resistant to change from both the national and local bureaucrats. These bureaucrats seem to be reluctant to shed off some significant powers to the lower levels of government apparently for fear of losing control over these local institutions. As a result, local authorities have continued to have limited financial and human resources powers with little protection from the national constitution despite the fact that the local government policy paper (1998) stipulates for D-by-D. In the end, some of the key objectives of the current LGRP II appeared to be a replica of the past efforts to decentralise the system of governance. Why is this the case? The historical antecedents of local governance in Tanzania show a clear pattern of moving along the path of centralization rather than decentralisation. This path can only be altered if there is a strong push from the national and local bureaucrats in a way that some of the contentious legal and policy documents are harmonised, and there is an overhaul changing of mindsets of the key players in the implementation of the LGRP to go in line with the motto of D-by-D.

While changing of organizational structure can be easy, changing the mindsets of key players in governance is perhaps the most difficult part in policy implementation. Nevertheless, this kind of push must be sustained since the more attempts are made to change the course of a policy, the more it reinforces itself further down the path despite allowing some cosmetic changes to occur.

The question of what it is about a policy that makes it path dependent does not admit a single, conclusive answer; rather it remains an open question for scholars applying the concept with theoretical and empirical corollaries. It would also be seen from the

above discussion that although a path dependency explanation can be a convincing argument for the retarded decentralisation in Tanzania, it would be unwise to totally discount the role of other factors such as the first President of Tanzania (Julius Nyerere), the nationalist political party (TANU) and later CCM, and the unstable economic environment.

References

- Botticini M. and Eckstein E. 2006. 'Path Dependence and Occupations', *Palgrave Dictionary of Economics*. Forthcoming.
- Byrne T. 1990. *Local Government in Britain: Everyone Guide to How It All Works*. 5th ed. London: Penguin Books.
- Elcock H. 1994. *Local government: Policy and Management in Local Authorities*. 3rd ed. London: Routledge.
- David, P.A. 1994. Why are the Institutions the Carriers of History? Path Dependency and the Evolution of Conventions. *Organizations and Institutions, Structural Change and Economic Dynamics* 5(2): 205-220.
- Deeg R. 2001. Institutional Change and the Uses and Limits of Path Dependency: The Case of Germany Finance. *Max-Planck-Institut für Gesellschaftsforschung Discussion Paper*. 01/6. November. http://www.mpifg.de/pu/mpifg_dp/dp01-6.pdf Accessed 14th April 2017.
- Dillinger W. 1994. Decentralisation and Its Implications for Urban Service Delivery. UNDP/UNCHS/World Bank, Urban Management Program: Washington DC: World Bank.
- Gains, F. John, P.C. and Stoker, G. 2005. Path Dependency and the Reform of English Local Government. *Public Administration* 83(1): 25-45.
- Ghazia, A. Yilmaz, S. and Gurkan, A. 2010. How to Note: A Framework for the Assessment of Administrative Decentralisation. *Social Development Notes* 129. Washington, DC: The World Bank.
- Gorges M.J. 2001. New Institutionalist Explanations for Institutional Change: A Note of Caution. *Politics* 21(2): 137-145.
- Greener, I. 2002, Understanding NHS Reforms: The Policy-Transfer, Social Learning, and Path Dependency Perspectives, Governance. *An International Journal of Policy, Administration and Institutions* 15(2) April: 161-183.
- Grindle, M.S. and Thomas, J.W. 1991. *Public Choices and Policy Change: The Political Economy of Reform in Developing Countries*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Hill, M. 2005. *The Public Policy Process*. 5th ed. Essex: Pearson Education.
- Hyden, G. and Kalstrom, B. 1993. Structural Adjustment as a Policy Process: The Case of Tanzania. *World Development* 21(9): 1395-1404.
- Hyden, G. 1999. Top-Down Democratization in Tanzania. *Journal of Democracy* 10 (4): 142-155.
- Illiffe, J. 1979. *A Modern History of Tanganyika*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Initiative for Policy Dialogue [IPD]. 2003. Synoptic Guide to Decentralization. Task Force on Decentralization. Columbia University. Released in April.
- Besley, T., Faguet, J-P. and Tommasi, M. 2003. Synoptic Guide to Decentralisation. Discussion paper. Initiative for Policy Dialogue. Unpublished. <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/49818/> Accessed 22nd June 2017.
- Kabagile, A. 2006. Delivery of Public Services in a Devolved System of Governance: The Tanzanian Experience: Paper presented at the 28th African Association for Public Administration and Management Annual Roundtable Conference: *Towards an Effective Delivery of Public Services in Africa*. December 4-8. Arusha, Tanzania.
- Kent, K., Kaiser, K., and Smoke, P. 2010. *The Political Economy of Decentralisation Reforms in Developing Countries: A Development Partner Perspective*. Washington, DC: The World Bank.
- Kessy, A.T. 2011. Local Government Reforms in Tanzania: Bridging the Gap between Theory and Practice. In Research and Education for Democracy in Tanzania (REDET) (ed.) *Democratic Transition in East Africa: Governance and Development at the Grassroots*. Dar es Salaam: TUKI Publishers, pp. 21-48.
- Kessy, A.T. 2008. Local Government Reform Programme (LGRP) and the Challenges of Local Governance in Tanzania: Local Autonomy, Participation, Accountability and Transparency. Unpublished PhD thesis. University of Manchester, UK.
- Kessy, A.T. and McCourt W. 2010. Is Decentralisation Still Recentralization? The Local Government Reform Programme in Tanzania. *International Journal of Public Administration* 33(12): 689-697.
- Kuusi, S. 2009. Aspects of Self Government Tanzania. *Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities*. Unpublished.
- Leach, R., Coaxal, B. and Robins, L. 2006. *British Politics*. Houndmills: Palgrave|MacMillan.
- Levy, J.D. 2005. Redeploying the State: Liberalization and Social Policy in France. In W. Streeck and K. Thelen (eds.) *Beyond Continuity: Institutional Change and Political Economies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 103-126.
- Mahoney, J. 2001. Path-Dependant Explanations of Regime Change: Central America in Comparative Perspectives. *Studies in Comparative International Development* 36(1) Spring: 111-141.
- Manor J. 1999. *The Political Economy of Democratic Decentralisation*. Washington DC: World Bank.
- Max, M.A.O. 1991. *The Development of Local Government in Tanzania*. Dar es Salaam: Education Publishers and Distributors.
- McCourt, W. 2005. Path Dependence and History in the Malaysian Civil Service. *Working Paper* No. 12. Institute for Development Management (IDPM). UK: University of Manchester.
- McCourt W. 2006. *The Human Factor in Governance: Managing Public Employees in Africa and Asia*. Houndmills: Palgrave|MacMillan.

- Mmari, D. 2005. Decentralisation for Service Delivery in Tanzania. Presented at Conference on Building Capacity for the Education Sector in Africa. Oslo, Norway, October 12-14.
- Mogella, C. 1987. Local administration Reforms for Rural Development in Tanzania 1962-1982. Unpublished PhD Thesis. Ottawa, Canada: Carleton University.
- Mollet, H.A. and Tollenaar, A. 2013. Decentralisation in Tanzania: Design and Application in Planning Decisions. *International Journal of Public Administration* 36(5): 344-353.
- Mukandala, R.S. 1998. Decentralisation and Democratization in Tanzania. *Occasional Paper* No. 46, Iowa City: University of Iowa.
- Mukandala, R.S. 1994a. Decentralisation, participation and power in Tanzania. Presented at International Conference on Democratic Decentralisation in Asia and Africa. September 21-23, 1994. Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London.
- Mukandala, R.S. 1994b. An Assessment of People's Participation in Decision Making with Reference to Local Authorities. *A Paper Submitted to the Workshop to Develop Strategies for a National Programme on Governance*, 29-31st March.
- Mutahaba, G. and Pastory, P. 2015. Local Government Capacities in East Africa. *Public Policy and Administration* 14(3): 268-280.
- Mutizwa-Mangiza, N.D. 2001. Lessons from Tanzania's Experience of Rural Local Government Reform. *Department of Rural and Urban Planning*. Harare: University of Zimbabwe.
- MwaiKusa, J. 1996. Local government policies in Tanzania: The political guinea pig. In R. Rothchild (ed.) *Strengthening African local initiative: Local self-governance, decentralisation and accountability*. Hamburg: Institute of African Affairs, pp. 59-74.
- Ngware, S.S. and Chamungwana W.M.S. 1996. Local Government System on Tanzania Mainland Facts and Figures. Dar es Salaam: Institute of Development Studies, University of Dar-es-Salaam.
- Ngware, Suleiman and Haule, M. 1992. *The Forgotten Level – Village Government in Tanzania*. Hamburg: Institute of African Affairs.
- Oates, W. 1972. *Fiscal Federalism*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Oxhorn, P. Tulchin, J. S. and Selee, A. D. (eds.) 2004. *Decentralisation, democratic governance and civil society in comparative perspective: Africa, Asia and Latin America*. Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center.
- Page, E.C. and Goldsmith, M.J. (eds.) 1987. *Central and Local Government Relations in Britain*. Modern Politics Series no. 13. London: Sage publications.
- Pallangyo, W. and Rees, C.J. 2010. Local Government Reform Programs and Human Resource Capacity Building in Africa: Evidence from Local Government Authorities (LGAs) in Tanzania. *International Journal of Public Administration* 33 (12-13): 728-739.

- Pratt, C. 1976. *The Critical Phase in Tanzania 1945-1968 Nyerere and the Emergence of a Socialist Strategy*, Cambridge University Press.
- Rast J. (2012) Why History (Still) Matters: Time and Temporality in Urban Political Analysis, *Urban Affairs Review*, 48(1) 3–36
- Saito, F. 2003. *Decentralisation and Development Partnerships: Lessons from Uganda*. Tokyo: Springer-Verlag.
- Shah, A. 2006. *Local Governance in Developing Countries*. Public Sector, Government and Accountability Series. Washington DC: The World Bank.
- Shangali, T. 2009. Recruitment and Selection in the Public Service: The Case of Tanzania: Paper. Presented at Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management Conference on Governance Excellence: Managing Human Potential, March 2-5, 2009. Arusha, Tanzania.
- Smoke, P. 2003. Decentralisation in Africa: goals, dimensions, myths and challenges. *Public Administration and Development* 23: 7–16.
- Stoker, G. 2004. *Transforming Local Governance: From Thatcherism to New Labour*. Government beyond the Centre series. Houndmills: Palgrave|Macmillan
- Therkildsen, O. 2000. Public Sector Reform in a Poor Aid- Dependent Country Tanzania. *Public Administration and Development* 20: 61-71.
- Transparency International Annual Report. 2008. Berlin: Transparency International, June 2008
- Turner, M. and Hulme, D. 1997. *Governance, Administration and Development: Making the State Work*. Houndmills: Palgrave|Macmillan.
- United Republic of Tanzania. 1998. Policy Paper on Local Government Reform, Dar es Salaam: Government Printer.
- United Republic of Tanzania (URT). 2003. The Public Service Regulations. Government Notice No. 168 Published 20th June 2003.
- United Republic of Tanzania. 2009. Poverty and Human Development Report. Research and Analysis Working Group. Dar es Salaam: Research on Policy Alleviation. Ministry of Finance.
- Warioba, M.M.D. 1999. *Local Governments in Tanzania: Some Historical Insight and Trends*. Mzumbe: Research, Information, and Publications Department.