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A causal model of decentralisation and the quality of local governance in Sub-Sahara Africa: the impact of Pan-African Organisations AMCOD and UCLGA

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Master's Research Report

Department of International Relations at the Faculty of Humanity of the University of the Witswatersrand

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A Causal Model of Decentralisation and the Quality of Local Governance in Sub-Sahara Africa:
The Impact of Pan-African Organisations AMCOD and UCLGA

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I. DECLARATION

Hereby I, Gwendolin Aschmann, declare that this study project is my own original work and that all sources have been accurately reported and acknowledged, and that this document has not previously, in its entirety or in part, been submitted at any university in order to obtain an academic qualification.



Gwendolin Aschmann

05 June 2011

II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study examines the causal relations between the national political, economic and social context as well as macro- and micro-level design of decentralisation reforms, and the effects that decentralisation has on the quality of local governance. Central government political will, overall poverty level and local social structures and norms are identified as important determinants of the capacity of decentralisation to bring about good local governance. Subsequently, it is outlined that pan-African organisations operating in the realm, namely AMCOD and UCLGA, can intervene to improve decentralisation's record to enhance local governance at three points in time: before decentralisation is on the agenda, when it is conceptualised and when local governments are already fully operational. The most promising area of action of these organisations is identified as the improvement of political will and commitment of central governments to democratic decentralisation and good local governance. Moreover, they can provide advice on how to best design decentralisation reforms and improve the technical, administrative and fund-raising capacity of local governments.

III. LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AMCOD - All Africa Ministerial Conference on Decentralization and Local Development

AU - African Union

GIZ - German International Cooperation

LG - Local Government

SSA - Sub-Sahara Africa

UCLG - United Cities and Local Governments

UCLGA - United Cities and Local Governments of Africa

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1. INTRODUCTION

This study will look at the possible benefits pan-African organisations can have on improving decentralisation and local governance across Sub-Sahara Africa. The analysis will be located at the theoretical level of possible benefits of such organisations.

More specifically, my interest lies in establishing how decentralisation can help to improve the quality of life of African people at the locality and how the current pan-African organisations covering decentralisation and local governance, AMCOD and UCLGA, could help to support such processes.

1.1 Thematic introduction

The main thematic areas touched upon in this paper are decentralisation and local governance. Currently, the majority of all countries in the developing world are embarking on some kind of decentralisation reform (Smoke 2000; Olowu and Wunsch 2004). Over the last decades, scholars and development workers alike have increasingly emphasised decentralisation as an effective tool to achieve broad-based development and poverty alleviation in the developing world. The World Bank, for example, has driven the adoption of decentralisation reforms since 1989 (Swilling 1997). Many international donors have followed suit by conditioning aid to the introduction of decentralisation reforms. “As such, major development agencies and multilateral and bilateral donors weary of corrupt central governments, which hijacked development initiatives, squandered public resources and lacked accountability, began vigorously promoting decentralization as a means to extinguish the culture of corruption and administrative paralysis in central government” (Barrett et al. 2007:2).

Reform process and results of decentralisation vary widely and are not yet fully understood (Ndegwa and Levy 2003). While studies basing their analysis on countries all over the world find a negative connection between the degree of decentralisation and mortality rates as well as corruption (JICA Synthesis Report 2007), the picture for developing countries, including African countries, is somewhat different. Kinuthia-Njenga (2002c) points out that proclaimed benefits of decentralization (e.g. poverty alleviation through a better use of

available resources at the local level) are not visible in many African countries due to the lack of pre-conditions necessary for decentralisation to work effectively. So far, decentralisation reforms have not brought about the hoped-for results across the African continent.

“Democratic decentralization, if followed through, promises to shift authority, resources, and accountability to local levels” (Olowu and Wunsch 2004:27). But instead of furthering development, local governments in most parts of Africa have been characterised for decades by gross ineffectiveness, endemic corruption and even by being at the brink of total collapse. Moreover, African leaders have over the years proven to be unwilling to relinquish meaningful powers. “The emphasis throughout Africa has been on decentralization of administrative structures rather than on political devolution.” (Barkan 1998:8). Support is strongly needed to furthering the cause of establishing decentralised state structures that produce good local governance. ‘‘The evidence of the outcomes of decentralization in African countries thus far suggests that while decentralization has failed to live up to expectations, and is certainly no panacea for rural empowerment and pro-poor growth, its potential has yet to be fully tapped.” (Barrett et al. 2007:4).

This study will examine in what way pan-African organisations in this area could best impact the improvement of decentralisation and local governance as tools for equitable, broad-based, effective and efficient development in a country. I have not found a comprehensive model analysing the causalities at work here. To my knowledge, this issue has not yet been analysed in a systematic way. By doing so, I hence seek to contribute to knowledge generation in the field.

Two pan-African organisations operating in the fields of decentralisation and local governance are the focus of this study, namely the ‘All Africa Ministerial Conference on Decentralisation and Local Development’ (AMCOD) and the ‘United Cities and Local Governments of Africa’ (UCLGA). AMCOD operates at a high political level. It presents a forum for African ministers responsible for decentralisation and local governance issues in their respective countries. UCLGA, on the other hand, is active on a level much closer to the grassroots, being the umbrella body for African municipalities.

1.2 Research Questions

The aim of this paper is to establish the underlying causalities of how decentralisation impacts the living conditions of the people on the ground, and how pan-African organisations can influence such causalities in a way that optimises the beneficial value decentralisation reforms can have on establishing good local governance. My interest lies in the exact nature decentralisation reforms must take on, and the specific national (pre-) conditions necessary, for decentralisation to contribute to a better life for the local people.

In order to do that, one needs to analyse firstly, what effects decentralisation can have on local governance, and in particular how they have performed in the Sub-Sahara African context. As it will be shown, decentralisation has so far been implemented with limited success in Africa. Consequently, as a next step it needs to be established, why that is the case. For this purpose, factors influencing success or failure of decentralisation to further good local governance need to be identified, and in particular which factors have been especially prohibiting in the African context. After establishing a comprehensive theoretical model of how decentralisation is affected and does affect good local governance, entry-points for AMCOD and UCLGA into these causal chains have to be identified. Lastly, the study will establish what areas of action seem most promising for AMCOD and UCLGA respectively when it comes to furthering democratic decentralisation and good local governance.

Hence a complex system of interrelated and interdependent research questions emerges. The ultimate, first-order research question is to establish how AMCOD and UCLGA can benefit the emergence of effective local governance. Other research questions serve the purpose of laying the foundations on which the first-order research question can be answered in a meaningful, systematic way. They include, as outline above, the questions of what effects decentralisation has on local governance, particularly in Africa; what factors influence the nature of the effect, i.e. if, and to what extent, the effect is beneficial or detrimental to the establishment of good local governance; what causalities underlie all these processes of decentralisation and good governance; and where, and at what times, the pan-African organisations will be best suited to intervene. Consequently, light will be shed on the 'black box' of decentralisation by establishing important underlying causalities as to its effect on local governance. Only then can the question of how to intervene best be answered in a meaningful way.

1.3 Methodology

In this paper, three different methods will be applied: desk-top literature review, and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data. The data is retrieved from a questionnaire distributed to development workers of the German International Cooperation (GIZ) across Sub-Sahara Africa. This questionnaire is needed for this study as the literature review often provided inconclusive results. Moreover, there was no scientific research available on some key questions this paper seeks to answer, namely which are the most promising benefits of AMCOD and UCLGA to the establishment of good local governance. Field research was hence indispensable.

Regarding the literature review, the tremendous amount of scientific literature available on decentralisation and local governance in Sub-Sahara Africa was not scrutinised in its entirety. The study focuses on key work in the area, including classical literature and recent studies.

Relating to the questionnaire, I designed it in cooperation with the Head of the GIZ Support Project to AMCOD and UCLGA during my six-month internship last year at the project which is situated in Yaoundé, Cameroon. The questionnaire was then distributed to all GIZ projects in Sub-Sahara Africa dealing with decentralisation and/or local governance. Responses were received from GIZ projects in thirteen countries from Sub-Saharan Africa. In most of the cases, a single completed questionnaire was returned. In the case of Mozambique, it was indicated that the whole project team contributed to the answers. From Benin, Ethiopia, Malawi and South Africa, multiple answers were received (2-3 separately filled-in questionnaires) out of which the mean was calculated for all answers.

The questionnaire, which can be found in the annex, composes of three basic parts: one relating to the current state of decentralisation and good governance in Sub-Sahara Africa; the second analysing constraining factors to decentralisation and local governance; while the last part deals with the possible benefits AMCOD and UCLGA can have on establishing effective local governance and democratic decentralisation. The quantitative questions have been designed on an ordinal scale. Additionally, a qualitative part was integrated.

1.4 Scope and Limitations of the study

In this study I will establish purely theoretical recommendations for possible AMCOD and UCLGA areas of actions. The study does not elaborate on whether it is realistic to expect that AMCOD and UCLGA will have the capacity to act upon these recommendations.

Moreover, the limited scope of this paper will not allow for detailed country case studies relating to the status of and obstacles to democratic decentralisation and local governance. Other limitations to this study arise from the nature of the analysed data. There was data available only for thirteen Sub-Saharan countries. Moreover, as only one to three responses per country were received, the risk is high that the data is biased due to an either overly pessimistic or optimistic outlook of single country respondents. Reliability and validity of the data might hence be compromised. In addition, the data's power of generalisation is limited. What is more, analysis of data gathered on an ordinal scale faces inevitable limitations in the strength of inferences that can be drawn from them (the distance between 'high' and 'medium' does not necessarily have to be of the exact same size as the distance between 'medium' and 'low'). Data analysis is largely restricted to a descriptive level. The results should thus be perceived as merely indicating certain trends and patterns. Moreover, due to time limitations, detailed particularities of theoretical models on which the questionnaire is based were only established in great detail after the questionnaire was send out (to ensure the timely reception of responses). Hence there are two incidences where not all theoretical categories are adequately covered by the questionnaire, namely in the section relating to UCLGA's value-add and to factors constraining decentralisation success.

On a more general note, the concepts of democratic decentralisation and local governance looked at here are influenced by a multiplicity of factors. It cannot be claimed that the study will outline all possible causal factors influencing decentralisation and local governance. Hence it should be borne in mind that the theoretical model established in this study is inevitably incomplete and simplifying of nature.

2. THEORY: DECENTRALISATION AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE

This chapter lays the foundations for the analytical part of this study by defining, specifying and clarifying key concepts used throughout the paper. Additionally, it outlines the possible positive and negative effects to local communities that can be expected from introducing decentralisation reforms.

2.1 Definition of key concepts

This section serves to clarify the theoretical constructs that will be used throughout the paper, in particular decentralisation and local governance. The meaning of related terms, such as (good) governance and participation, are also examined.

2.1.1 Decentralisation

As to the definition of decentralisation, many different approaches exist in parallel (Mawhood 1993). This has led to confusion surrounding the term and has blurred its meaning (Makumbe 1998).

According to Mukandala (1998), de-centralisation is an antonym of centralisation. It thus includes all forms of a governance structure that shift political action, e.g. decision-making authority or the power to implement decisions, outside the central government, regardless of who is in ultimate control. Rondinelli and Nellis (1986:5) define decentralisation as "the transfer or delegation of legal or political authority to plan, make decisions and manage public functions from central government and its agencies to subordinate units of government, semi-autonomous public corporations, area-wide or regional development authorities [...], local government or non-governmental organizations." In this paper I will focus on the local level, and leave out of the analysis the often established medium level of a decentralised structure, i.e. regional governments.

Kibua and Mwabu (2008) emphasis the procedural dimension of decentralisation: it presents an inherently time-consuming process of changing the governance structure of a country. "Decentralization must generally be seen as a lengthy process in which attitudes of key

actors at all levels must be changed and capacity at all levels must be built" (Smoke 2000:43).

Mostly, the three dimensions of political, administrative and financial decentralisation are distinguished. *Political decentralisation* means the shift of the decision making locus from the centre toward the locality, and is hence associated with the devolution of power. *Administrative decentralisation* means to shift the locus of authority to implement centrally controlled policies from the centre to the regional and/or local levels and is widely associated with deconcentration. *Financial decentralisation* refers to a shift of authority to raise financial resources and to control its use from central government to regional and/or local authorities (Blaser et al. 2005; Scott 2009).
Relating to the extent of decision-making authority of local governments autonomous from the central government, four types of decentralisation are distinguished (in increasing order of decision-making authority): deconcentration, delegation, devolution and privatisation (Mawhood 1993; Blaser et al. 2005; Kinuthia-Njenga 2002a; JICA Synthesis Report 2007; Laleye and Olowu 1989, Ng`ethe 1998; Gboyega 1998; Barkan 1998).

Decentralisation by devolution is most widely regarded as fully-fledged decentralisation, also labelled 'democratic decentralisation'. Real devolution of power, authority and responsibility from the national government to geographically defined, partly-autonomous, locally elected authorities is taking place. The established units lie outside the command structure of the central government (Makumbe 1998). According to Blaser et al. (2005:9), devolution "transfers specific decision-making powers from one level of government to another […] or from governments to entities of civil society. Regional or provincial governments, for example, become semi-autonomous and administer […] resources according to their own priorities" Mahwood (1993:4) states that under devolution, a local authority "has its own budget and a separate legal existence, with authority granted to it by the central government to allocate substantial material resources on a range of different functions."

Kinuthia-Njenga (2002a) asserts that 'discretionary authority' is a crucial factor to democratic decentralisation, while Olowu and Wunsch (2004) emphasise that accountability needs to be devolved too, i.e. local authorities need to be downwards accountable to their local electorate. Ddungu (1998) states that local governments must have the authority to

raise own-source revenue, e.g. to impose local taxes. The provision of sufficient financial resources – as well as human resources – is crucial for local authorities to function. Moreover, local authorities under devolution should have the authority to plan, decide on and implement policies autonomously and to manage their public affairs (Ng`ethe 1998). Even certain legislative authority (Crook and Manor 1998) and legal competences (Mukandala 1998) might be devolved. Devolution is "the strongest form of decentralization because beneficiaries of devolved powers are usually allowed considerable autonomy"(Gboyega 1998:5).

Larson (2005:33) puts it in the following way: democratic decentralisation is the "transfer of authority to representative and downwardly accountable actors", i.e. locally elected governments, with an "autonomous, discretionary decision-making sphere with the power – and resources – to make decisions that are significant to the lives of local residents".

Deconcentration or administrative decentralisation refers to the establishment of central government 'field offices' mandated to manage local affairs along central government lines. Local governments serve as implementing agents of central government policies. All strategic decisions remain at the centre, while operational decisions may be left to the locality. Field offices are fully accountable to the central government. The ruling party sends its members to different regions in a country, where they head local administrations. According to Ddungu (1998:9) deconcentration "entails shifting work load from the center to local authorities, but the functions at the local level are controlled by the officials from the center." Blaser et al. (2005:9) make the following important point: "deconcentration redistributes decision-making authority and financial and management responsibility within central government; there is no real transfer of authority between levels of government."
According to Crook and Manor (1998:6), deconcentration "tends to extend the scope or reach of central government and to strengthen its authority by moving executive agencies controlled by the centre down to lower levels in the political system." Central government is not only not giving up any authority, they are also able to tighten their grip around the country with further penetration of the countryside by their officials. It is hence widely disputed whether or not to include deconcentration into the term decentralisation, as with such an institutional approach all ultimate decision making power remains with central party members whose controlling power is often even enhanced.

The main feature separating decentralisation by deconcentration from decentralisation by devolution is, according to Ddungu (1998:37), that with the latter a governance unit "outside the command structure of central government" is created, while the former implies an intra-organisational power-shift "away from the top of the hierarchy to its lowest echelons". Deconcentration therefore retains a unified political structure, while devolution creates a separate, semi-autonomous layer of government outside the reach of central government.

Particularly in Africa, decentralisation often entails elements of both deconcentration and devolution - so called *mixed authorities* have been established. This concept is ideally based on the principle of partnership. "This is achieved by allowing central government to set policy, but leaving local governments free to interpret policy and to mobilise the resources to implement policies" (Swilling 1997:8). Locally elected officials are supposed to rule hand in hand with centrally appointed personnel in the local authority, although experience has shown that such bodies are often largely controlled by those members being accountable to the central government (Mawhood 1993).

Delegation involves the transfer of managerial responsibility for specific functions from the central government to organisations usually outside the regular bureaucratic structure, for example to public enterprises (Barkan 1998). The concept is defined as the transfer of "responsibilities and authority to semi-autonomous entities that respond to central government but are not totally controlled by it" (Blaser et al. 2005:8). Hence delegation implies a less pervasive control of local affairs by the centre than it is the case with deconcentration.

Following Olowu and Wunsch (2004), devolution, deconcentration and delegation can be distinguished in the following way: deconcentration refers to a transfer of authority and responsibility while accountability and resources remain with the centre; delegation is present when authority, responsibility and resources are transferred but accountability is not; while devolution is characterised by a legally binding transfer of authority, responsibility, accountability and resources.

Privatisation or market decentralization refers to the transfer of authority and responsibility outside the government sphere (whether central or local), e.g. the privatisation of water

management. Full disengagement of the state for a certain type of functions is implied (Makumbe 1998). It is disputed whether this category is to be included into decentralisation, as it puts responsibility and authority outside the realm of the state and is therefore not concerned with a restructuring of the state's governance system (see e.g. JICA Synthesis Report 2007; Kasfir 1993).

The common practice to transfer responsibility directly to involved *user groups*, and not to any form of government, falls into the same category of shifting authority outside the government realm (JICA Synthesis Report 2007). Hence it can be disputed, if such a practice constitutes decentralisation at all or if, in fact, this approach constitutes the most decentralised forms of all, as the people affected by certain policies are directly and solely responsible for their formulation.

Table 1 sums up some of the most important distinctive features of the different types of decentralisation.

Table 1: Overview of the Different Types of Decentralisation

Types of Decentralisation	**Characteristics**			
	Locus of **decision-making authority**	**Responsibilities** of local units	**Financial resources** of local units	**Accountability** of local units
Deconcentration	Mainly central government, local officials have limited discretion	Can be diverse, but under ultimate control of central government	Provided and controlled by central government	Local authorities accountable to central government
Delegation	Central government in conjunction with local actor	Limited responsibilities under central government supervision	Provided and monitored by central government	Local actor accountable to central government
Devolution	Local government	Substantial authority over many functions legally transferred to local governments	Central government grants or own source revenue, substantial LG control over use	Local governments primarily accountable to local population
Privatisation	Local private sector organisation	Full control over all outsourced matters lies with private company	Mostly provided by private actor, who is in full control of its use	Local company accountable to its executive board

Another distinction can be made by whether decentralisation is organised *horizontally or vertically*. The sector approach (separate decentralisation strategies for different sectors, e.g. social services and agriculture) stands contrary to a more holistic approach involving

various different central ministries in the planning exercise. Most analysts emphasis that taking both approaches into consideration is central for a decentralisation approach to be of high quality. On overall strategy should be complemented by the recognition of specific sector needs.

In practice, decentralisation takes many different forms on the African continent such as the "integrated, administrative, partnership, dual, and comprehensive local government systems" (Kibua and Mwabu 2008:16). Whereas the *comprehensive local government* system refers to strongly autonomous administration of local services by local authorities (full devolution), the other systems are characterised by a mix of deconcentrated and devolved elements. In the *integrated system*, local authorities consist of seconded members from the central government and locally elected members. Only decisions regarding the implementation of policies are subject to local authority, while central government retains all decision-making power. In the *partnership system*, locally elected bodies are expected to take decisions together with centrally seconded officials. All decisions at the local level are scrutinized by central government delegates to ensure that they fit central objectives. Within the *dual system*, separate locally-controlled and centrally-controlled bodies co-exist at the local level. Both bodies are granted specific authorities and functions (Kibua and Mwabu 2008).
As Swilling (1997:8) puts it, in reality, devolution, deconcentration and privatisation all co-exist on the African continent "in complementary and contradictory ways".

2.1.2 Local governance

In order to define local governance, first the term governance has to be clarified. This term has been widely used with different meanings associated to it.

Olowu and Wunsch (2004:8) define governance as formal and informal rules that guide the "process by which humans make collective choices and implement them". Swilling gives a more detailed account of the concept. At the centre of his conception are "founding values and constitutional metapolicies […] that constitute the nature of governing institutions, guide their actions and shape the complex relations between them and society. […] In other

words, governance is about the way the power structures of the day (what Hyden [1985] calls the 'regime') and the framework within which civil society operates are managed" so that in combination "these two inter-dependent elements can make up a robust and healthy civil public realm" (Swilling 1997:2,5). The author here already touches upon 'good governance', a concept that has been associated throughout the literature with political concepts originating in the Western world. Pluralistic, multi-party political systems with effective separation of powers, based on a strong rule of law, and enriched by a vital civil society, are seen by many as cornerstones of good governance. Swilling identifies 'trust' between social spheres and 'reciprocity', expressed e.g. in free political competition, as indispensable elements to make good governance work. A third crucial element is displayed by downwards 'accountability': "whether the governors can be held accountable by the governed via institutionalised procedures and processes (such as elections, public oversight and referenda)" (Swilling 1997:5-6). Lastly, the 'capacity to govern' of political leaders is vital to good governance. Politicians must be able and willing to implement decisions for the benefit of their electorate. State legitimacy is then reinforced.

All four elements are crucial for the quality of governance. They are moreover mutually dependent as well as mutually reinforcing. For example, trust within the population cannot be sustained without functioning accountability measures and a demonstrated capacity to govern. Moreover, reciprocity within civil society can enhance accountability.

Two crucial aspects of the capacity to govern in appropriate way do not feature in Swilling's account of good governance. The conception of policies needs to be comprehensive and based on a long-term overall strategic plan, so that sustainable local development can be ensured. Policies need to be planned in a coherent manner, under an overall vision for the whole governed area. One often cited area in this regard relates to environmental policies. Short-sighted exploitation has to be avoided. The focus should lie on sustainable use and protection of natural resources so that future generations can enjoy living on a healthy, bio-diverse planet (Junge 2002). Moreover, adverse effects, such as landslides due to deforestation, can be avoided with sustainable planning of resource-exploitation.

Another widely used term associated with good governance is democratisation, and in particular participation of the local population in decision-making processes. As Barkan (1998) states, two key elements of democratic governance are promotion of popular

participation and empowerment. Participation is a widely used term that is lacking clarity (Chiweza 2005). Mukandala (1998:44) defines participation as follows: "Participation includes actions by the population which are intended to influence, that is control, change, support, share, or determine policy making and execution." Crook and Manor (1998:7) identify three main means of political participation: "voting, election campaigning, and contacting or pressuring either individually or through group activity, including non-violent protests" (Crook and Manor 1998:7). Moreover, direct participation in community projects and even paying taxes are seen as forms of political participation. It is important to ensure that participation does not remain at a nominal level but that the citizens' concerns are effectively taken into account when local governments formulate policies.

Most analysts agree that decentralisation is a vital means to achieve good governance, especially at the local level. *Local governance* can be defined as the existence of a "working local systems of collective action that manage a locality's public affairs" (Olowu and Wunsch 2004:1). The authors define *good local governance* as "a rule-governed process through which residents of a defined area participate in their own governance in […] locally important matters; are the key decision-makers in determining what their priority concerns are, how they will respond to them, and what and how resources will be raised to deal with those concerns; and are the key decision-makers in managing and learning from those responses" (Olowu and Wunsch 2004:4). Elected representatives charged with these tasks have to be downwards accountable to the people and there needs to be an effective mechanism in place to remove key decision-makers if the local government malperforms, i.e. regular free and fair elections. As (Swilling 1997:11) puts it, democratic local governance will develop "if accountable and democratically managed local governments evolve that, in partnership with well managed formations in civil society who are committed to the principles of trust and reciprocity in the promotion and defence of citizen interests, have the resources and capacity to formulate and implement policies that deal effectively and efficiently" with local development issues. Good local governance takes root "when localities are able to effectively manage their public affairs in a way that is accountable to local residents" (Olowu and Wunsch 2004:2).

As we have learned from Swilling, a key element of good local governance is that the governing enact policies aimed at the benefit of their electorate. Following my above statement, good local governance has to follow the principles of comprehensive long-term planning and sustainability.

To summarise, good local governance is achieved when the following conditions are being met: Local governments implement policies that are aimed at benefiting the local people (that e.g. promote poverty alleviation and community-led development); that are based on a comprehensive strategic plan and the principle of sustainability; when local governments are responsive to the needs and priorities of the local population who is enabled to participated effectively in local decision-making and –implementation (including vulnerable groups); when politically mature citizens are able to significantly determine their local lives; when a strong rule of law and a competitive multi-party political system is in place; when downwards accountability and transparency of government operations takes root; when capacitated and critical civil society and media are active in an open local society; and, on a more basic level, if local governments are capacitated to act in an effective and efficient manner.

2.1.3 Synthesis

In this study good local governance is considered the goal towards which to strive. Decentralisation presents a means to achieve this goal. To me, democratic decentralisation based on strong devolutionary features offers the best prospects in this regard. Only with devolutionary forms of decentralisation can real local governance be achieved as other forms lack downwards accountability (Olowu and Wunsch 2004) and are thus not prone to act on local priorities. Moreover, democratic decentralisation provides the best chances to increase popular participation in political processes, thus not only potentially enhancing the quality of policy outputs, but also instilling a feeling of self-determination and empowerment within the local people.

Good, democratic local governance can help to achieve the ultimate aim of enhancing the living conditions of the population. Ultimately, people should be empowered to take control over their own lives, poverty should be alleviated by e.g. providing good education and

health facilities as well as creating job opportunities, and the environment should be protected so that future generations can enjoy a healthy planet. People should feel free to speak out openly and have confidence in an independent judicial system. Local governance should be participatory, just and transparent in nature while aiming at the benefit of all local people and the environment.

Democratic decentralisation is a means to achieve this end, not an end in its self. Furthermore, it is only a necessary condition but might not be sufficient to achieve this goal. Initiating democratic decentralisation does not mean that good local governance is automatically achieved (Olowu and Wunsch 2004). Factors such as the aforementioned 'capacity to govern' of local officials are not tackled by institutional reforms.

Moreover, democratic decentralisation itself represents only the most comprehensive form of decentralisation which might not be realisable or even desirable in the near future in many African countries. The conditions faced in many Sub-Saharan countries might not allow for democratic decentralisation to take root immediately or to produce the hoped-for results. Local governments, when left alone by the centre, can easily fall into traps such as lack of appropriate human and financial resources, or corruption and patronage. Other forms of decentralisation, e.g. the mixed authority model, might be more appropriate in order to prepare a country and locality that are not ready yet for full democratic decentralisation for the successful introduction of the concept in the medium-term future.

Nevertheless, democratic decentralisation based on substantial devolution has to be sought after as it presents a powerful tool to enable good local governance to thrive. Throughout this study, the decentralisation term is used, if not specified otherwise, as relating to democratic decentralisation based on devolution.

2.2 Decentralisation's positive and negative effects

This section analyses possible effects that decentralisation can have on the society while considering both negative and positive effects. The conclusion offers an assessment of whether decentralisation offers greater advantages or disadvantages in a Sub-Saharan context.

2.2.1 Possible positive effects

The overall positive effect expected from democratic decentralisation is improved local governance. Even though decentralisation reforms will not be sufficient to ensure good, democratic local governance, they can represent an important vehicle for laying the foundations necessary for effective local governance to emerge. A state system based on democratic decentralisation will provide the institutional structures needed for vital local governance to flourish. Decentralisation has the potential to improve public management of resources, therefore ensuring a more effective and efficient provision of services. Moreover, the problem of lack of rural development can be better addressed by instituting local governments in rural areas (Mawhood 1993). As outlined below, decentralisation can improve the odds of achieving responsive, accountable and transparent local governance.

Barkan (1998) cites two main motives for decentralisation: popular participation (the democracy-argument) and increased effectiveness and efficiency of service provision and project implementation (the managerial argument).

Along similar lines, I identified two main clusters of beneficial effects of democratic decentralisation: firstly, improvements in good governance and democratisation; secondly, economic improvements. As (Larson 2005:33) neatly summarised, decentralisation "is a tool for promoting development and is aimed at increasing efficiency, equity and democracy."

Decentralisation is often mentioned as a central element for good governance and crucial to democratisation (Blaser et al. 2005; Olowu and Wunsch 2004; Kibua and Mwabu 2008; Kinuthia-Njenga 2002a; Prud`homme 1989; Makumbe 1998; Mawhood 1993). Transparency, accountability, representativeness, probity, responsiveness, accessibility and legitimacy of local governments are oftentimes accredited to decentralisation (Crook and Manor 1998;

Ng`ehte 1998; Barrett et al. 2007; Mukandala 1998). These factors are said to be mostly due to the close proximity of local government officials to their electorate. Local officials stem from and are well known in the community they are to govern and are subject to regular free and fair elections. As popular scrutiny of local policies increases, corruption levels are said to decrease.

Another factor falling into the good governance and democratisation category that contributes substantially to achieving the above ideals is broad-based popular participation in policy formulation and implementation (Crook and Manor 1998; Laleye and Olowu 1989; Makumbe 1998, World Bank and Istituto Italo-Africano 1989). Popular participation enhances in particular accountability and legitimacy of the local authority. Moreover, participation increases the likelihood that local policies respond to local priority needs. In addition, decentralisation is said to increase grassroots education and, in turn, emancipation, thereby empowering local citizens. According to Mukandala (1998:3), "Decentralized structures can facilitate genuine democratic participation, empower grassroots, and channel their input constructively into the national developmental efforts." Moreover, conditions supportive of civil society sector development and competitive, multi-party politics are established under democratic decentralisation, thus creating a more open society (Crook and Manor 1998; Manor 1999; Barkan 1998; Barrett et al. 2007). An important factor often mentioned is the inclusion of vulnerable groups (e.g. women, the youth and the poor) into political and developmental processes which can be fostered by democratic decentralisation. All in all, broad-based participation by all sections of society is said to enable local citizens to increase their say over developments in their own region that are important to them. Self-determination is hence increased. People own and determine their lives to a greater extent under decentralisation than under centralised rule (Manor 1999; Makumbe 1998; Kibua and Mwabu 2008).

A further element falling under good governance and democratisation is increased equity among community members and between communities in a country (Barrett et al. 2007; Crook and Manor 1998; Laleye and Olowu 1998). Democratic decentralisation can achieve the latter by the use of formula-based central government grants, providing communities with a weak resource-base and substantial service provision backlog with additional funding. Increased equity within communities is said to result from local officials responding to priority needs of the community as they are able to tap local information much better than

distant central officials could (Barrett et al. 2007). Finally, Prud`homme (1989) points out that democratic decentralisation provides a counter-weight to central government: autonomous or semi-autonomous local governments function as checks and balances.

Other benefits falling in this cluster are the protection of human rights through responsive government and the protection of the local environment as local, community-based management of resources can result in more ecologically sensitive policies (Junge 2002).

Moreover, political stability and security is said to increase under decentralisation. This is not only due to enhanced service provision but also owing to eased ethnic and societal tensions. Enhanced regional self-determination through decentralisation can reduce these tensions present in many African nations characterised by a heterogeneous population. Smaller, more homogenous governance units are formed (Kinuthia-Njenga 2002a; Kibua and Mwabu 2008; Makumbe 1998; World Bank and Istituto Italo-Africano 1989). In addition, such units with locally-rooted leaders will not encounter paralysing rule-and-divide tactics by politicians. The local leader will identify himself better with the electorate (Olowu and Wunsch 2004). As development efforts take root, some authors predict that national unity will also rise, further contributing to increased political stability and security (see e.g. Rodinelli and Nellis 1986).

The last passage demonstrated the interwoven nature of the political and economic clusters, as enhanced economic development and more effective service provision – two key elements of the economic cluster – reinforce the element of national political stability.

Relating to mostly economically-rooted factors, poverty alleviation is strengthened by democratic decentralisation (Kibua and Mwabu 2008; Barret et al. 2007 Manor 1999), following improved service provision and more frequent job opportunities through the implementation of context-sensitive local economic policies. Local governments are said to be more prone to implement pro-poor policies. Moreover, the installation of new government bodies creates a need for a broadened skill base. Necessary on-the-job training will increase local capacity to govern (Makumbe 1998). Local citizens are then better prepared to be active in national politics, leading to a better representation of local interests at the centre.

Other economic factors include that decentralisation is thought to bring about increased effectiveness and efficiency of both institutional operations and consequently of service provision (Crook and Manor 1998; Barrett et al. 2007; Ceccarelli 1989; Prud`homme 1989;

Makumbe 1989). Following Ceccarelli (1989) and Barrett et al. (2007), local matters are best dealt with locally. *Effectiveness* of service provision is increased due to a choice of projects based on local needs. This is made possible due to the close proximity of the local government official to the locality and its priority needs. Local knowledge and experience can be tapped (Mukandala 1998) both for improved project formulation and implementation. Community-led development takes place. Strong downwards accountability reinforces the tendency of local officials to choose and act according to local priorities. *Efficiency* in service provision is increased due to pressure on local officials to perform well. They will be judged, inter alia, according to the timeliness and cost-efficiency of project implementation. Naturally, local officials will be able to handle development proposals much more quickly when they are able to decide autonomously – as is the case under democratic decentralisation – than when they have to await the approval of central government agencies (Kinuthia-Njenga 2002a). Additionally, decentralisation can increase resource mobilisation for specific projects (Olowu and Wunsch 2004).

With regard to more efficient and effective institutional structures, decentralisation entails the reduction of an often inefficient and corrupt central government (Crook and Manor 1998; Mukandala 1998; Makumbe 1998). Costs and workload at the centre are reduced as the governance structure is streamlined. With local governments subjected to immediate downwards accountability, they are pressurised to act in an efficient and effective manner. In general, service provision throughout the country can be better coordinated (Prud`homme 1989), e.g. with regional governments overseeing the establishment of service facilities to be used by several communities (hospital, secondary school, etc.). This is related to a better, more comprehensive development planning (Makumbe 1998). Furthermore, communication flows between government levels are said to improve (Gregersen et al. 2005), as well as those information flows between the governing and the governed (through close proximity and participatory measures).

Another factor associated with decentralisation is economic growth and development (World Bank and Istituto Italo-Africano 1989). Decentralisation is widely recognised as having the potential to enhance development: it provides direct developmental benefits such as enhanced effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery, as well as systemic benefits such as responsive institutions and an enabling environment for economic growth and job creation at the locality (Makumbe 1998; Kibua and Mwabu 2008). Moreover,

bringing government closer to the people can also result in a better management of available resources. When local politicians include popular input into policy formation and are being subjected to close performance scrutiny, corruption is reduced and local policies improved. Policies evolve that better respond to people's needs (Kibua and Mwabu 2008).

Decentralised governments are said to be more prone to improving the environment for investment and economic growth at the locality than central government officials. This is because they possess superior knowledge of local conditions and are thought to be more committed to the community's welfare. It is stated that innovation and invention are thus fostered (Mukandala 1998) – as is the creation of jobs and in turn poverty alleviation.
Table 2 summarises some of the most important positive effects accredited to democratic decentralisation.

Table 2: Assumed Positive Effects of Democratic Decentralisation

Cluster	**Direct Positive Effects** of a Decentralised State Structure	**Indirect Positive Effects** of a Decentralised State Structure
Good governance	Local government operations: proximity to people, transparency, accountability, responsiveness, legitimacy; inclusive, participatory decision-making and implementation; checks and balances	Improved social, economic and ecologic policies; less corruption; popular education and empowerment, increased self-determination; open society, strengthened media and civil society; political stability; community-led development
Economic	Enhanced Effectiveness and Efficiency of local and central government operations and of local service provision; cost reduction at centre; improved cooperation between government levels	Poverty alleviation; economic growth; job opportunities; invention and innovation; political stability; improved development planning

2.2.2 Possible negative effects

The most widely cited possible negative side-effect of decentralisation by devolution is the abuse of power and mismanagement by local government officials. Decentralisation "moves allocative decisions further out of the limelight, thereby permitting greater corruption or mismanagement of scarce resources" (Barrett et al. 2007:3). The risk thereof is determined to a large part by the particularities of the local societal structure and present cultural norms. In addition, the authors state that local elite capture is a key danger to

decentralisation. Members of the elite secure their domination of political and economic power in the locality and use their influence to misallocate local government revenue into their own pockets. Decentralisation increases the risk of corruption and elite capture under circumstances often given in Africa, namely the existence of "powerful local elites, neo-patrimonialism and patronage relationships" (Devas 2005:1). The less control the central government exerts over local officials, the greater the risk. In the wake of decentralisation, it is very likely that marginalising power structures of local societies are cemented. Vulnerable groups are then even further excluded from participation in, and receiving benefits from, local politics. Patron-client relationships are a good example here, with the 'small man' remaining dependent on the good will of the 'big man'. Local officials can turn into non-benevolent 'Pseudo-Gods', doing whatever they please and not caring for the welfare of the local citizens (Mukandala 1998). Local elites often benefit most of decentralisation efforts, at the expense of local populations (Makumbe 1998). Moreover, decentralisation is often used by national elites to strengthen their local power-base (Crook 2003). Barrett et al. (2007:7) caution that "without a keen understanding of the array of local interests and the prospect for competing centres of power within local jurisdictions, and without buttressing effectively functioning traditional institutions, devolution of formal power may lead to an inequitable and unsustainable distribution of authority and resources that my serve to fuel, rather than resolve, land and resource conflicts." An analysis of studies from all over the world lead Scott (2009) to the conclusion that decentralisation more often exacerbates than reduces conflict within nation-states. It is often argued that national unity can be threatened if decentralisation makes regional differences more apparent or reinforces them, by e.g. forming ethnically homogenous units. A resulting fragmentation of the country can even lead to secession tendencies (Mukandala 1998; Makumbe 1998). The occurrence of secession movements are, according to Olowu and Wunsch (2004), not unrealistic due to the high ethnic fragmentation of African countries and its domination of politics. They assume that consequently, local and regional candidates are chosen who are perceived to being able to best defend specific regional interests while national welfare is not considered. National development might hence be compromised.

The risk of mismanagement is exacerbated by a severe skill shortage at the local level in many African countries. Moreover, as Barrett et al. (2007:3) states, "progressive leadership is scarce" at the local level. Lack of human capacity also leads to poor service delivery, so that initially, the quality of services delivered by new local governments, compared to the services provided by a centrally controlled system, often significantly decreased (Makumbe 1998). A reason for this is that skills are usually congested at the centre. Obviously, wide-spread chronic lack of financial resources exacerbates the problem.

It has also been argued that participatory planning, advocated by democratic decentralisation, can lead to administrative paralysis (Mukandala 1998). In case the local population is not familiar with, nor accustomed to, modern managerial techniques, or if a consensus cannot be found, effectiveness and efficiency of local governments is compromised.

Mukandala (1998:4) argues further that decentralisation implies substantial costs due to the need to erect new local governments across a country. This financial burden can have negative effects on an often already financially severely constrained central government. Such costs may be "economically and politically unacceptable" in some African countries.

Lastly, it is often argued that valuable 'economies of scale' are being lost in decentralised systems (Barrett et al. 2007). For example, if bricks are ordered for two schools instead of fifteen schools (as central planning would allow), the price per brick – and thus per school – will be increased.

Table 3 sums up the negative effects that decentralisation can have.

Table 3: Possible Negative Effects of Democratic Decentralisation

Locus of Effect	**Direct Negative Effects** of a Decentralised State Structure	**Indirect Negative Effects** of a Decentralised State Structure
Local	Local elite capture, domination and oppression: acting towards own benefit, not that of the community; fostering patron-client relationships; administrative paralysis; corruption; loss of economies of scale	Cementing local social hierarchies and fostering within-community inequality; ineffective and inefficient local government operations and service provision
Country-wide	Costs for erecting additional government layers; increased conflict and regionalism / secession tendencies	Threat to political stability, unity and nation-building; threat to national government policy goals; increased inequality across regions (e.g. concerning level of services provided)

There are valuable arguments favouring centralisation over decentralisation that have to be taken into account (Mawhood 1993; Kasfir 1993; Larson 2005; Prud`homme 1989): a national planning rationale ensures the implementation of policies supportive of a national development strategy; adequate capacity and moral of local government officials can be better ensured; national unity can be fostered and preserved through centrally led nation-building (although the attempts made under centralisation did not lead to a reduction of the still prevailing tribal sense of belonging); the risk of growing corruption is reduced (some assume it can be better controlled at the central level); and lastly, centralised revenue collection and policy-setting is better suited to facilitate an equal distribution of resources, service provision, etc. across a country (if no or inappropriate formula-based equalising grants are used under decentralisation).

But most authors state that the desire to stay in power displays in reality the strongest motivation for centralisation. Moreover, most of the above problems for decentralisation are also present to a similar degree at the central level, for example has centrally guided development of a nation failed all across Africa, due to e.g. lack of capacities; corruption is equally endemic on the national level; etc. (Kasfir 1993; Kinuthia-Njenga 2002b; Wunsch 1998).

2.2.3 Synthesis

Kasfir (1993:44) summarises that “decentralization, on grounds of both effectiveness and democracy, should provide the most pragmatic form of government.”

Nevertheless, this might not apply to all country-contexts. If fully-fledged decentralisation results in severe elite capture, if domination and misuse of funds lead to a decreased level of service provision, and if further marginalisation of vulnerable groups takes place, democratic decentralisation might not have been a good choice for the welfare of the local people. Local social and cultural realities have to be taken into account when deciding on how to design a governance structure of a specific country.

Many authors indicate that endemic corruption, patronage and elite-domination is present to such an extent in many African local societies, that democratic decentralisation is a risky

choice. These conditions probably explain, together will lack of political will at the centre and human and financial resource shortages, why decentralisation has performed so badly in most Sub-Saharan countries. It has to be re-iterated that centralisation in Africa has by no means fared better to enhance the living conditions for the people. Elite domination and corruption tend to be equally, if not more, fierce at the centre. As Barrett et al. (2007:2) outline, "a centralized system of government suffers informational disadvantages and transactions as well as search costs that render it ill-equipped to identify and provide an effective mix and distribution of services. Moreover, a central government monopoly supplier of public goods and services faces less (typically, no) competition and may be able to demand bribes or other rents that can be extinguished through interjurisdictional competition following decentralization. The core idea is that sub-national and local governments, by virtue of their proximity to the people concerned with policy outcomes, have better access to local information, are more directly accountable to constituents, can more effectively and quickly identify and articulate regional and community-specific needs, and are thus better placed to allocate and extract resources more efficiently than higher-level organs of government." According to Olowu and Wunsch (2004), centralisation has neither produced efficient nor effective local governance. Larson (2005) states that decentralisation can have positive effects when people are empowered and negative effects when central state control is increased.

Even though the challenge remains to establish a viable democratic process on the local level, I conclude that the possible merits of democratic decentralisation weigh stronger than its possible risks, even under unfavourable conditions.

3. TACKING STOCK OF DECENTRALISATION IN SUB-SAHARA AFRICA

Firstly, this chapter will provide a brief account of the history of decentralisation in Sub-Saharan Africa based on available literature. The second part will analyse the current state of decentralisation and local governance in Africa based on questionnaire results of the levels of autonomy as well as effectiveness and efficiency of current local governments and the quality of designing decentralisation reforms in Sub-Sahara Africa.

3.1 History of decentralisation and local governance in Sub-Sahara Africa

This section will examine the history of decentralisation before and during colonialism; the first stage of decentralisation in Africa after independence, and heavy centralisation following soon thereafter; the 1980s as a second stage of decentralisation characterised by deconcentration disguised as devolution; and the more recent attempts of the third stage of decentralisation in the 1990s/2000s, where the debate is still on-going as to whether or not these recent reforms present a more genuine attempt at establishing democratic decentralisation and good local governance.

3.1.1 Pre-colonial and colonial heritage

Many authors have stated that pre-colonial structures of society in many parts of Sub-Saharan Africa were based on participatory governance (see e.g. Makumbe 1998; Olowu and Wunsch 2004; Barkan 1998). Cultural norms rooted for centuries in African societies are thus especially prone to democratic local governance. Hence democratic local governance should have fallen on fertile grounds. Unfortunately, these values and practices were largely deformed or destroyed by the colonial intervention. As an example, the British model of local governance, or, to be more accurate, of local control, will be examined. The French, Belgian, German and Portuguese models were even more hostile to the establishment of indigenous local governance, allowing for even less involvement of the local population in political affairs.

With the system of ‘indirect rule’, the British colonial regime put up local strong-men to rule authoritatively and oppressively over their target population. Consequently, authority to

govern was shifted from the general population into the hands of servants of the colonial regime. Pre-colonial polycentric systems of governance were replaced with monocentric systems of governance (Olowu and Wunsch 2004). While many of the so-called chiefs were traditionally entrusted to assume a leading role in their local community, in many other cases the colonial regimes disregarded local power structures. If a community was not traditionally ruled by single leaders they established the institution of one-man rule in form of the chiefs. Locals were selected to secure law and order and to collect taxes in return for material incentives. The chief's allegiance clearly lay with the colonial regime and not with the local population. "This system […] could not serve as the springboard for political, economic, or social development. Importantly, it failed to provide avenues for political participation and expression […] as well as structures of accountability to the public." (Olowu and Wunsch 2004:30). European colonizers ruled through their puppets of installed chiefs. Ever since colonial rulers introduced chiefs vested with absolute executive, legislative and judicative powers, patrimonialism dominated local governance in Africa. Power was personalised and corruption flourished. Local politics were corrupted (Olowu and Wunsch 2004). Due to their oppressive behaviour, many chiefs were not well received by the locals. Opposition against the rule of the traditional leaders grew who were mostly "illiterate, ultraconservative, and widely regarded as the minions of the white rulers, and often abused their authority to acquire personal wealth at the expense of their subjects" (Olowu and Wunsch 2004:30)

Colonial rule was "authoritarian in nature and practice, and only used decentralization as an effective way of facilitating both control of the "natives" and the collection of badly needed revenue" (Makumbe 1998: 10; see also Heller 2001). The author adds that decentralisation was also used as an effective tool to apply 'divide and rule' tactics, thereby "reinforcing ethnic divisions and eroding the notion of nationalism." Colonial rule thus left behind destroyed pre-colonial cultures of collective rule while corruption, patronage, oppressive and divisive rule based on ethnicity had taken over. Nevertheless, the participatory governance culture is still very much alive in African societies, as "populations have shown by their culture that they are willing, even demanding, to participate more in decisions concerning their lives" (Laleye and Olowu 1989:17).

3.1.2 After independence: the golden age of decentralisation and its rapid decline

During the last stages of British colonialism in Africa - after World War Two - the British tried to erect local government systems (Ribot and Oyono 2006). The British secretary of state for the colonies, Lord Creech-Jones, laid out in 1947 the British strategy to prepare African states for independence: the establishment of an "*efficient* and *democratic* system of *local* government" (Olowu and Wunsch 2004:30). He emphasised closeness to the people and their needs, efficiency in managing service provision, and the application of democratic systems in order to legitimise government and to involve the people in local government activities. Due to this substantial shift in policy, local government structures were fundamentally altered. "Local government councils were democratized fully or partially […], independent revenue sources were established for the local governments, and a genuine effort was made to ensure that local government structures were at once local, democratic, and efficient" (Olowu and Wunsch 2004:30). These measures led to what some call the 'golden age' of local governance in post-independence Africa in the 1960s. Local governments were e.g. tasked with the provision of vital social infrastructure in the health and education areas. Decentralisation in the 1960s was based on the premises of 'bringing government closer to the people' and to tap local creativity for the development of a country. "But by the early 1970s, most of these initiatives had been vitiated by distrust and interference from above and by infighting and shortages of resources and expertise in elected councils and local communities" (Crook and Manor 1998:2). African governments started to embark on centralisation exercises.

Many different reasons have been cited for this trend. The low acceptance of local leaders empowered by colonizers by the local population is one factor. In some countries, so-called 'traditional authorities' were totally abolished (e.g. Tanzania), others allowed them to continue to play an important role in society and governance (e.g. Swaziland) and while some countries preferred a medium way of co-existence and often hotly debated cooperation of traditional and elected authorities (e.g. South Africa).

Other reasons for centralisation include that nation-building was seen as highest priority by post-independence governments. It was feared that when homogenous regions were granted too much authority, secessionist movements might grow stronger, leading to fragmentation or even to the falling apart of the fragile nation state construct in Africa. Another reasoning was the idea that the development of a country needs a strong central

hand guiding and controlling the process, thereby following the socialist planning rational. Olowu and Wunsch (2004:29-30) point out that since the empowered African elite regarded the rural population as "possessing neither the intellectual nor cultural capacities for local self-governance, administrative systems that were highly elitist and centralized" were erected across Africa. "The emphasis here was on a centralized Party/State bureaucracy, whose mission was to achieve the transformation of society through unified political action." (Mawhood 1993:viii). Others state that centralising tendencies can also be explained by two other factors: firstly, colonialism instilled a culture of paternalistic control of the masses in the ruling elite; and secondly, the elite's hunger for power and access to resources. Moreover, administrative inertia took hold in a country's bureaucracy, i.e. law, rules and operating procedures of colonial times were largely kept intact (Olowu and Wunsch 2004). Economic decay and dissatisfaction with local government performance are additional factors that led the new leaders of African countries to install a strongly centralised system.

3.1.3 The 1980s: deconcentration disguised as devolution

During the 1980s, centralised governance systems were widespread in Africa. But their malperformance (poverty, corruption and crime levels were on the rise), let the elites to rethink their approach. As Mawhood (1993:vii) puts it, "few African governments have ever possessed the capacity to run the state efficiently from the centre". A phase of nominal decentralisation took hold in the 1980s due to the dismal economic state of many African economies since the late 1970s. The motivation to decentralise was only related to service delivery efficiency issues and to cutting costs, not to participatory governance or empowerment of the local population. Responding to the economic crisis, many Sub-Saharan governments followed the neo-liberal policy-prescriptions of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) of the World Bank. Local governments were established in order to relieve the centre of some financial burden while they were not equipped with appropriate human and financial resources which were unavailable. Nominal decentralisation took hold with central government (or in some cases foreign donors) largely controlling local government's funds and decision-making processes (Olowu and Wunsch 2004). Deconcentration and delegation were the vehicles of choice, no significant power or authority was devolved to local authorities. The centre remained in full control (Ng`ethe

1998). According to Laleye and Olowu (1989:17), “There has been a creeping centralization in favor of the central government which exerts a stultifying control over decentralized local units.” Local governments were in fact local administrations of the ruling party without any meaningful authority, designed to control the territory and implement centrally planned development plans. National civil servants largely controlled the local bodies (Barkan 1998).

The central government and its agents were thus able to penetrate the rural areas, allowing the central government to even extent its controlling powers, instead of reducing them (Makumbe 1998).

“Overall, the results were far below hopes. Major breakthroughs in improved delivery of services, economic performance, and participation have not been realized. If anything, these efforts became obstacles to the development of effective local government institutions” (Olowu and Wunsch 2004:37).

3.1.4 The 1990s and 2000s: more genuine attempts of democratic decentralisation?

The initiation of the third phase of decentralisation that took root in the 1990s was mostly due to world-wide tendencies of political liberalisation and democratisation. The good governance paradigm, including political pluralism, participation and democracy, was on the raise. The break-down of communism was surely one driving force behind this paradigm change (Makumbe 1998).

Other factors include, according to Olowu and Wunsch (2004), the rise of political instability and challenge towards long-standing national elites in Africa, particularly by strong regional elites (e.g. Ethiopia, South Africa, Mozambique). In order to conserve their power, central elites sought to satisfy the demands of regional elites for enhanced authority and the increasingly vocal demands from the population for more effective and participatory governance by means of decentralisation. Moreover, donor-pressure to install a decentralised state-system mounted. Decentralisation was seen as crucial element to good governance and was thus identified as key conditionality for further aid. Especially since the late 1980s, there was strong internal and external pressure “to put in place macroeconomic, political and legal reforms” (Kibua and Mwabu 2008:4). Moreover, continued financial

pressure on central state budgets played a crucial motivating role. Central governments were, for example, unable to deal effectively with the raising trend of urbanisation.

There is a lively debate as to the extent that decentralisation attempts in the 1990s and 2000s were more genuinely aimed at increasing local participation and self-governance than previous efforts of African national governments. Olowu and Wunsch (2004:47) detect a substantial "shift from local administration or deconcentrated structures during the mid-1980s and 1990s, toward democratic decentralization and local self-governance in many African countries. These reforms point to something new: they point toward the principles of local self-governance, and highlight the transfer of responsibility, resources, and accountability directly to ordinary citizens in the local community." They assert that "serious democratic decentralization has begun" Olowu and Wunsch (2004:3). They identified "a public-policy paradigm shift with respect to decentralization in several countries"(Olowu and Wunsch 2004:29). Barrett et al. (2007:1) agree when they state that the "last two decades or so have witnessed the steady advance of decentralization – devolved administrative, political and fiscal authority from central government to regional and local jurisdiction – within developing countries."

But for example Barkan (1998) emphasises that little has changed in the approach of African central governments towards the establishment of local authorities. He asserted that hardly any real devolution of power from the centre to lower levels of government is visible while central control of local authorities is still pervasive. Ng`ethe (1998) too paints a rather bleak picture of the late 1990s attempts of decentralisation: local authorities are not vested with meaningful powers or responsibilities while the control of the central state over such organs remains overwhelming. Central state personnel infiltrate the local decision-making bodies, even deepening central control. The author states that the approach to decentralisation had not changed much since the early 1980s. Even though the establishment of local government units increased across Africa, their powers remain restricted. "Micro-management and control of such units makes them ineffective in terms of political or development participation." (Ng`ethe 1998:8). Larson (2005:35) agrees that merely nominal decentralisation has taken place in many countries across Africa: "in reality, what researchers have found is not democratic decentralization but partial, blocked and hybrid decentralization, and even centralization." Transfer of significant authority to local

government appears to be still rare in developing countries (Kinuthia-Njenga 2002b). Instead, in most African countries, a poorly regulated mixed form of deconcentration and devolution persists. Swilling (1997:9) agrees when he states that "instead of increasing the autonomy of local government, decentralisation policies have enabled central governments to increase their control and power over sub-national levels of government." Devas (2005) outlines that scepticism is raising with regard to decentralisation's beneficial effects in Sub-Sahara Africa, especially because the local political processes are lacking democratic elements. To Ribot and Oyono (2006:1), lack of implementation is the most serious limiting factor: "In the current wave of decentralisation reforms, governments across Africa have successfully etched 'democracy' in their decentralisation laws – calling them democratic decentralisation. These governments are still in the first stages of translating these laws into practice." Scott (2009:8) too emphasises lack of progress: "the empiric evidence suggests that decentralisation has not led to significant improvements in service delivery". As Agrawal and Ribot (Forthcoming:1) put it: "most decentralization efforts end up without increasing much the powers of local authorities or peoples ". Successful decentralisation "has been the exception to the rule" (Heller 2001:137).

A third group of scholars argues that recent decentralisation attempts have produced mixed results throughout Africa (Wunsch 1998). Ndegwa (2002) identifies uneven but visible progress across the continent. Other authors find the negative component dominating in current decentralisation reforms, while they state that still many countries have succeeded in establishing functioning local governments that promote development and alleviate poverty at the local level. Jütting et al. (2004), for example, find in one third of the countries they examined that decentralisation has had positive effects in this regard, while in the majority of cases in the developing world, decentralisation has, if at all, made matters worse.

The literature review is inconclusive regarding the extent that democratic decentralisation and local governance have already taken root in Africa. Empirical data is hence needed; this is what the next section of this chapter will provide.

3.1.5 Summary of findings

Decentralisation has been tried and tested in Africa several times, with different degrees of success. “To be sure, many political actors at the center continue to resist democratic decentralization because it shifts resources and power away from them. And, in many cases, they will win. However, there are now factors [external and internal political pressure, economic pressure] also pushing toward democratic decentralization, and they will not be easily eliminated.” (Olowu and Wunsch 2004:79)

Local governance is in general strongly valued by local African communities but local government structures imposed by the colonial occupiers were not supportive of local governance. On the contrary, colonial influences on structures and minds pose a hindrance to effective local governance still today. Instead of having reformed local governance structures, the imported systems from the West have hardly been changed (Mawhood 1993). Independent African states still inherit many features from the colonial state. For example, the pattern of dominance and control between the local elite and population is still pervasive. “Instead of attempting to build the foundations of an independent African state along more democratic lines, postindependence states in the region sustained these autocratic foundations, only replacing the external power with a domestic single-party, military oligarchy or personal despotism.”(Olowu and Wunsch 2004:57). The authors conclude that democratisation and the establishment of good local governance present a very difficult task in many regions in Africa. Nevertheless, if the above obstacles can be overcome, the African continent would present an environment especially prone to decentralisation: being socially (culturally, ethnic, linguistic, etc.) and geographically diverse and its inhabitants having a long tradition of participation in governance (Kasfir 1993).

3.2 Characteristics of current decentralisation approaches in Sub-Sahara Africa

Current decentralisation reforms, i.e. those reforms initialised during the 1990s and 2000s, vary considerably across Africa in terms of overall approach (fast paced and radical, e.g. Uganda, versus taking small steps at a time, e.g. Botswana), chosen structure (focus on regional units, e.g. Ethiopia, focus on local units, e.g. Uganda, or an integrated approach, e.g. South Africa), available resources to national and local government, and service provision performance of local governments. Some countries clearly came a long way since the 1980s and have established considerable self-governance, as happened e.g. in Ghana, while others are seemingly re-centralising, e.g. Uganda, or stagnating, e.g. Malawi (Jütting et al. 2004). It is hence not surprising that the literature review has produced inconclusive results as to whether decentralisation reforms in Africa have improved over the last two decades regarding their contribution to efficient, effective, responsive and inclusive local governance.

To shed more light on the issue, the next section of this study will analyse the results of a questionnaire distributed to long-standing development experts who are involved at the grassroots-level in strengthening decentralisation and effective local governance in thirteen different Sub-Saharan countries. Three dimensions of the current state of decentralisation are analysed: the level of autonomy of local governments; the effectiveness and efficiency of local governments; and appropriateness of decentralisation design.

3.2.1 Questionnaire results

For all three dimensions of the state of decentralisation, different indicators were established. The questions were designed on an ordinal scale, leaving three options for the respondents (in addition: 'not applicable'): 'High', 'Medium' or 'Low' levels of autonomy, effectiveness and efficiency, and design appropriateness. In order to display the answers graphically, they were converted into numerical figures with 'Low' taking the value '1', 'Medium' '2' and 'High' '3'. In case of multiple answers from one country the mean has been constructed and used. Indicators rated at 2.5 or higher receive a high rating, values between 1.5 and 2.4 are determined as medium while values of 1.4 or lower present a low score. There are considerable limitations to this method due to the inherited restrictions an ordinal

scale presents. The results should thus be considered only as tendencies instead of accurate numerical graphs.
Four figures result: level of autonomy; effectiveness and efficiency; design appropriateness; and a figure displaying the answers to the questions of how the respondents rate the overall level of all three dimensions.

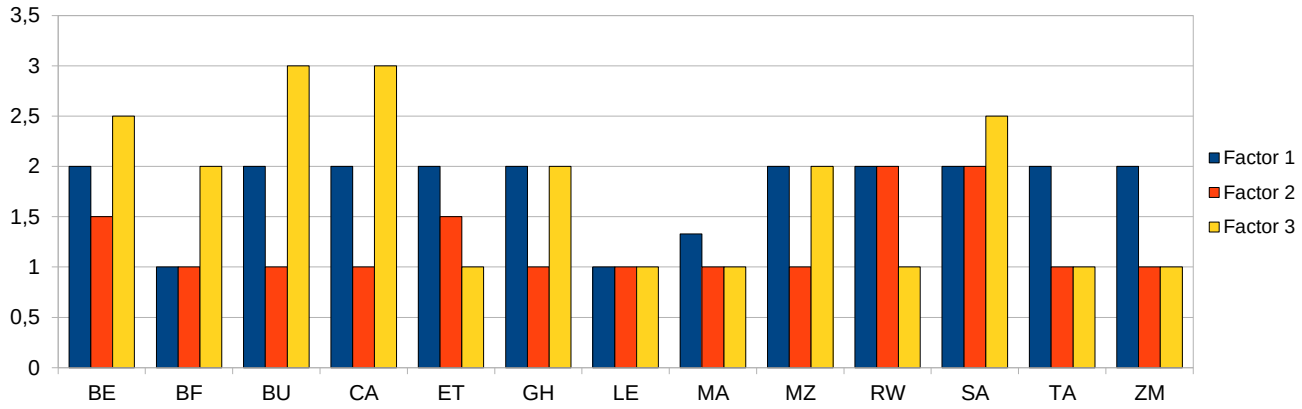
Data was available for the following thirteen Sub-Saharan countries: Benin (BE), Burkina Faso (BF), Burundi (BU), Cameroon (CA), Ethiopia (ET), Ghana (GH), Lesotho (LE), Malawi (MA), Mozambique (MZ), Rwanda (RW), South Africa (SA), Tanzania (TA) and Zambia (ZM).

3.2.1.1 Local government autonomy

Relating to the level of autonomy of local governments in Africa, three factors were looked at: factor 1 covers the extent of responsibilities transferred to local governments; factor 2 relates to financial means available to local authorities, particularly other than central government transfers; and factor 3 determines the extent of local governments' power to decide autonomously on local issues.
It can be observed from Figure 1 that overall, financial independence of local governments is the lowest factor, ranging mostly within the low to medium area, while the extent of responsibilities referred to local government lies in the middle, displaying mostly values around '2' (medium), and the power of local governments to decide autonomously has been evaluated highest, ranging mostly between medium and high. Apparently, the foundations for autonomous local governments have been laid with local governments being able to decide autonomously on a considerable amount of responsibilities. Nevertheless, this autonomy is not substantiated with the necessary financial resources. The inability of local governments to retrieve sufficient finances from their citizens through fees or taxes becomes apparent. Presumably, both pervasive poverty and the inability to collect funds effectively play a role here.
No country ranges above medium on more than one of the three factors. There is hence considerable room for improvement across Sub-Sahara Africa.

Country-specific, Lesotho and Malawi range lowest on the autonomy scale. All three factors take on values below medium. South Africa is the only country to figure in none of the three factors below medium ('2') and can thus be regarded as possessing the most autonomous local governments. Moreover, there are three countries that figure one high (decision-making autonomy), one medium (responsibilities) and one low (financial autonomy) indicator: Benin, Burundi and Cameroon.

Figure 1: Level of Autonomy of Local Governments in Sub-Sahara Africa



***Factor 1**: LG responsibilities* ***Factor 2**: LG financial independence* ***Factor 3**: LG power to decide*

Three more countries score on two autonomy-indicators in the medium range, while one factor is low: Mozambique and Ghana have medium responsibilities and power to decide, while their financial autonomy is low; Rwanda is characterised by low power to decide while financial independence and local government responsibilities are assessed as medium. The four remaining countries (Ethiopia, Burkina Faso, Tanzania and Zambia) are scoring on two factors below medium. Ethiopia, Tanzania and Zambia received a medium rating only on the responsibilities indicator and Burkina Faso only achieves a medium-ranking on the power-to-decide indicator.

Within-country variation can be described as moderate. Two countries cover with their three indicators all three scores of high, medium and low value (Burundi and Cameroon), while only Lesotho and Malawi score on a single level for all indicators, namely the low levels. All other countries cover two neighbouring categories with the three indicators. These results indicate that the three indicators of autonomy do not measure the exact same thing and

that patterns diverge with regard to underlying causalities determining the level on which each indicator scores. Based on the above results it is reasonable to assume that central governments are less willing to transfer financial resources or powers than responsibilities and are most at ease with providing local governments with formal power to decide.
This finding might surprise pessimists who reiterate that autonomous decision-making in Sub-Sahara Africa remains scarce. On the other hand it confirms those authors who state that there has taken place some degree of change over the last years towards democratic decentralisation and effective local governance. Nevertheless, effective local governance surely remains very limited due to the lack of financial independence.

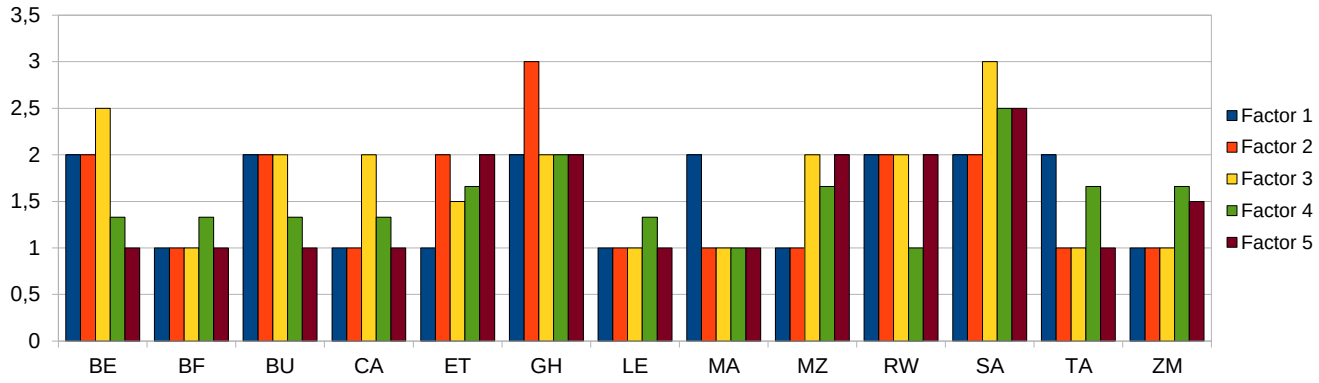
Moreover, the above results indicate that there is considerable variation across African countries with regard to the level of autonomy of their local governments. There are high-scoring countries such as South Africa, low scoring countries such as Lesotho and numerous countries scoring the in the middle field. Interferences drawn for general trends in Sub-Sahara Africa might not be very meaningful. Single-country analyses are indispensable. The authors assessing decentralisation progress as mixed are supported by the data on the autonomy-level.

3.2.1.2 Local government effectiveness and efficiency

Secondly, the level of effectiveness and efficiency of local authorities in Sub-Saharan Africa is analysed. Regarding efficiency, both timeliness and cost-efficiency of local government actions are considered here. As presented in Figure 2, five indicators have been established: factor 1 deals with the recent local government service provision performance; factor 2 relates to the budget percentage spent on developmental investment rather than on administrative costs; factors 4 concerns the strength of management, accounting and strategic planning capacity of local officials; while factor 5 measures the strength of technical capacity of LGs.
Overall, with the exception of South Africa, no country scores above medium on more than one of the five indicators of effectiveness and efficiency, room for improvement thus remains vast. Moreover, South Africa has to be considered as a 'special case'. There are vast disparities concerning the quality of local government officials and operations across the

country. As clearly outlined by the South African respondents of the questionnaire, an assessment for all local government across the whole country is therefore nearly impossible. Hence the country's results on the state of decentralisation should be treated with great caution. The apartheid legacy provided many formerly white municipalities with excellently trained, experienced officials and well-equipped office buildings. On the other hand, rural black communities were strongly marginalised in terms of the quality of education and facilities available to them. These differences are still visible today, as not even 20 years have passed by since the apartheid regime was toppled.

Figure 2: Level of Effectiveness and Efficiency of Local Governments in SSA



***Factor 1**: LG service provision* ***Factor 2**: Investment vs. administration* ***Factor 3**: Quality of monitoring*
***Factor 4**: Managerial capacity* ***Factor 5**: Technical capacity*

Overall, the differences between the average values of the five indicators are relatively small and the variation across countries high.

The strongest performing indicator of the level of effectiveness and efficiency is the strength of monitoring and auditing systems. Six countries received a medium rating on this indicator, two countries perform high and five countries low. In the middle segment, there are three factors performing nearly identically. Five countries scored at medium level, one country at a high level and seven countries received a low rating for investment vs. administration, as well as for managerial and technical capacity. The lowest performing factor was the recent performance of service provision. No country reached a high level, seven countries scored medium and six low. This result is hardly surprising, as much of the literature analysed above indicated that the service provision capacity of local governments is still disappointingly low

in many African countries. The authors who stated that significant improvement in terms of effective local governance have not taken hold yet, are supported by the results.

Turning to single country results, South Africa performs best with three out of five indicators reaching a high level, while the remaining two indicators have been rated at a medium level. Ghana is the clear second, with investment spending vs. administrative costs at a high level while all other factors reach a medium score. Apart from these two good performers, moderate performers are Rwanda, Benin, Ethiopia, Mozambique and lastly Burundi who are all ranging on average close to a medium score. The next group of countries, the bad performers, is on average closer to a low score than they are to a medium level. Tanzania, Cameroon, Zambia and Malawi all fall into this category. Lastly, Lesotho and Burkina Faso, the very bad performers, score worst with all five indicators of effectiveness and efficiency receiving a low score. Overall, the group of good or moderate performers is slightly more numerous than the countries falling into the segment of bad performance, although the difference is inconclusive (seven versus six). These mixed results can thus not shed much light on the debate of whether effective local governance has taken root or not. Clearly, country-context is important.

Within-country variation is of low to moderate extent as most countries score on the five factors in only two neighbouring categories. Only Benin has a very high variation, reaching a high level on the monitoring quality indicator and a low rating regarding technical and managerial capacity with the other two indicators reaching an assessment of medium. Lesotho and Burkina Faso are characterised by very limited within-country variation as in both cases only the lowest level was reached on all five indicators. Lack of strong variation indicates that similar causalities underlie all indicators. As a common determinant, the breadth and quality of the skills base available to a certain country come to mind. The skills base affects the quality of local officials (managerial and technical), and hence also the quality of service performance and spending on developmental projects. Presumably all indicators are interrelated as they measure different aspects of the same measure: the level of effectiveness and efficiency of local authorities. A low variation is therefore explained.

Between-country variation is moderate with the medium-group being by far the largest. There are only small groups of good and very bad performers while the rest of the countries

produce mixed results. The group of authors referring to a mixed picture of decentralisation progress are supported.

3.2.1.3 Appropriateness of decentralisation design

Thirdly, the quality of decentralisation design is evaluated. Four factors are looked at in order to determine the degree of appropriateness of design: factor 1 examines whether the legal framework for decentralisation is clearly structured and coherent; factor 2 analyses the pace and sequencing of the decentralisation process; factor 3 deals with the questions of whether coordination of different levels of government runs smoothly; while factor 4 examines the extent to which the decentralisation approach provides for both horizontal and vertical (sector-based) planning.

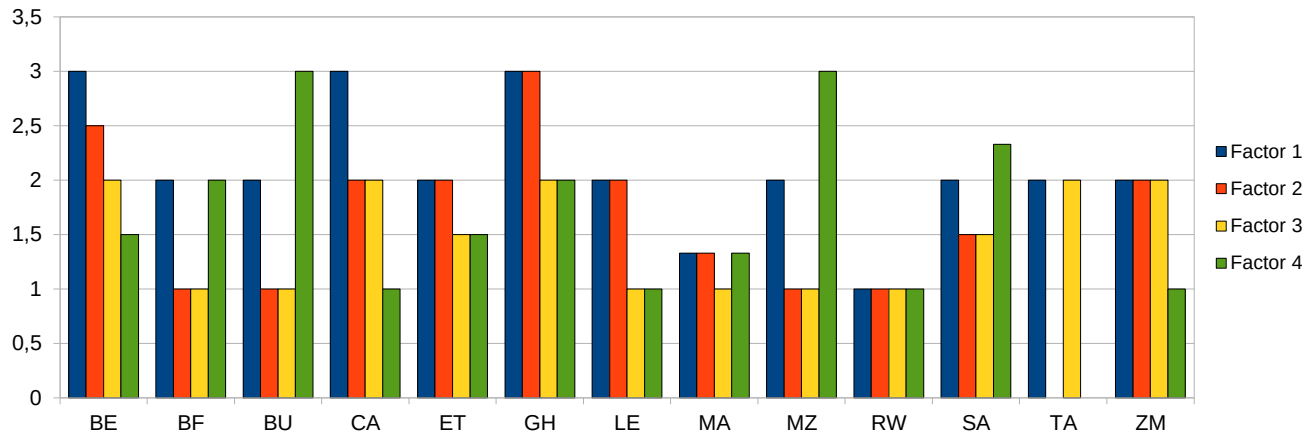
As Figure 3 clearly shows, the national legal framework for decentralisation and local governance is out of the four factors most favourably assessed by the respondents. In only two countries was the quality rated as low, while eight countries assessed the quality to be medium and three countries high. The pace and sequencing of decentralisation shares the second place with the extent of integrating sectoral and horizontal planning: both indicators are estimated as low in five countries, as medium in five countries and as high in two countries (with missing data from Tanzania). The last place takes the indicator of inter-government coordination: this indicator is not highly rated for any country, while respondents from seven countries detected a medium degree and six countries rated coordination between government levels as low. The risk of decentralisation to fuel conflict can explain this low rating.

The surprisingly positive assessment of design of decentralisation as a whole could indicate that there is a gap of central commitment between design and actual implementation of decentralisation reforms. Less trade-offs are faced at the centre at the design stage which only involves planning instead of actual re-distribution of authority and financial resources.

Turning to country-specific results, it can be observed that many countries fare reasonably well, achieving on average at least a medium rating. The clearly strongest country according to the questionnaire results is Ghana, achieving a high rating for both the legal framework

and reform pace, while inter-government coordination and horizontal and vertical planning receive a medium rating. The second strongest country is Benin with similar results on all four indicators but slightly lower single values. These two countries are the good performers. The moderate performers, ranging on average at a medium level, are Tanzania, South Africa, Ethiopia and Cameroon. While the first three countries received medium ratings for all indicators, Cameroon performed high relating to the legal framework, medium with regard to reform pace and government coordination, while planning received a low voting.

Figure 3: Level of Design-Appropriateness of Decentralisation Reforms in SSA



***Factor 1**: Legal framework*
***Factor 2**: Reform pace/sequencing*
***Factor 3**: Government coordination*
***Factor 4**: Horizontal and vertical planning*

The next group comprises of those countries that lie in the range between medium and low design appropriateness. Zambia received three medium ratings with only the indicator of horizontal and vertical planning performing low. Both Mozambique and Burundi perform low in terms of reform sequencing and government level coordination, while they receive a medium rating for the quality for their national legal framework und were rated highly in terms of combining horizontal and vertical planning. Two countries scored medium on two indicators as well as low on two indicators: both Burundi and Lesotho received a medium assessment for their national framework while Burundi's horizontal and vertical planning received the second medium rating and Lesotho's pace or sequencing of decentralisation reforms. Lastly, the group of very bad performers comprises Malawi and Rwanda. Both

countries have been rated low on all four indicators, while Rwanda received even more negative single ratings.

As demonstrated by the above analysis, data variation in this category is fairly high with five countries receiving a moderate or above-moderate rating, two countries receiving a bad performance rating while the other six countries lie somewhere in between. Again, it has to be emphasised that evaluating a combined Sub-Saharan state of decentralisation on a single scale would not produce very meaningful results.

Within countries, the variation between the rating of the different indicators is less substantial but still clearly visible. While in five countries all four indicators fall into the same category (Ethiopia, Malawi, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania), three countries cover all variations from low over medium to high values (Burundi, Cameroon, Mozambique). All other five countries fall into two neighbouring categories. The limited variation indicates that the indicators measure similar factors that are influenced by similar variables. This finding could be explained by the fact that decentralisation reform design is arguably the most restricted, homogenous variable of the three factors. Probably not many other factors than political will play a vitally determining role of decentralisation design, as e.g. skill shortages are less severe at the central government level.

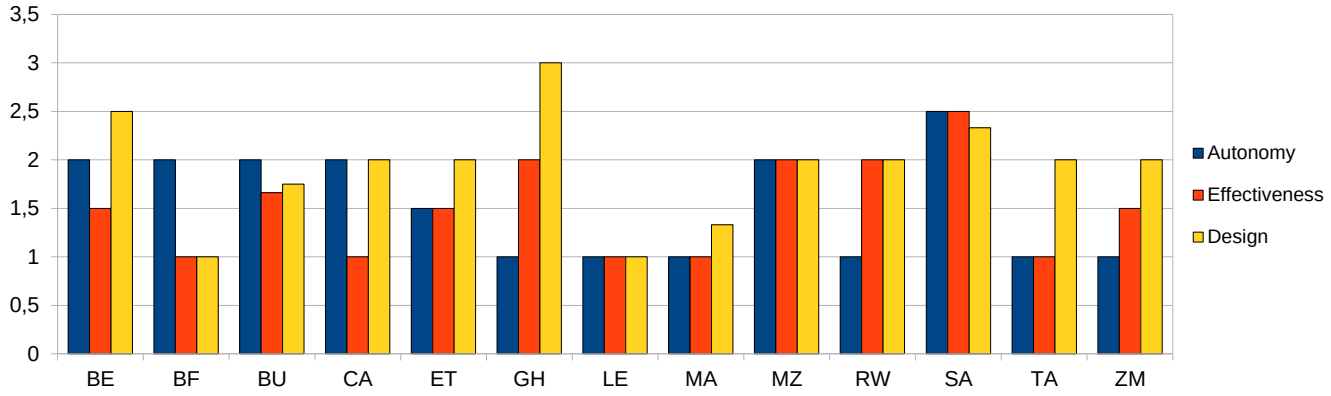
3.2.1.4 Overall assessment: the state of decentralisation in Sub-Sahara Africa

Lastly, it is analysed how the respondents rated the overall level of autonomy, effectiveness and efficiency of local governments as well as the overall quality of reform design. It can thereby be attempted to analyse the state of decentralisation Africa-wide based on single country results, even though explanatory power of such an approach remains limited.

As presented in Figure 4, the design of decentralisation and local governance reforms is rated most highly across the thirteen African countries, with two countries evaluated as high performing in this regard, while in eight countries a medium quality of reform design was detected. Only three countries rate the overall design quality of decentralisation reforms as low. Second scores the level of effectiveness and efficiency of local governments (one high, seven medium and five low country evaluations), closely followed by the extent of local

government autonomy (one high, six medium and six low evaluations). Clearly, reform design is rated much higher than autonomy or effectiveness and efficiency of local governments. Severe problems in the day-to-day operations of local governments still persist as both autonomy and effectiveness and efficiency score on average below a medium level. Lack of these factors most likely prevents the emergence of effective local governance. The pessimists cited in the literature are thus more strongly supported than the optimist hypothesis of substantial change.

Figure 4: Overall State of Decentralisation and Local Governance in SSA



***Blue**: LG level of autonomy* ***Red**: LG level of effectiveness/efficiency* ***Yellow**: Appropriateness of design*

The above findings could indicate two different things: firstly, outside factors such as the degree of lack of capacity or unsupportive local cultural and social norms strongly hamper the effective implementation of well-designed reforms. On the other hand, political will and commitment could not be substantial enough so that central government activity stops at formulating the reform process. Appropriate implementation or sustaining of decentralisation is lacking. To examine these questions further, the next chapter will look at what factors constrain decentralisation and local governance most.

On a general note, even the design of decentralisation and local governance is rated on average slightly more often negatively than positively. With exacerbated results for the other two dimensions of the state of decentralisation, it can be concluded that much work still needs to be done in order to achieve democratic decentralisation and good local governance that have not taken root yet in most of Sub-Sahara Africa. Even if

decentralisation had been of late more successful in establishing these conditions (maybe local government autonomy, effectiveness and efficiency were even at a lower level 20 years ago), the gains can have only been marginal.

In order to complete the analysis, country-specific results are briefly analysed. As could be expected, South Africa received the highest overall rating for its state of decentralisation, with all factors ranging between a medium and high level. Countries achieving a medium level on all three indicators include Mozambique; Benin, Burundi and Ethiopia. Ghana is characterised by a high variation whereby local government authority is ranked low, effectiveness and efficiency medium and design quality high. Countries receiving two medium and one low rate are Cameroon (effectiveness and efficiency is rated low) as well as Zambia and Rwanda (autonomy is rated low). Two countries received two low and one medium assessment: Tanzania (design quality is medium) and Burkina Faso (autonomy is medium). The remaining countries of Malawi and Lesotho receive low values on all three dimensions. The variation between countries concerning their state of decentralisation is therefore substantial. Progress in achieving democratic decentralisation and local governance hence varies considerably across Africa, supporting the advocates of a mixed progress of decentralisation in Africa.

The variation of different dimensions of the state of decentralisation within a single country can be characterised as moderate to low. Only Ghana covers all three categories of high, medium and low evaluation (see above). Within five countries all three values are similarly high (Burkina Faso, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique and South Africa) while the three dimensions in the other seven countries span over two neighbouring categories. These three dimensions of the state of decentralisation and local governance hence do not vary much within one single country. This could indicate a certain inter-correlation between the three dimensions. It is for example possible that political commitment of the central government to decentralisation and local governance affects all three dimensions to a certain extent: strong commitment to democratic decentralisation produces a clearly structured, coherent legal framework for the reform process, the devolution of many responsibilities to local governance and the provision of human resources to local governments, enhancing e.g. their technical capacity.

3.3 Conclusion: limited democratic decentralisation in Sub-Sahara Africa

The above analysis of the questionnaire results confirmed the divergence of progress achieved across Sub-Saharan Africa relating to the establishment of democratic decentralisation and good local governance. This coincides with the mixed results of the literature review on the issue. Nevertheless, it was clearly visible that effective local governance is a long way off in most Sub-Saharan countries. Immense obstacles remain in the way of decentralisation in nearly all countries of Sub-Saharan Africa. Full democratic decentralisation and effective good local governance have not yet been achieved. Therefore, the more negative outlook relating to whether or not local governance has been improved substantially through recent decentralisation reforms is supported by the data. Overall, a mixed picture with a negative tendency has been developed, supporting the findings of Jütting et al. (2004) cited above.

4. ANALYSIS: FACTORS INFLUENCING DECENTRALISATION SUCCESS OR FAILURE

This chapter will analyse the multiplicity of factors determining the success or failure of a complex, multifaceted reform process such as decentralisation. From a theoretical point of view, relevant literature is reviewed. The second part of this chapter looks at empirical data on factors influencing decentralisation success across Sub-Saharan Africa in order to determine which of these variables matter most. Lastly, a comprehensive model of factors influencing decentralisation and its effects on the quality of local governance is established.

First of all, it needs to be clarified what is meant by success or failure of decentralisation. For the use of this study, decentralisation has succeeded when it fosters genuine good local governance. Decentralisation fails, if the systemic change is not supportive of good local governance. To reiterate, the aim of decentralisation here is to establish participatory, inclusive, community-led, transparent, accountable, effective and efficient local governance.

Secondly, it has to be emphasised that due to the multiplicity of factors possibly influencing the success or failure of decentralisation, the below analysis cannot claim to be exhaustive.

4.1 Literature Review

Reviewing relevant literature, I identified two main categories of factors influencing the success or failure of decentralisation reforms: contextual factors and design-related factors. This coincides with the analysis of Jütting et al. (2004:16) who emphasise "the crucial importance of the country background and the design of the process in shaping the success or failure of pro-poor decentralisation". Within the context category, three dimensions can be identified: economic, societal and political context, while institutional factors, such as administrative history, can also feature separately of the political context. With regard to design-related factors, one can distinguish between a more general design of the decentralised state system, setting the overall conditions for decentralisation processes (e.g. the size of local government units and the functions allocated to them) and more specific, operational factors, such as the frequency of council meetings, applied decision-making rules (e.g. single majority rule) etc. Macro- and micro-level of decentralisation design are separated here.

All of the above factors often interrelate. For example, the emergence of free and fair local elections is home to the political dimension, but strongly determined by the design of decentralisation and heavily influenced by the specifics of the local societal structure. More generally, the design of decentralisation depends to a large part on political factors, such as the commitment to and motives behind the initiation of decentralisation reforms at the central government. Inter-linkages between different factors will be outlined below.

Within the political factors category, the arguably most important determinant of the success or failure of decentralisation reforms is political will and commitment at the centre (Kinuthia-Njenga 2002a; Jütting et al. 2004; Smoke 2000; Heller 2001; Ng`ethe 1998; Laleye and Olowu 1998; Mawhood 1993). The initiation of decentralisation must stem from the central government that decides to share power, authority, responsibilities and resources. Moreover, for decentralisation to succeed, central government needs to sustain the reform process with continuous financial and technical support and guidance provided to local governments. Without substantial commitment from the ruling party, decentralisation is doomed to fail (Ng`ethe 1998). Unfortunately, genuine commitment from the political elite has often been lacking in Africa. "The unwillingness of political and administrative leaders to share the monopoly authority inherited from colonial times, even when the case for democratic decentralization has been overwhelming, has constituted the veritable dilemma of local government reform in Africa" (Olowu and Wunsch 2004:57-58). Instead, "the incidence of encroachment on the responsibilities of local institutions has been pervasive" (Laleye and Olowu 1989:17).

The motivation for initiating decentralisation is of crucial importance here. The central government has to realise that decentralisation is not a zero-sum game whereby the local level gains at the expense of the centre but that both levels can benefit from the process (Mawhood 1993; World Bank and Istituto Italo-Africano 1989; Laleye and Olowu 1989). In case central politicians and/or bureaucrats lack commitment to decentralisation, strong tendencies to (re-)centralise occur. Oftentimes, implementation of decentralisation is incomplete, or contradictory and obstructing legislation is put in place. As many authors state, the main problem with decentralisation in Africa is that African states tend to centralise: central governments do not give away power and authority (Mawhood 1993; Laleye and Olowu 1989; Ng`ethe 1998; Olowu and Wunsch 2004; Makumbe 1998). "How

can a national government and ruling party, sometimes faced by no effective challenger, put through a programme of political decentralization which seems to go against the interest of all its individual members, from the Minister down to the humblest bureaucrat? The resistance to change is built into the structure of administration itself – […] politicians and officials have a natural tendency to centralize power in their own hands and to resist the measure of decentralization." (Mawhood 1993:ix). If decentralisation is not initiated due to genuine commitment but only to e.g. appease donor interest, the chances that the programme will fail are high.

Related to the above, good leadership is essential for decentralisation to succeed: "the principle ingredient for success is visionary and strategic leadership [...] spread across state, civil society and the private sector. [...] The potential success of participatory governance is dependent on a new form of leadership that operates on the basis of sharing power and advancing the collective interests of the community" (Kinuthia-Njenga 2002b:19; see also Wunsch 1998). It becomes apparent that attitudes and behaviour of central and local politicians, as well as of the local population, based on the principle of democratic good governance, are - often missing - crucial ingredients for decentralisation success. These issues will be dealt with in greater detail in the paragraph dealing with societal factors.

Apart from genuine political will and commitment to decentralisation as an inevitable pre-condition for decentralisation to succeed, a stable political environment displays a more general necessary prerequisite for even political will to develop. Particularly a stable security situation at the national level is of concern here. In case of violent internal opposition or full-scale civil war, decentralisation will surely not be considered a viable national policy option as the central state is struggling for its survival (Mawhood 1993). Other political pre-conditions for decentralisation success include a strong rule of law and a political system that allows for multi-party politics (Mawhood 1993; Kinuthia-Njenga 2002a; Wunsch and Olowu 2004). The latter factor overlaps with social conditions and will be dealt with more comprehensively in the section concerned with social determinants below.

There are many factors related to macro-level design of decentralisation that are strongly influenced by political factors such as political will. Prud`homme (1989:12) emphasises the importance of the conceptualisation aspect of decentralisation processes: "How to decentralize, what to decentralize, in order to maximize the potential benefits of

decentralization while minimizing its possible costs – these are the real issues" (see also Tibaijuka 2002, Jütting et al. 2004; Smoke 2000).

For example, drawing up the legal framework for decentralisation is an inherently political decision. Consider e.g. the question as to whether, and to what extent and detail, to root the principles of decentralisation and local governance in the constitution of a country. Institutional anchorage of powers and responsibilities is crucial to ensure citizen support for, and investment in, the newly created structures, as otherwise central governments might easily reverse their decision to devolve authority (Larson 2005; Mawhood 1993; Smoke 2000). Safeguarded rights of local governments to govern stand contrary to easily removable privileges to rule. Additionally, it is important that the legal framework is clear and coherent, and that it specifies the roles and responsibilities of all government levels (Kibua and Mwabu 2008). Moreover, it needs to subscribe a substantial amount of authority to local government bodies so that viable local governance can result (Wunsch and Olowu 2004).

Another very important macro-level design factor largely influenced by central politics is the level of deconcentration vs. devolution. Clearly, local governments should be dominated by locally elected officials, not by central government appointees, in order to ensure downwards accountability and responsiveness (Laleye and Olowu 1989). Here it is imperative that local candidates standing for election are selected locally, and are not pre-selected by the centre (Mawhood 1993; Kinuthia-Njenga 2002a). Moreover, the extent of authority, responsibilities and resources assigned to the new local governments are decisions made by politicians of the central government. Which functions to fully devolve to local authorities must be carefully considered in order to avoid the two risks of either overburdening the young institutions or of making them irrelevant to their electorate (World Bank and Istituto Italo-Africano 1989). Moreover, it needs to be assured that the financial resources available to local governments match their assigned functions. Only then are local authorities capacitated to perform well. These decisions are highly political, as they involve a shift of power, functions, skills and financial resources away from central bureaucracies to local units. Resistance has often been strong, particularly in the developing world.

Other factors fall in the same category of being politically motivated design-related factors, namely those dealing with the institutional context that is established for local authorities. For example, the degree of transparency and accountability of local government decision-

making is largely dependent on the establishment of well thought-through mechanisms and procedures. Both factors are crucially determining local government legitimacy and thus their credibility among the local population (Wunsch and Olowu 2004).

Regarding transparency of decision-making, the provision of well-kept and publicly accessible records of local council meetings is important. Furthermore, independent, institutionalised auditing systems and well-functioning monitoring and oversight need to be established (JICA Synthesis Report 2007; Larson 2005; Kinuthia-Njenga 2002a).

It is of utmost importance that effective accountability mechanisms are integrated into decentralised governance systems (Crook and Manor 1998; Agrawal and Ribot [Forthcoming]; World Bank and Istituto Italo-Africano 1989). This refers both to upwards-accountability – local governments having to report back and to answer enquiries of the central government – as well as downwards accountability, whereby local citizens are systematically included into the decision making and implementation processes (institutionalised participation) and judge the officials in local elections according to their performance. Crook and Manor (1998) found that effective accountability measures, especially those connecting the local populace with local government officials, are the most important factor determining decentralisation success or failure. For example, regular free and fair local elections have to take place in order for local politicians to feel pressure to perform well (JICA Synthesis Report 2007). Unfortunately, local elections in Africa "are often dominated by personalities and by ethnic loyalties, with little information about policy alternatives and little access to information about the real performance of those in power." (Devas 2005:8).

Moreover, citizens should be regularly invited to make policy proposals and to put forward amendments. If possible, the means of participatory budgeting should be applied (Kibua and Mwabu 2008; Barrett et al. 2007; Crook and Manor 1998). In addition, freedom of press must be ensured, and the formation of civil society organisations allowed. A more detailed analysis of these largely societal factors will be given in the respective paragraph below.

Moreover, the approach to decentralisation is important. Many authors state that a horizontal, all-encompassing view has to be combined with taking into account specific sectoral conditions when setting up decentralisation reforms (World Bank and Istituto Italo-Africano 1989). Strategic planning with foresight, taking local conditions into account, is

crucial for the success of any comprehensive governance reform (Kinuthia-Njenga 2002a; Kibua and Mwabu 2008).

The pace of reform is also important. Many authors and practioneers argue for a gradual advancement of decentralisation so as not to overburden newly erected structures (World Bank and Istituto Italo-Africano 1989; Smoke 2000; Barrett et al. 2007). Further on, setting in place a system of institutionalised communication and coordination between the different levels of government is critical to the success of the institutional reform process (Prud`homme 1989; Ng`ethe 1998; Wunsch and Olowu 2004).

The establishment of a transparent, just and effective funding system is important too. It has to be ensured that financially weak communities receive extra support in order to enable them to function properly. “However, getting them [government grants] transferred reliably, without crippling strings attached to them, and without suppressing local revenue raising, is still an issue for most of Africa. Formulas that determine how much each area gets are also a problem: they frequently lack both transparency and legitimacy, and are subject to political tampering by the center.” (Wunsch and Olowu 2004:52-53).

Central governments also need to establish concrete national guidelines to give local governments a clear orientation on standards and principles of local governance (Prud`homme 1989). Moreover, determining the size of the local entities is important, as too small a unit will not be viable in terms of tax revenues and too large a unit will be too far away from its constituency and thus its degree of representativeness is reduced (trade-off between viability and representativeness). Local councils should not become a “distant and alien authority” (Mawhood 1993: xi) but be close and representative to its constituency while still retaining its economic viability. This is a delicate task to achieve.

Another important point relating to decentralisation design is that local governments should be entitled to substantial own-source revenue as this will enhance their financial autonomy (Larson 2005). Certain taxes should be assigned to the local level. In turn, local officials will be more committed to collecting local revenue and citizens will be more eager to hold local governments accountable.

The extent to which the institutional set-up provides for the inclusion of traditional authorities as well as community-based organisations is another important factor (Mawhood 1993; Gregersen et al. 2005). The influence of traditional authorities on inclusive, democratic

governance has in many cases proven to be complicated and even overall negative, with traditional rulers continuing their elitist, self-supportive, arbitrary and oppressive governance style. According to Olowu and Wunsch (2004:63), “while traditional leaders are still at times respected and can play important roles in contemporary African affairs, they lack the legitimacy, administrative resources, and skills to become “local governments”. Even if they had these attributes, their interests would likely undermine the emergence of national democracy in Africa.” On the other hand, the authors emphasise that strong acceptance of traditional leaders in some communities can lead to enhanced conflict-solving, especially around land-use issues. A well-crafted solution has to established, taking local particularities into account. To combine “traditional rulership and local government democratization constitute a dilemma that many countries have yet to resolve.” (Olowu and Wunsch 2004:62)

Another point frequently discussed is whether to install a nation-wide public service overseeing the recruitment, positioning, promotion and sanctioning of local government personnel or whether this task should be handed over to local governments (Crook and Manor 1998). While the latter option ensures better accountability and commitment of local officials to local citizens and their priorities, the former system can ensure better payment and promotion opportunities, thereby enhancing the attractiveness of local government positions, leading to much needed increased human capacity at the local level. This trade-off has to be carefully considered according to specific country conditions.

Micro-level design-factors also influence the ability of decentralisation to foster local governance. The exact institutional setup (council, committee-system, etc.) is very important to the process of decentralisation, as well as the institutionalisation of training programmes for local officials (Ceccarelli 1989). Moreover, appropriate mechanisms need to be set up to resolve social conflicts within the community.

Smaller details of developing specific rules and procedures can also be influencing decentralisation success. Among them are the budgeting process, decision-making rules in the council, and rules of engagement with civil society and citizen representatives (Mawhood 1993; Gregersen et al. 2005). The frequency of council and committee meetings also plays a role here. Moreover, dominance of the executive over the legislative can be helped to prevent by indirect election of the mayor from within the legislative council, to

which he/she is then accountable (Crook and Manor 1998; Wunsch and Olowu 2004). It is crucial to implant checks-and-balances mechanisms in local government systems (Laleye and Olowu 1989). Concerning local personnel, incentives and punitive measures should also be put in place in order to ensure high working standards (Mawhood 1993; Crook and Manor 1998; Wunsch and Olowu 2004).

Institutional factors that overlap with the economic dimension include overall ineffectiveness and inefficiency of state operations at national and local level (Olowu and Wunsch 2004; Makumbe 1998). The viability of the whole governance system is severely compromised by these frequently occurring conditions. If local governments are not able to produce quality services in a timely manner, citizens will withdraw their support to them. If the central government only approves local budgets at the end of the year the budget was envisaged for, as happened recently in many Sub-Saharan countries, local government operations will be severely disrupted. What is more, the transfer of vita local government revenue by the central government to the locality is also in many cases extensively delayed.
Moreover, colonial structures continue to be influential in many African bureaucracies (Makumbe 1998; Laleye and Olowu 1989, Wunsch and Olowu 2004). As Kasfir (1993) notes, decentralisation efforts in Africa are often rooted in colonial structures that have not been sufficiently adapted to specific national conditions. There is a clear need to re-model the state administration away from top-down, very authoritative and oppressive colonial structures towards more democratic, transparent and accessible state structures (Olowu and Wunsch 2004). But, as Makumbe (1998:10) cautions, “The nature or characteristic of the post-colonial LG system must, however, not be blamed only on the colonial legacy of Africa; there have been ample opportunities for African nations to discontinue the inherited LG systems and, indeed, to determine new courses of decentralizing central government since independence.” This task is nevertheless monumental, as administrative inertia is a commonly known phenomenon implying strong resistance to change. Attitudes and behaviour instilled into public servants for decades need to be radically changed. For example, bureaucrats are used to respond to the central government, not to local citizens (Wunsch and Olowu 2004). Moreover, in many African states, central bureaucrats and politicians continue to extensively interfere into local matters. Paternalistic attitudes towards rural population prevail. “This pathological and paternalistic perception of the masses, coming as it does from both the national elite and career bureaucrats, assumes that

people cannot lead their own processes of change. It reduces the masses to mere objects of change and development. It cannot result in the empowerment of the poor." (Makumbe 1998: 14).

These points lead us to the societal context influencing decentralisation success or failure. Behaviour and attitudes of both central and local officials are crucial for a decentralisation project to succeed. National officials need to be ready to devolve meaningful powers and responsibilities and need to understand the importance of grassroots-led development. They need to work in a cooperative, supportive and effective manner. Local officials need to have as their prime objective to better the living conditions of their communities instead of furthering their own profit (Barrett et al. 2007). Symptoms such as corruption and embezzlement of funds are unfortunately all too frequently occurring in Africa, both on national as well as local levels (Olowu and Wunsch 2004; Crook and Manor 1998; Makumbe 1998). Moreover, local officials need to work in favour of the whole community without advantaging or disadvantaging certain groups. Unfortunately, neo-patrimonialism is widespread in Sub-Saharan Africa. Furthermore, they need to see locals as equals to them. The practice of 'big men' giving favours to their selected 'small boys' in return for loyalty must be overcome. "Given these […] general behavioural patterns of dominance and submission at the local level, it is a critical question whether local self-governance can reasonably be expected to take root in Africa" (Olowu and Wunsch 2004:59). Furthermore, the use of any oppressive means by local officials toward their electorate has to be abolished. Both national and local officials need to overcome the colonial idea of a controlling, oppressive state ruling over their subject population (Crook and Manor 1998). Local officials need to be integer, of high moral standards, committed and motivated to do their job, as well as effective and efficient in doing so (Laleye and Olowu 1989; Barrett et al. 2007). Only then can good local governance to take hold. Kasfir (1993:32) points out that local government officials in Africa are unfortunately often characterised by a "low level of personal efficacy". Some authors go as far as to identify behavioural and attitudinal problems as principal reason for the malperformance of democratic decentralisation in Sub-Sahara Africa. Green (2008) states that both central government and local government shortgalls in this regard are driven by attitudinal or behavioural factors. All state actors stem

from the same population, hence a difference in attitudinal quality between the centre and locality cannot be expected.

Elite-domination of economic and political spheres at both national and local levels threatens the development of truly democratic, broad-based development (Kinuthia-Njenga 2002c; Larson 2005). According to Crook and Manor (1998:303): "democratisation […] is unlikely to succeed where the institutions of social and economic dominations substantially overlap with or correspond to those of the power structure of political institutions." All too often in African countries do local elites capture local government in order to advance their own interest only. "Elite capture, whereby well-connected individuals secure positions of advantage in decentralized organizations in order to direct benefits towards themselves or even to misappropriate resources, has been widely identified as a key risk of decentralization" (Bardhan 1997:9). Personalisation of rule takes hold (Wunsch and Olowu 2004). The roots of such practices lie deep in local, hierarchical societal structures and cultural norms. Moreover, local leaders in Africa often use government resources to "co-opt, corrupt, or intimidate possible opponents, and [they] use patron-clientage to pre-empt any disturbance of this game […]. All this means that trying to begin a broadly based political process is not rational for most people; and that even when one is begun, it soon decays" (Wunsch and Olowu 2004:66). The authors add that "the very ethnic fragmentation typical of Africa seems to engender "big man"-based patronage that sustains local fragmentation". Nation-building is severely threatened by these patterns. The African state as such was set up only recently by the colonial forces. Borders were drawn according to strategic points of view, disregarding societal bonds. That is why nowadays many tribes are spread across numerous countries and many traditionally hostile tribes were forced to form one nation (Wunsch and Olowu 2004). Only when tribal rivalries can be transcended for a struggle to achieve a better life of all citizens of a region or nation, can good governance on the national and local levels take hold. Then, local politicians will not be able to apply divide-and rule tactics but will have to tackle the pressing issues many people in Africa face, such as lack of service provision.

Additionally, social capital is seen by many as enhancing the chances of effective grassroots-based governance taking root. As Larson (2005) emphasises, only those communities that are able to speak with one voice in an organised manner will be able to considerably influence pending political decisions. On a more general note, local heterogeneity makes

governance harder, while open local conflict, often along ethnic or religious lines, can deadlock local government operations, due to infighting of different groups of a local society (Wunsch and Olowu 2004).

Other factors are cross-cutting the social and political context, e.g. the extent to which the principles of good governance and democracy are compatible with ancient social and cultural norms of peoples of a country. This influences whether such norms crucial to local governance are accepted and treasured by the local population. Olowu and Wunsch (2004) emphasise the importance of cultural factors when it comes to decentralisation processes. Another factor in this category is the degree of openness of a society (Wunsch and Olowu 2004; Crook and Manor 1998). For example, to what extent is the political climate at the locality characterised by pluralist, competitive politics? Furthermore, the degree of civil society development and capacity at the local level play a role here (Makumbe 1998; Wunsch and Olowu 2004; Heller 2001; Wunsch 1998). Do local interest groups institutionalise their demands and do these community-based organisations have the capacity to engage in meaningful dialogue with the local government? Also important are capacity and financial resources of local media. As emphasised by the JICA Synthesis Report (2007), vibrant, capacitated and independent civil society and media are essential for democratic decentralisation to work. A viable democratic political process must be built at the locality. Unfortunately, in developing countries there is a great risk that local elites capture and co-opt civil society organisations (Wunsch and Olowu 2004). Moreover, a pre-condition for vibrant discussion in society is a politically mature, educated and interested local population, a condition that is often lacking in Africa (Wunsch and Olowu 2004; Barrett et al. 2007). Crook and Manor (1998) point out that the degree of openness of society is closely linked to the political design factor of effectively working accountability mechanisms (as touched upon above). Among the crucial social prerequisites identified for accountability mechanisms to work properly is a competitive multi-party system leading to open challenge of sub-optimal policies within a council; capacitated, free and critical media; and the presence of a "public 'culture of accountability'" (Crook and Manor 1998:303).

Lastly, the socio-economic environment has to be conducive to democratic governance (Barrett et al. 2007). The social and economic dimensions cross here. Factors such as the pace of economic growth and the degree of poverty, and the regional distribution thereof,

are important factors affecting the chances of decentralisation to succeed in fostering local governance (Wunsch and Olowu 2004). These factors largely determine the amount of financial resources retrievable through taxes and/or user charges for local government operations, affecting both its financial independence and ability to implement projects. A connected factor is the often limited ability or willingness of local governments to retrieve due taxes and fees from their subject population (Kinuthia-Njenga 2002b).

The educational standard of the local (and national) population is another crucial issue within the socio-economic environment. The ability of local citizens to understand and criticise local government policies is strongly influenced by this factor, as is the breadth and quality of the skill base available to local governments. Local government officials need to have an appropriate set of skills (and experiences) in order to serve the demands of the local people effectively (Crook and Manor 1998; Barrett et al. 2007; Wunsch and Olowu 2004).

Other economic factors are the general level of development of a country and the extent of economic prosperity in a given region (Laleye and Olowu 1989; Wunsch and Olowu 2004). Both factors influence a state's capabilities to develop a strongly performing bureaucracy. Unfortunately, most African states lack sufficient financial means and are dependent on donor funding. This situation is exacerbated with the addition of new administrative units, inevitably linked to costs such as constructing and equipping office buildings. The overall costs of a decentralisation programme are strongly determining the ultimate success of decentralisation (Mawhood 1993). As African national governments are often under severe financial pressure, they may not be able to sustain decentralisation efforts.

Additional economic factors include the quality of the infrastructure and transport system in a county. These factors can, in addition to general poverty, greatly influence the ability of citizens to participate in local government operations (Wunsch and Olowu 2004). The ability of local governments to effectively tap local knowledge in order to provide cost-efficient services that are in demand is at stake here.

Another economic factor is linked to the overall managerial performance of local governments. Does their accounting system work properly and do operations run smoothly? The overall efficiency and effectiveness of local government operations is analysed here (Wunsch and Olowu 2004; Barrett et al. 2007).

Lastly, adequate financial (sufficient amount provided in a timely manner) and human resources (competent, sufficiently trained and experienced personnel) are critical to a local unit's success (JICA Synthesis Report 2007; Kibua and Mwabu 2008; Jütting et al. 2004; Wunsch 1998). "Where these resources are inadequate, or are in reality administered by central government without discretion being allowed to the local council, the scene has been set for the destruction of local government itself." (Mawhood 1993:xii)

A compacted overview of some of the main factors influencing success or failure of democratic decentralisation in Africa is presented in table 4.

Table 4: Factors Influencing the Success or Failure of Decentralisation Reforms

Political Context	Economic Context	Societal Context	Macro-level Design	Micro-level Design
Political will/commitment; leadership	Level of economic growth and prosperity	Endemic corruption and patron-client relationships	Nature of Legislative Framework	Procedural Factors: Decision-making rules at the council
Motivation of behind decentralisation	General level of development	Behaviour and attitudes of local and national officials	LG resources match responsibilities	Nature of committee system
Politics at the centre: extent of devolution vs. deconcentration	Matching responsibilities with financial resources	Elite-domination or capture of local affairs	Institutionalised accountability, transparency and monitoring means	Mechanisms of engaging with private sector and civil society
Political stability	Poverty level, Skill base	Social capital, cultural norms	Horizontal/vertical approach	Frequency of council meetings
Rule of law	Costs of decentralisation	Pluralist party politics	Funding system formula; size of LGs	Budgeting system
Political and technical guidance to LGs	Quality of infrastructure	Political mature, critical population	Coordination of government levels	Institutionalised participation measures
Colonial influence on administrative structure and behaviour	Overall effectiveness and efficiency of LGs	Openness of the society, strength of civil society and media	Strategic planning; Including traditional authorities	Direct/indirect election of mayor; conflict resolution mechanisms

4.1.1 Conclusion

As we have seen in the last chapter, decentralisation, when it was attempted in Africa, has far too often not produced the hoped-for results. This is due to inadequacies in some (or most) of the above crucial factors for its success (Mawhood 1993). Both political, economic and social conditions as well as the micro- and macro-level design of decentralisation have to favour the establishment of democratic decentralisation and good local governance. These issues have to be addressed in order to assure "professional, transparent, accountable, lawful, and publicly oriented governance" (Wunsch and Olowu 2004:17).

Barrett et al. (2007:4) offer the following summary of factors necessary for democratic local governance: "For a programme of decentralization to succeed, a set of prerequisites must be met in order for local level institutions to become capable and honest service providers to replace or improve upon central government. Unless local populations are politically mature, have access to adequate information, are aware of their rights and the channels by which they can exercise them, devolving authority to local leaders may result in the capture of resources by an elite few, and undermine the popular support for decentralization. […] For its promise to be met, decentralization has to unfold systematically and sequentially, be attentive to scale-sensitive subsidiarity, have local capacity to efficiently and equitably identify needs and opportunities and allocate resources […]."

Amidst the multiplicity of factors, it remains however unclear, which of them are most impactful when it comes to the dismal performance of local governance in many parts of Sub-Sahara Africa. An empirical analysis is needed to establish those factors most strongly constraining the emergence of effective, good local governance. Only then can priority areas of action for AMCOD and UCLGA be established so that their intervention can be most helpful to establishing democratic decentralisation. The next section of this chapter will deal with the empirical analysis of this question.

4.2 Empirical evidence: major obstacles to decentralisation and local governance in SSA

In this section, I will briefly outline the main obstacles to decentralisation and local governance faced today in Sub-Sahara Africa based on the results of the distributed questionnaire. Again, data was available for the thirteen countries of Benin (BE), Burkina Faso (BF), Burundi (BU), Cameroon (CA), Ethiopia (ET), Ghana (GH), Lesotho (LE), Malawi (MA), Mozambique (MZ), Rwanda (RW), South Africa (SA), Tanzania (TA) and Zambia (ZM).

The section of the questionnaire covering the major obstacles that democratic decentralisation and local governance face today in Sub-Sahara Africa is separated into ten different factors. The respondents were asked to weigh the importance that each of the ten possible obstacles to decentralisation has in their specific country-context on a scale of '1' (very low importance) to '5' (very high importance).

Factor 1 relates to lack of capacity of local governments; factor 2 measures the lack of financial resources of local governments; factor 3 concerns the lack of political commitment at the centre; factor 4 deals with a lack of strong upwards accountability mechanisms; factor 5 is concerned with a possible lack of strong downwards accountability mechanisms; factor 6 relates to the poverty level among the local population; factor 7 deals with the intensity of corruption, patronage, nepotism, and clientelism; factor 8 examines a possible lack of meaningful popular participation; factor 9 relates to a possible inadequate involvement of traditional authorities in local governance processes; and factor 10 concerns inefficient or ineffective local government officials.

As the results will be used to determine the entry-points of pan-African organisations, Africa-wide data, as opposed to country-based data, is used in order to determine the greatest need for intervention across Africa. This simplification is also used due to scope limitations of the paper. Each country's (if applicable: average) response is used to form an overall mean of importance relating to each single constraining factor. Figure 5a displays the results.

When analysing figure 5a, it becomes immediately apparent that all potential obstacles identified are strongly constraining the emergence of effective decentralisation and local governance. None of the constraining factors received an average rating lower than 2.5 out of five. The two major prohibiting factors to the effective establishment of democratic local governance seem to be factor 1 and 2: lack of financial and human resources at the local government level (importance-value greater than 4 out of 5). These factors are closely

Figure 5a: Factors Constraining Democratic Decentralisation and Local Governance in SSA

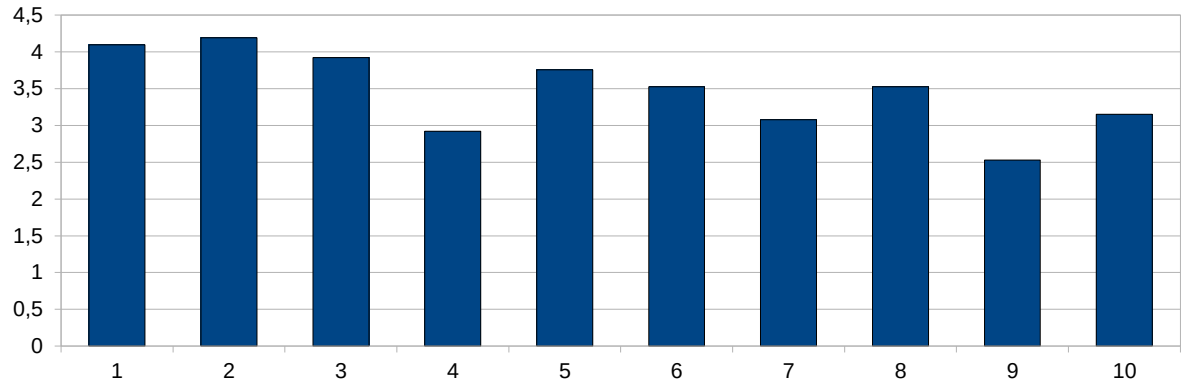
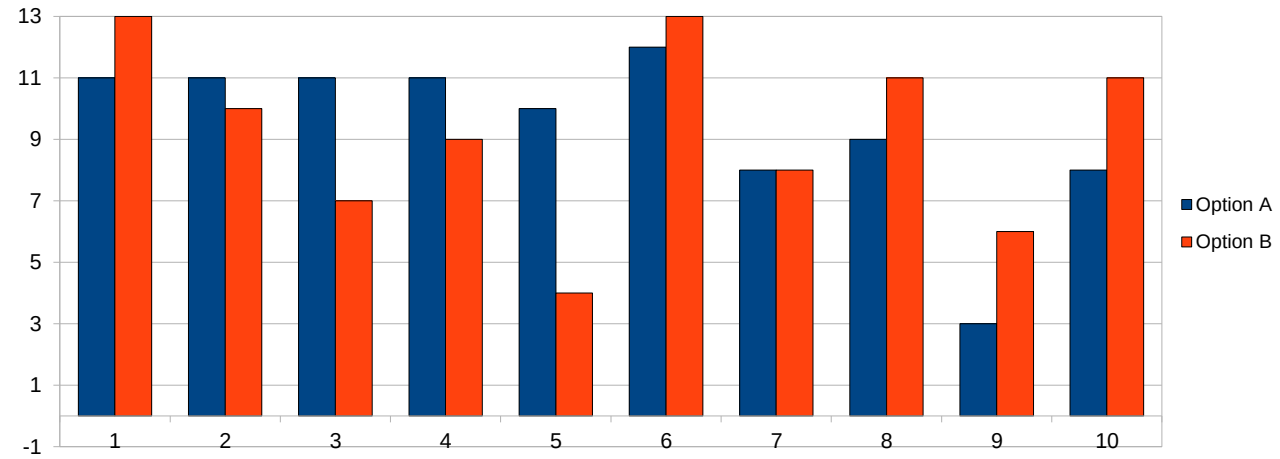


Figure 5b: Frequency of Options A and B per Constraining Factor



Factor 1: Lack of capacity: ***a*** *- technical,* ***b*** *– administrative*
Factor 2: Lack of financial resources: ***a*** *- insufficient amount,* ***b*** *- unreliable supply*
Factor 3: Lack of political commitment: ***a*** *- by politicians,* ***b*** *- by civil servants*
Factor 4: Lack of upwards accountability mechanism: ***a****: oversight/guidance,* ***b*** *- M&E*
Factor 5: Lack of downwards accountability mechanism: ***a*** *- formalized participation,* ***b*** *- fair elections*
Factor 6: High poverty: ***a*** *- low education,* ***b*** *- low income*
Factor 7: corruption, patronage, clientelism: ***a*** *- local elite capture,* ***b*** *- gross misuse of funds*
Factor 8: Lack of popular participation: ***a*** *- low democratic maturity,* ***b*** *- lack of civil society capacity*
Factor 9: Inadequate involvement of traditional authorities: ***a*** *- too much,* ***b*** *- not enough*
Factor 10: Inefficient/ineffective LG officials: ***a*** *- lack of commitment,* ***b*** *- lack of adequate work culture*

followed by factor 3, lack of political commitment at the centre, and factor 5, lack of strong downwards accountability measures (taking on a value close to 4 out of 5). Still above an average value of 3.5, factor 6 and 8, high poverty and lack of meaningful popular participation, are assessed as strong prohibiting factors. The rest of the factors fall into the category of medium strong importance. Factor 10 (local government official's ineffectiveness

and inefficiency) and factor 7 (corruption, patronage, nepotism, and clientelism) value slightly above an average value of '3' while factor 4 (lack of effective upwards accountability mechanisms) is slightly below the value of three. The by far least important factor relates to the involvement of traditional authorities, factor 9 (value slightly over 2.5). Either traditional authorities are fairly well integrated into local governance processes or it is seen by most respondents as a low priority when it comes to factors prohibiting democratic decentralisation.

The above analysis shows that all ten factors are valuable targets for AMCOD and UCLGA action, with lack of local human and financial capacity and political will standing out as most important issues.

Turning to more specific results, Figure 5b is analysed which displays the frequency with which respondents named variation a and b as applying to their country context regarding each constraining factor. It was possible to list one, both, or none of the options as important in the country context (with exception of the options relating to the involvement of traditional authorities, as explained below). With valid data from 13 countries, 13 is hence the highest possible number for both option a and b to be named by the respondents for each constraining factor. A value of 10-13 implies a high or very high importance, while 7-9 is a moderate value, 4-6 a low value and 1-3 very low. Figure 5b shows that the vast majority of options score highly, between-option variation is hence fairly low. Only two out of 20 options score in the low and very low categories.

Hence, on an overall level, obstacles to democratic decentralisation and local governance, as displayed in Figure 5a and 5b, take on a high value. Decentralisation still faces considerable challenges in Sub-Sahara Africa.

Concerning specific results with regard to the options a and b offered, in nearly all countries both low income and a low-level education are important features of poverty constraining effective local governance. Moreover, lack of administrative capacity is constraining decentralisation in virtually every country, while in 11 out of 13 countries lack of technical capacity too plays an important role. With regard to financial resources of local governments, 11 out of 13 countries state that the amount allocated to them is insufficient while in 10 countries the supply of the funding is delayed too. Regarding lack of popular participation, lack of civil society capacity was mentioned by 11 country respondents and

low democratic maturity of the local population by 9 respondents. Frequently listed as impactful was in addition the variation of lack of upwards accountability measures of oversight and guidance, named by 11 respondents, while insufficient monitoring and evaluation was perceived by 9 country respondents as being important.

Apart from this constantly high ranking group, variants of other constraining factors diverge in their perceived importance. Two constraining factors have one highly and one moderately important variant. Concerning ineffectiveness and inefficiency of local government officials, inappropriate work culture is highly important, having been cited by 11 countries. Low commitment of local officials is less widespread, only in 8 out of 13 countries does the presence of this condition pose a serious threat to effective local governance. Secondly, political commitment is strongly lacking from central politicians (11 counts) while civil servants resistance seems to be either less frequent or often considered as not very important (7 counts). With regard to downwards accountability, one variant scores high (10), namely the lack of formalized participation mechanisms, while the other one scores low (4), i.e. free and fair elections. Apparently, free and fair local elections are more frequently established than effective mechanisms to include the local population in political decision-making processes. As lack of downwards accountability was perceived as one of the strongest overall factors constraining democratic decentralisation, it is puzzling that its variations do not fare as 'well'. Probably other factors than procedural ones are important too to ensure effective downwards accountability. For example, actual responsiveness of local government officials to known local needs can play an important role (e.g. influenced by capacity, commitment and work culture of officials).

Both variations of corruption, nepotism, clientelism and patronage score moderately. Local elite capture of government operations and gross misuse of local government funds have been selected by eight country respondents as important factors. This result is in accordance with the overall moderate result of the corruption factor.

The lowest ranking variations stem from the involvement of traditional authorities in local government operations. A moderate six countries named its variation of not enough involvement as being important in their country context, while only three countries established that not enough was being done to involve traditional authorities. Inappropriate involvement as a whole is taking place in eight countries, a moderate value. This count

makes sense as respondents were not able to mention both – contrary – factors as being present in their country. This result too is in line with the limited importance that was accredited to the overall factor of inadequate involvement of traditional rulers.

4.2.1 Synthesis of results

To summarise, the following factors can be said to have the most constraining impact on democratic decentralisation and local governance: three factors top the list, namely lack of technical and administrative capacity of local governments; insufficient amount and irregular supply of financial resources to local governments; and lack of political commitment by central politicians. Somewhat less important, while still of high importance, is the apparent lack of formalised popular participation mechanisms to ensure downwards accountability. With some distance follows poverty in terms of local education and income on the fourth place, displaying an odd case: poverty as overall factor was not ranked as highly constraining as its variations of low income and education. This could be, for example, explained by the fact that poverty is an abstract construct and has hence not been directly connected to decentralisation success or failure by the respondents who have instead been able to identify a more tangible low income and educational level much more easily as factors constraining democratic decentralisation and local governance.

Two more factors should be mentioned that were rated fairly high across the thirteen countries as obstacles to democratic decentralisation: lack of popular participation due to lack of civil society capacity and, to a slightly lesser degree, due to low democratic maturity of the local population. Moreover, local officials seem not only to lack capacity but also an adequate work culture.

These results are largely confirmed by the qualitative data collected with regard to the most constraining factors to decentralisation and local governance. The respondents were asked to provide a ranking of up to three most important factors constituting obstacles to effective local governance in their country-context. The following four categories emerged as being most frequently cited: lack of capacity and moral of local governance staff; inadequate financial resources of local governments; lack of political will, including e.g. lack of policy implementation; and a lack of democratisation and local government downwards

accountability. In addition, but less frequently cited, factors related to the macro-level design of decentralisation emerged, i.e. a lack of clear, strategic decentralisation policy following a systematic approach. Unfortunately, the ten questionnaire factors did not sufficiently relate to this category. All the more, its importance is clearly shown by the fact that decentralisation design was named in the qualitative section. Additionally, one respondent mentioned the importance of both administrative history and unattractive living conditions in rural areas, while another emphasised high staff turnover as a fundamental problem.

In a nutshell, lack of local capacity, financial resources and political commitment by central politicians emerge as the most importantly constraining factors to the establishment of democratic decentralisation and local governance. Additionally, the importance of a well thought-through macro-level design of decentralisation, based on a systematic and strategic approach, emerged.

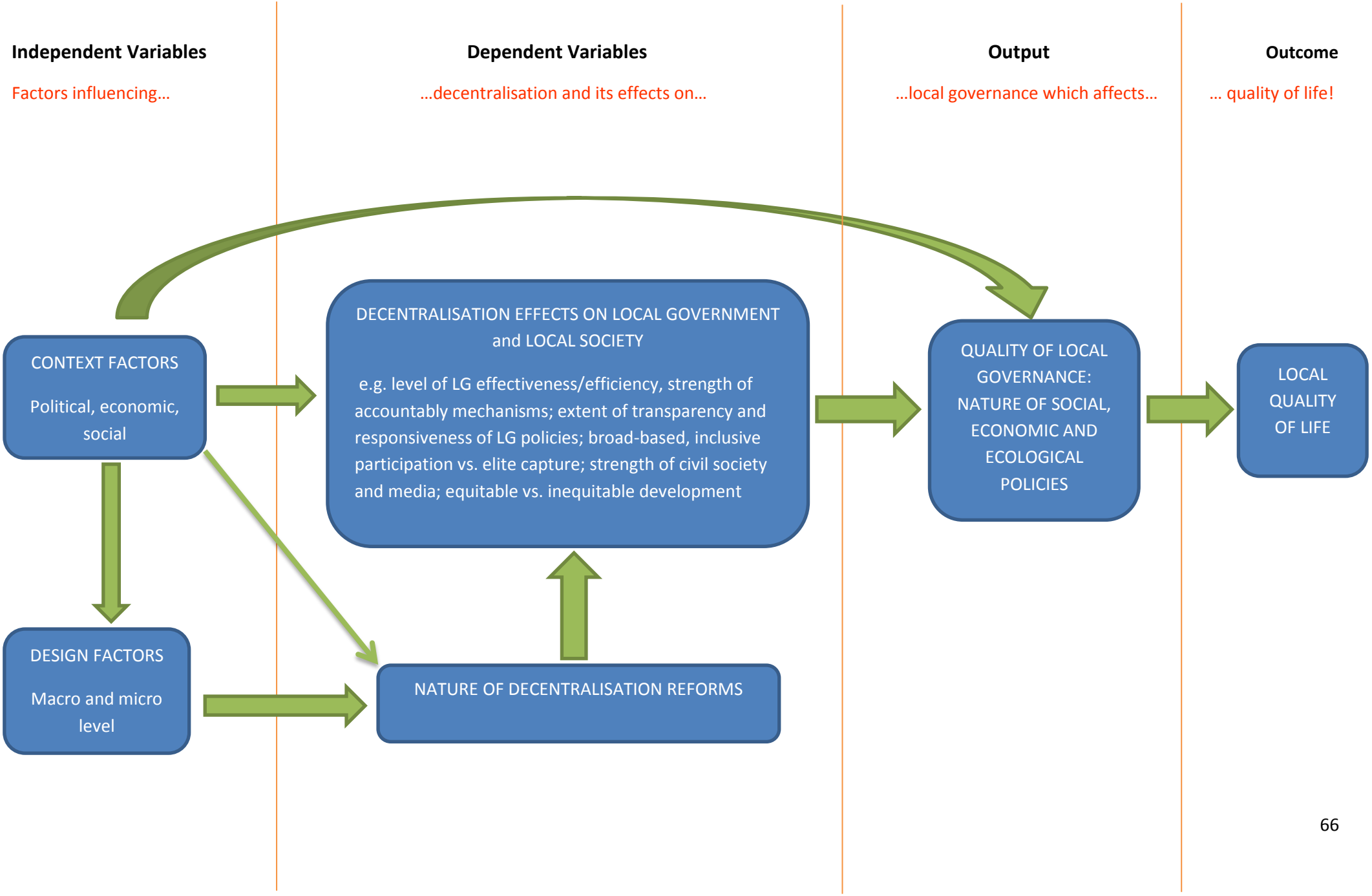
4.3 Comprehensive model of influences on decentralisation and its effects on governance

The present section will develop a comprehensive, simplified graphical display of how decentralisation impacts the living conditions of the local population. Starting with factors influencing the success of decentralisation reforms (both relating to the national and local environment, as well as to designing the reforms), decentralisation effects and its determinants are then presented and the influence on the quality of life of the local population outlined Hence the following graphic presents a summary of the previous theoretical elaborations on the possible effects decentralisation can have on the quality of life of people and on factors that influence the extent to which decentralisation helps to improve the living conditions. This synthesis of theoretical assumptions will then lay the foundation for analysing in which ways, and during what stages of the decentralisation process, the pan-African organisations of AMCOD and UCLGA can contribute to the emergence of good local governance. Figure 7 summarises the identified causalities.

As outlined earlier in this chapter, contextual factors relating to the social, political and economic conditions present in a certain country influence the extent to which decentralisation can help improve the living conditions of the local population. On the most basic level, political conditions such as national instability or complete lack of political will at the centre can prevent a government from embarking on the development of decentralisation reforms. Other political pre-conditions, such as the presence of strong rule of law, have frequently been cited as necessary for viable local governance to emerge. Moreover, the motivation behind initialising decentralisation has to stem from genuine commitment to local governance, as opposed to a purely donor-driven agenda. Economic prosperity is also often seen as a crucial prerequisite as it provides the necessary conditions for local governments to be provided with sufficient funding. Contextual factors thus influence decentralisation directly.

Social, political and economic conditions also influence the design of decentralisation: political will, for example, is crucial to the extent of devolved responsibilities local authorities receive and if technical guidance is given to them from the centre. Moreover, to install a formula-based grant system is a decision dependent on political commitment at the centre. Another example is the constraining effect lack of economic prosperity will have on the amount of central revenues provided to local authorities.

Figure 6: Causalities relating to Factors Influencing Decentralisation and Its Effects



These social, economic and political conditions also influence the extent of positive effects decentralisation reforms can directly have on local lives. For example, broad-based, inclusive participation in decision-making can only take place, if the local population is reasonably well educated, is politically interested and vested with a democratic culture, and can afford to spend time on getting involved in local politics. Moreover, the extent to which social hierarchies are cemented and patron-client relationships established at the local level; and if cultural norms at the locality are compatible with democratic governance are important social influences on decentralisation's possible effects. Downwards accountability of local governments can only take root if it is demanded as their right by local citizens. Similarly, well-educated and politically mature citizens are crucial for strong and independent media and civil society to evolve as watchdogs of local government operations. Moreover, local government officials are usually residents of the area the local government covers. Hence the quality of local government staff, and hence the body's effectiveness and efficiency that strongly determine the positive effect decentralisation can have on local communities, is influenced by overall educational standards as well as local cultural particularities.

How to design decentralisation reforms is of crucial importance too. Well-defined accountability mechanisms (e.g. free and fair local elections, institutionalised regular consultation of the public, monitoring and guidance from the centre) are indispensable in order to ensure that decentralisation produces transparent and responsive governance. Strategic planning involving both a horizontal/comprehensive and vertical/sector-based approach are also important for decentralisation to succeed. Moreover, the characteristics of the overall legal framework for decentralisation reforms are influencing decentralisation success: when, for example, local government authority, responsibilities etc. are enshrined in the constitution, local authorities are substantially strengthened. Apart from macro-level factors, micro-level design is also important: to adjust conflict-resolution strategies to specific local realities is, for example, crucial for them to work effectively.

Moreover, whether the mayor is directly elected by the public or indirectly by the council affects local government power-constellations. Additionally, decision-making rules in the council and the frequency of its meetings can also strongly affect the quality of local government operations.

Among those development-prone effects produced by democratic decentralisation and influenced by context and design factors, are, among others, the level of effectiveness and efficiency of local government operations; the level of transparency and responsiveness of local policy-making; the level of local government legitimacy; the extent of upwards and downwards accountability of local authorities; the existence of broad-based, inclusive popular participation in local government decision-making and -implementation vs. elite capture of local governments; the quality of cooperation between different government levels; local and national unity or fragmentation; the degree of strength and independence of civil society and media; equitable vs. inequitable development within and across regions; exacerbating or reducing the extent of corruption; reducing vs. cementing local social inequalities and dependencies; and whether local governments can produce effective checks and balances towards the central government.

These effects of decentralisation then determine the quality of local governance. The nature of social, economic and environmental policies is influenced by e.g. effectiveness, efficiency, and responsiveness (to local needs) of local governments. Further on, how many, what kind of developmental projects are planned and their location is strongly influenced by the extent of corruption, clientelism etc.

The quality of local governance then determines the quality of service provision, infrastructure etc. Moreover, whether there is equal access to and distribution of these services and infrastructure projects (e.g. hospitals, schools, roads, etc.) across community members, and if vulnerable groups are specifically cared for, is determined by the nature of local governance. Furthermore, the policies determine whether conditions fertile to local economic prosperity, and hence to job creation and poverty alleviation, are established. What is more, the extent of environmental protection and conservation is also directly influenced by the ecological policies (e.g. regulations) local governments adopt.

Consequently, these policy outputs directly influence the quality of life of the local population. If, for example, poverty is reduced, economic prosperity and job opportunities increased, empowerment and self-determination of local citizens achieved, and if community-led development is instilled, largely depends on the nature and quality of local governance. Local quality of life, then, also influences overall national prosperity and stability. For example, people satisfied with their local living conditions are less prone to riot

or rebellion. Additionally, overall increased local economic activity improves the country's economic performance as a whole.

But the quality of local governance is also directly affected by contextual factors. Consider for example the breadth and quality of the local and national skills base: it is strongly affecting the ability of local governments to recruit officials who are capable of detailed, long-term, strategic planning. Local governance quality is also influence by the degree of poverty and underdevelopment in rural areas that make rural governments an unattractive workplace to quality personnel.

This example outlines the complexities at work here. Oftentimes, certain variables are both independent and dependent factors. Consider e.g. poverty: the level of poverty influences directly the quality of local governance. Low educated personnel will perform less well than highly educated staff. Additionally, poverty affects decentralisation effects. For example, a poor and uneducated population will have neither the time to spare nor the capacity to engage in meaningful participation. What is more, the level of poverty is also determined by the exact factors it influences: by the quality of local governance. Effective local governance helps to alleviate poverty by creating job opportunities, developing schools, hospitals etc.

Moreover, there are many possible other factors that could interfere with any of the causal mechanisms outlined above. What is more, it is perfectly possible that many more influential factors exist besides those included in the model. Those factors may be found inside or outside the categories of decentralisation and political, economic and social context that determine the quality of local governance and local life. This model cannot claim to present a complete account of all variables that come into play in such complex processes.

In a nutshell, the theoretical model established here comprises three stages of a causal chain leading to the outcome of quality of life at the locality: the independent variables, i.e. national context and decentralisation design approaches; the dependent variables of the nature of decentralisation reforms and the influence the reforms can have on local government structure, operations and societal realities at the locality; and finally the output, i.e. the quality of local governance, namely of policies and projects. These output factors, relating to e.g. the construction of roads or schools as well as to economic policies determining the investment climate at the locality, strongly influence the quality of life.

4.4 Conclusion: country conditions and reform design matter

As it has been established, governance systems across Africa lag behind when it comes to establishing good local governance. The analyses undertaken in this chapter have led to the conclusion that a multiplicity of factors and causalities are at work here. This system is by no means simple or straightforward. A complex, inter-dependent system of causalities is present here to the extent that even chicken-and-egg problems evolve: for example, the poverty level has been identified both as an independent variable influencing decentralisation success and as an output, influenced by decentralisation success.

One main finding is that lack of political will, local capacities and finances as well as the poor quality of decentralisation design are very impactful constraining factors. It is hence assumed that pan-African organisations in the realm of decentralisation and local governance could have meaningful beneficial effects to the establishment of democratic decentralisation and good local governance by targeting these obstacles.

The next chapter will analyse these hypotheses from a theoretical and empirical viewpoint, namely, the exact ways in which AMCOD and UCLGA can influence the nature of output and outcome of decentralisation reforms by influencing independent or dependent variables of the above outlined causal model.

5. CASE STUDY: THE VALUE-ADD OF AMCOD AND UCLGA

This chapter analyses how pan-African organisations in the areas of decentralisation and local governance can help to improve national reforms aimed at establishing democratic decentralisation and substantial good local governance. The potential value-add of the All Africa Ministerial Conference on Decentralisation and Local Development (AMCOD) and the United Cities and Local Governments of Africa (UCLGA) will be looked at through the perspective of the established framework of factors influencing decentralisation success.

AMCOD is a high-level political organisation. It presents a forum for African ministers of decentralisation, local governance and local development to exchange information and best practices. The newly established Secretariat in Yaoundé, Cameroon, once fully operational, is supposed to support local governance processes across Africa by conducting regular reviews and analyses of decentralisation and local governance in Africa. It will then be able to establish and disseminate best practices to national ministries. Moreover, it is envisaged to draw up guidelines relating to how best to implement decentralisation reforms. Among AMCOD official goals for the period of 2011-2015 is to complete the institutional set-up and its alignment with the AU as Special Technical Committee (STC) for decentralisation and local development, a status accredited in 2007; and to foster policies across Africa that support decentralisation and local development based on popular and civil society participation in the design and implementation of policies (www.amcod.info). Other overall objectives include, according to the AMCOD constitution adopted at the extraordinary session in Yaoundé, Cameroon, in September 2010: the African Union prioritises decentralisation and local development as urgent sectors for national government action; civil society is sensitised to the primary importance of decentralisation for national development in the social, economic and cultural spheres; mediation mechanisms are provided for local and national authorities concerning decentralisation and local development; research is conducted on decentralisation and local development; resources are mobilized for decentralisation and local development programmes; guidelines are established as to the optimal design and implementation of decentralisation and local development policies; and support and guidance is provided to sub-regional organisations in decentralisation and local development matters (www.amcod.info).

Even though AMCOD is a young organisation that faced a near-standstill due to lack of political commitment after its inception in 2003, the organisation has overcome the paralysis by solving various key issues during its very effective extraordinary session in September 2010. Not only was the permanent seat of the Secretariat determined, member states requested to start paying an agreed amount of annual contribution and its logo and website adopted, but the acting AMCOD chairman, the Cameroonian minister of territorial administration and decentralisation, Marafa Hamidou Yaya, was tasked to lead, in cooperation with the AU, the recruitment process of the new Permanent Executive Secretary and other crucial staff members. The participation of numerous ministers from all across Africa in the September 2010 conference has proven that national interest is on the rise. Thus there is a good potential for AMCOD to succeed in its mission to foster democratic decentralisation and inclusive local governance and development.

UCLGA is the Africa branch of the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) world body. It functions as an umbrella organisation for roughly 40 national local government associations and 2000 cities across Africa. The UCLGA headquarters are based in Rabat, Morocco. Its vision is to help build African unity and to foster grassroots-based development in Africa (www.uclga.org). The following two main aims of the organisation are outlined: to promote decentralisation and the establishment of largely autonomous local governments across Africa; and to build 'African unity' from the grassroots (www.uclga.org). It seeks to carry out three main functions: providing local governments throughout Africa with concrete technical, administrative and fund-raising advice (by e.g. establishing guidelines and setting up Africa-wide training programmes for local government officials) so that they can provide local services in an effective manner and to enable them to better cooperate with the central government; to support the set-up and operations of national local government associations; and to foster information and best-practice exchange among local governments in Africa and across the world (e.g. at the Africities summit held every three years). Moreover, UCLGA's proclaimed aim is to strengthen the voice of African local governments on both the continental (AU) and international (UCLG) stages. Additionally, it seeks to promote "a culture of accountability, good governance and results-oriented behaviour among local government authorities" (www.uclga.org).

Unfortunately, the young institution has so far not been able to work effectively towards its proclaimed goals. Soon after its inception in 2005, a leadership-conflict ensued that has widely paralysed UCLGA's operation, involving two main personalities: Mr. Elong Mbassi from Cameroon, representing the North-West African (francophone) division, and Father Smangaliso Mkhatshwa from South Africa, representing the Southern African (English-speaking) division. This conflict climaxed in the effective establishment of two separate arms of UCLG Africa. Subsequent to the world body UCLG's acknowledgment of the Rabat faction as valid UCLGA, tensions began to ease. Now signs of improvement, namely the begin of informal communication between the two factions, provide for a better outlook of UCLGA's future ability to concentrate its energy on serving the establishment of autonomous local authorities and good, democratic local governance in Africa. Nevertheless, only future will tell if, and when, this stage will be reached.

5.1 Theoretical benefits of AMCOD and UCLGA

Following the established causal chain of decentralisation relating to factors that influence it and its effect on local governance and thus the quality of life at the locality, this chapter will identify how AMCOD and UCLGA can influence the chances of decentralisation leading to enhanced development at the local and, consequently, national level.

I identified three levels on which AMCOD and UCLGA could have an effect, although they can only intervene on the first two: contextual factors and the conception of decentralisation reforms; decentralisation effects on the local community; and on local governance itself (through influencing contextual factors). Moreover, the pan-African organisations can do so before decentralisation has become effective, both before and during the stage of concrete planning; and while decentralised governments are already up and running. Hence two loci and three points in time of intervention have been identified. The intervention of AMCOD and UCLGA turns the independent variable of national political, economic and social particularities into a dependent variable. Furthermore, in addition to contextual factors, another major influence is added to decentralisation design with the intervention of AMCOD and UCLGA. The theoretic model presented above is thus altered and enlarged.

Following the causal model established in the previous chapter, a logical entry point for pan-African organisations would be to improve the political will and commitment at the central government to democratic decentralisation and local governance. This factor is not only very often constraining the quality of design in such fundamental ways as to the extent of responsibilities and financial resources devolved to local governments; it also directly effects local government operations as excessive control stemming from lack of commitment to effective local governance by politicians and bureaucrats greatly disturbs local government operations in many African countries. This factor seems to be a powerful entry-point. Both at the (pre-) conceptual and fully operational stages of decentralisation can increased political will and commitment be very helpful.

From an analytical point of view, AMCOD seems better able to influence central government will, motivation and commitment than UCLGA. This is because AMCOD is placed in the realm of high-level politics whereas UCLGA mostly acts below the national level. Regular Benchmarking of local governance, for example, has the potential to instil considerable peer pressure and hence political commitment into leading decision-makers.

Other contextual factors falling into the category of pre-conditions for successful local governance are much less easily influenced by pan-African organisations. Political factors such as national stability or the strength of rule of law seem to be difficult to influence. AMCOD would surely overstep its technical capacities. The same applies to economic factors such as the level of economic prosperity and poverty. Direct influence seems difficult. Advancing these factors as preconditions is unlikely; having an indirect influence on them through better local governance is nevertheless more realistic. Social factors such as the political maturity and societal particularities at the locality (determining participation patterns) are also not in the realm of influence of AMCOD or UCLGA.

Concerning design-related factors of decentralisation, pan-African organisations could provide the responsible national ministries with valuable advice and guidance through e.g. the provision of guidelines and standards as well as best practices. This could cover both macro-factors, such as the make-up of a high-quality legal framework or appropriate monitoring mechanisms, as well as micro-level factors relating to the choice of appropriate local government structures and procedures.

AMCOD might have a slight advantage here over UCLGA due to its better ability to access high-level decision-makers. But UCLGA has most likely an advantage when it comes to detailed technical knowledge on practices and approaches that have been tried and tested successfully. AMCOD could thus more meaningfully influence macro-level design while UCLGA seems better positioned to advise on micro-level factors. Both organisations could influence the design of decentralisation in a meaningful way. Obviously, this intervention has to come at a point of time when decentralisation reforms are in the process of being conceptualised in a specific country. The level of impact such an intervention could have appears to be quite promising.

The quality of local governance could be indirectly influenced by strengthening the skills base at the local level. Better qualified local officials can produce a higher quality of local governance. This intervention could take place by providing training programmes both for long-standing local government officials and those 'to be'. Nevertheless, training programmes make most sense when the local governance structure is at least nearly completed, or fully operational. UCLGA is clearly better positioned here, as they operate much more closely to the grass-roots level than AMCOD. They could much better identify local needs and concerns and elaborate respective solutions.

To tackle those factors most strongly constraining the emergence of effective decentralisation and local governance promises to provide the best chances of making a difference in terms of enhancing democratic decentralisation and local governance. Following the priority issues that emerged in the previous chapter, these factors are primarily the lack of local government capacities and of political will at the centre. Both factors appear to be promising targets for intervention of AMCOD and UCLGA. In addition, lack of financial resources has been raised as a huge problem. This issue is more difficult to address by AMCOD and UCLGA because it is highly influenced by the state of the nation's economic power. Nevertheless, political commitment to re-allocate given finances in a timely manner could be enhanced. This method is likely to have a rather restricted impact. What could be done additionally is to enhance local governments' capacity to better collect and manage local resources. UCLGA seems to be well-set here, through e.g. providing training programmes.

Other important factors resulting from the theoretical analysis are also very difficult to tackle for pan-African organisations: increasing local participation and alleviating poverty. Improving the work culture of local officials seems also hard to come by, in contrast to the easier task of improving their capacities.

To summarise, AMCOD seems to be able to intervene most effectively on the following levels: to strengthen central political commitment and will to democratic decentralisation and local governance and to provide advice on how to best frame decentralisation reforms on a macro level. UCLGA seems to be best positioned to provide knowledge on how to construct micro-level components of decentralisation as well as to provide capacity-building programmes to local government officials. Concerning the point in time to intervene, AMCOD and UCLGA should become active both before the establishment of decentralised structures and during their full operation. Political will needs to be strengthened at all given times (pre-conceptualisation, decentralisation design and operation); advice to design reforms has to be given at initial stages of decentralisation conceptualisation; and training programmes to increase capacity are most impactful when decentralisation is already operational.

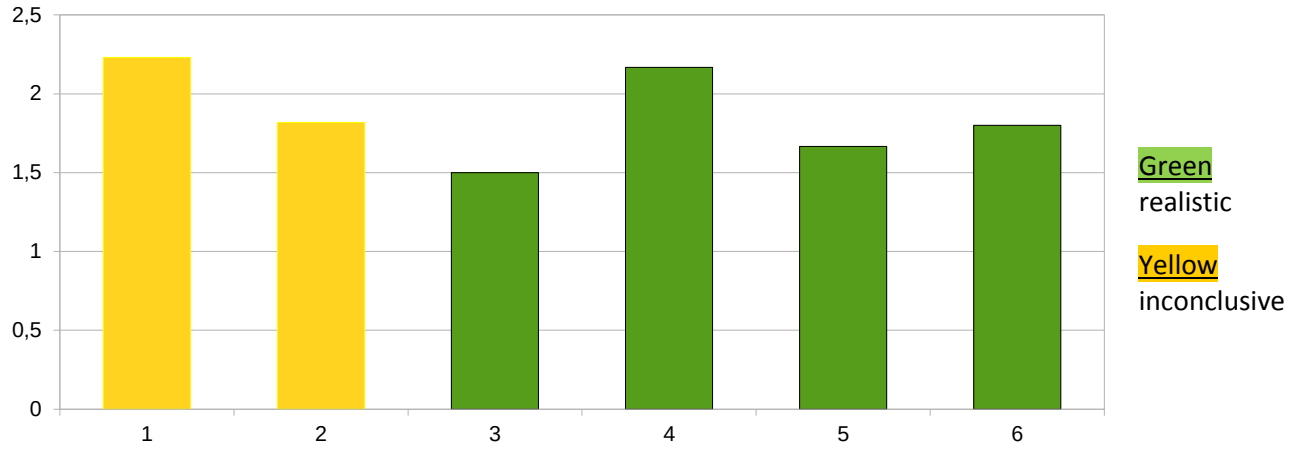
5.2 Confronting theory with reality: AMCOD questionnaire results

The respondents of the questionnaire were asked to assess possible AMCOD benefits on a scale of high (3), medium (2) or low (1) value-add. Factors are categorised as having a low importance if an average value of up to 1.4 is reached; the medium category ranges from 1.5-2.4; while values of 2.5 or higher are counted as highly valuable. Respondents also marked whether the achievement of each specific benefit seemed realistic to them in their country context. Due to the limited scope of the paper, no single-country results are displayed as they are not urgently needed in order to assess areas of action for Africa-wide operating organisations. Figure 7 displays the results of the questionnaire. The green bars signify that the majority of respondents estimated the benefit as realistic; while yellow bars indicate an inconclusive result in this regard (the difference in number of optimistic and pessimistic counts is 0 or 1). No clear unrealistic assessments were received.

Six different possible AMCOD benefits were established: benefit 1 refers to an improved national framework and practice through the provision of best practices on decentralisation and local governance; benefit 2 relates to improved decentralisation and local governance processes by utilizing AMCOD standards and guidelines; benefit 3 examines the benefit countries draw from better informed AU recommendations relating to decentralisation and local governance; benefit 4 analyses enhanced national political commitment by peer pressure through regular benchmarking; benefit 5 is concerned with increased influence of national lessons learned and best practices on the AU agenda, leading to enhanced country efforts in order to improve its reputation; while benefit 6 relates to AU policies that reflect decentralisation and local governance as prime issues to improve development.

When analysing the graphs, an immediate observation can be made: all six factors are on average considered as having a moderate value relating to improved decentralisation and local governance, ranging between 1.5 and 2.4. Moreover, no possible benefit is on average regarded as very unrealistic to achieve. The overall best performing factor is benefit 4 which is rated highly valuable and realistic to achieve: enhanced national political commitment through benchmarking-induced peer pressure. This result confirms the above theoretical estimation.

Figure 7: Envisaged Benefits of AMCOD to Decentralisation and Good Local Governance



***Benefit 1**: Improved national framework and practice through provision of best practices*
***Benefit 2**: Improved decentralisation processes by utilizing AMCOD standards and guidelines*
***Benefit 3**: Informed AU recommendations relating to decentralisation and local governance*
***Benefit 4**: Enhanced national political commitment by peer pressure through regular benchmarking*
***Benefit 5**: National best practices exert greater influence on AU agenda, leading to enhanced country efforts*
***Benefit 6**: AU policies reflect decentralisation and local governance as prime issues to improve development*

In terms of possible value add, benefit 1 even slightly exceeds factor 4 but falls short of achieving a clear majority vote when it comes to whether it is realistic or unrealistic to achieve. Improved national framework and decentralisation practice through the provision of best practices seems to a considerable number of respondents as not likely to being achieved, while it must be emphasised that nearly half of the respondents were optimistic about its achievability.

With some distance in terms of its perceived value-add, one factor (6) is categorised as realistic to achieve while another factor (2) produced an inconclusive result in this regard. Both raging at a value of nearly 2 (medium), AU policies prioritising decentralisation and local governance are regarded as realistically beneficial, while more respondents found the improvement of decentralisation processes through AMCOD guidelines to be unrealistic.

The remaining two factors only achieve an assessment of 1.5 or slightly above, and are thus at the low range of the medium-value category. That national best practices in decentralisation and local governance exert greater influence on the AU agenda, which would then lead to enhanced country efforts, is regarded as being of not much value. Even worse scored the possible AMCOD benefit of informed AU recommendations relating to

decentralisation and local governance. The low value of these factors can be interpreted as showing that factors at the AU-level purely based on 'goodwill' are not regarded as very valuable. The trickle-down effect to the local level is unclear as recommendations are not binding (contrary to policies as in factor 6), hence peer pressure is less strong; and it is apparently unclear if good practices in decentralisation and local governance will ever receive increased prominence or status at the AU level.

Another puzzling result is that, even though valued very highly, enhanced national framework and processes are not seen by most respondents as realistically achievable. This can be explained by strong lack of political commitment at the central government so that implementation of this framework remains unlikely. As one respondent commented: 'local governments are so weak here in Malawi, and the central level is discouraging the decentralisation process to such an extent, that without change in the agenda of central level politicians, local governments will remain hopeless'. This line of argument could also explain why the use of AMCOD guidelines translating into concrete benefits on the local level was not seen by the majority of the respondents as realistic. Without sincere political commitment, such benefits will be difficult to reap. Strengthening political commitment hence gains - due to its multiplicative effect - all the more importance.

In the qualitative section of the questionnaire, respondents were asked to provide what they considered to be the three most valuable benefits AMCOD could provide to local governance and democratic decentralisation in their country. Two major categories evolved as most frequently cited: enhancing national political will and commitment to decentralisation and local governance (e.g. through peer pressure by benchmarking, through sensitising political leaders and by 'bringing decentralisation back on the agenda'); and improved decentralisation design through shared learning (by improved networking, information exchange, sharing best practices, and the provision of AU technical guidelines). Less frequently cited were factors relating to cooperation between different levels of the African governance architecture (AU, RECs etc.) and cooperation between countries. As the design of the question did not ask about the extent of the factors' achievability, the qualitative results confirm the quantitative results above. Taking achievability out of the equation, design factors (benefit 1 and 2) rank, taken together, second after political commitment through peer pressure. As the design-related benefits were not seen as clearly unrealistic to

achieve, these two factors should be the main targets of AMCOD interventions, also confirming the earlier theoretical elaborations.

5.3 Confronting theory with reality: UCLGA questionnaire results

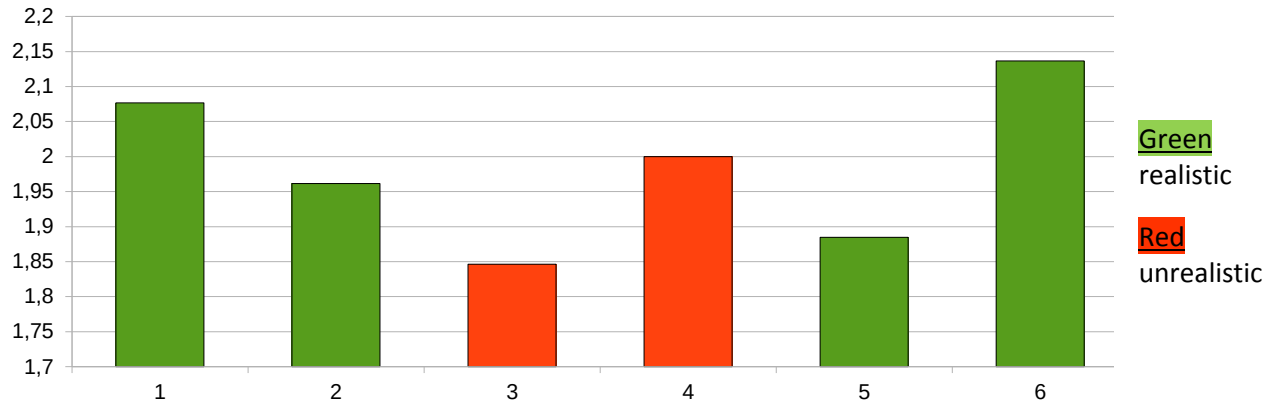
In the UCLGA section of the questionnaire too respondents were asked to rate the benefit of possible UCLGA actions on a scale between low (1), medium (2) and high (2). They were also asked to indicate whether they perceive the achievement of these benefits as likely or unlikely. Green bars signify that a broad majority assessed the benefit as realistically achievable while red bars signify that a broad majority assessed the benefits as unrealistic to obtain. No inconclusive results were obtained.

Here too, six different possible UCLGA benefits were established: benefit 1 refers to the learn effect through the provision of best practices of municipal development and/or management; benefit 2 examines the possibility of transborder inter-municipal cooperation through UCLGA exchange platforms; benefit 3 relates to giving local governments a voice at AU level, reflected in AU policies which is then translated into national policies; benefit 4 concerns an enhanced voice of local governments at regional and/or national level, leading to increased funding provided to local authorities; benefit 5 examines the improvement of local government capacity by UCLGA training programmes concerning technical advice, support to attract funding etc.; and benefit 6 refers to AU policies that reflect decentralisation and local governance as prime issues to improve development. Figure 8 presents the results obtained.

If one examines the y-axis closely, it is immediately apparent that all possible UCLGA benefits scored similarly high. All factors fall in the centre of the medium category (1.8 – 2.2). Greater variation exists with regard to the assessment of whether a factor is realistic or not: only clear majority votes are to be found, assessing a factor either as clearly achievable or clearly not achievable. To rank the above factors, the information whether one factor is rated as realistic or unrealistic could therefore in some cases be more telling than a minor difference in the perceived value-add.

The best performing factor comprises AU policies reflecting decentralisation and local governance as prime issues to improve development; closely followed by the learn effect through providing member states with best practices. Both factors have an average rating above the value ‘2’ and have been assessed as realistic to achieve.

Figure 8: Envisaged UCLGA Benefits to Democratic Decentralisation and Local Governance



***Benefit 1**: Learn effect through provision of best practices*
***Benefit 2**: Transborder inter-municipal cooperation through UCLGA exchange platform*
***Benefit 3**: Giving LGs a voice at AU level, translated into AU and then national policies*
***Benefit 4**: Enhanced voice of LGs at regional and or national level leads to increased funding provided to LGs*
***Benefit 5**: LG capacity is reinforced by UCLGA training programmes*
***Benefit 6**: AU policies reflect decentralisation and local governance as prime issues to improve development*

A ranking with regard to the other four possible benefits is not as straight forward. I determined that factor 2 ranks third and that number 5 comes in at fourth place as I give more weight to achievability than the small difference in perceived value-add. Transborder inter-municipal cooperation hence received a better ranking than enhanced local official capacity through UCLGA training programmes. I find it puzzling that such an obvious benefit of UCLGA has been rated comparatively low. This could again be explained by lack of political commitment at the centre, being a paralysing force to local government operations. Even enhanced capacity would not significantly improve the status of local governments if the centre continues to disrupt its affairs (see also the Malawi comment above).

There are two factors that have been assessed as unrealistic to achieve: firstly, there is the factor of enhanced voice of local governments at national level, leading to increased funding. Even though its beneficial value is rated fairly high at '2', it is assessed as unrealistic to achieve. Again, an explanation based on lack of political will counter-acting this method comes in handy. If lack of political will to transfer financial resources is strong, lobbying will do no good, especially with the lack of any form of peer pressure from fellow state leaders that had been rated as possibly very effective. A similar explanation applies to the last factor.

The only difference is that a further layer has been added here, making a trickle-down effect even more unlikely: local government lobbying at the AU.

The following two main themes emerged as being considered most valuable in the qualitative part of the questionnaire regarding UCLGA benefits on national decentralisation efforts: improved local government capacity related to technical, administrative, and fund-raising issues (through e.g. UCLGA training programmes; advise/mentoring and the provision of guidelines; sharing knowledge and exchanging experiences and best practices; and 'peer learning'); and improved political will at AU and national level. According to the respondents, the last factor can be achieved firstly by improving the voice of local governments, leading to increased emphasis on decentralisation and local governance by both AU and national governments; secondly by monitoring the implementation of UCLGA summit decisions; and lastly by a general sensitisation of decision-makers on issues surrounding decentralisation and local governance. Two respondents also emphasised the possible UCLGA benefit of increased local government cooperation across borders.

An analysis of the two best performing quantitative factors (AU policies reflecting decentralisation and local governance as prime issues to improve development; learn effect through providing member states with best practices) reveals that central government is the main target here that is either pressured by the AU to implement policies or by peer pressure of seeking to compare well in comparison to other countries. It seems as if increasing political will emerges as the most important area of action of both AMCOD and UCLGA when it comes to enhancing the chances of decentralisation. One could therefore draw the conclusion that UCLGA is slightly less likely to achieve substantial beneficial effects to democratic local governance, because AMCOD is better positioned, as shown above, to increase political commitment at the central government level.

The qualitative analysis further confirms the above hypothesis of the prime importance of political will and commitment at the centre. When achievability is taken out of the equation, both capacity-building and strengthening political will are seen as potentially very beneficial to the development of effective local governance. The achievability-measure dampens the outlook of capacity building activities to reach their beneficial potential, possibly due to distrust in the measure or owing to lack of political commitment at the centre, eliminating the positive effect because of its overpowering impact on local governance performance.

5.4 Conclusion: way forward

Overall, the theoretical assumption of the primary importance of political will and commitment for establishing good local governance has been supported by both the available quantitative and qualitative data concerning restraining factors, and the data concerning priority areas of action for AMCOD and UCLGA. Relating to the results of the previous chapter, it seems less likely, according to the data, that AMCOD and UCLGA will be able to significantly improve local capacities and financial resources.

AMCOD benefits have been rated on average more realistic to achieve than UCLGA benefits, while the pure beneficial value, disregarding achievability, is on average even slightly higher for UCLGA interventions ('1.984' vs. '1.864'). The assumption of primacy of political will is again confirmed: even though UCLGA actions are rated slightly more valuable than AMCOD actions, the assessment of their achievability lacks behind. This can be explained by the fact that UCLGA is less able to influence high-level political commitment than AMCOD. An alternative explanation could be that respondents perceive it as more likely that AMCOD will become fully operational than UCLGA (due to the unresolved leadership conflict). In general, it has to be outlined that the data and literature reviewed of this study cannot be used to determine whether, when or to what extent any of the two pan-African organisations become fully operational.

On this theoretical level, two major areas of action emerge for AMCOD both from the qualitative and quantitative data: creating peer pressure through regular benchmarking, thus enhancing political will to decentralisation and local governance; and advice on macro-level design decentralisation reforms e.g. relating to the national legal framework. The theoretical assumptions about the optimal areas of action for AMCOD are thus confirmed.

UCLGA presents a more complicated picture. Firstly, a factor relating to political commitment also scores highest: creating pressure for national governments to follow up on AU policies prioritising decentralisation and local governance. This is surprising as the theoretical assessment saw UCLGA's strength at the grassroots-level and not in the realm of high-level politics. This theoretical assumption is thus not supported by the available data.

The second best scoring factor, learn effect through best practices on municipal development and/or management, can be put both into the micro-level design category and in the capacity-building category. The other capacity building measure of UCLGA training

programmes was rated surprisingly low. Apart from the already elaborated lack of political will argument, the following alternative explanations have to be taken into account: firstly, the work culture of local officials could remain low despite attempts to build technical capacity, rendering these measures ineffective when it comes to improving local government performance. Secondly, it could simply express a general distrust of the effectiveness of the 'workshop-method'. If UCLGA training programmes are not conceptualised very well, including e.g. follow-up measures, effects might not be sustainable or of neglectable extent. Nevertheless, the qualitative data has shown that enhancing local government's capacity is seen as very valuable, even if it might be hard to come by and sustain. The theoretical assumption that UCLGA will be very valuable in terms of strengthening local government capacity is thus only partly supported by the data.
Moreover, the hypothesis of strong benefits of UCLGA actions regarding advice on micro-level design is only partly substantiated by the data. This is also due to a weakness in the composition of the UCLGA section of the questionnaire. No identified possible UCLGA benefits relate clearly only to micro-level design of decentralisation. In a nutshell, the theoretical assumptions on UCLGA beneficial areas of action are mostly not confirmed.

To summarise, AMCOD should prioritise regular benchmarking on the quality of decentralisation and local governance across Africa. Moreover, it should support those countries that are currently embarking on reforming their governance structure by advising them on how to best design decentralisation with regard to macro-level factors. UCLGA, on the other hand, should work towards the goal that AU policies reflect decentralisation and local governance as priority area of action in order to increase national governments' commitment to democratic decentralisation. Moreover, UCLGA should focus on disseminating best practices on micro-level design and management of decentralisation to its member states.

The data indicates that AMCOD actions to benefit democratic decentralisation and local governance are more realistically achievable than UCLGA's action. Contrarily, UCLGA's interventions seem to have a greater potential value to benefiting democratic decentralisation and good local governance. On a general note, AMCOD and UCLGA should work together in a coordinated manner to create synergies. The decentralisation and local governance agenda needs to be strengthened from above (AMCOD) as well as from the

grassroots (UCLGA) in order to achieve the best possible results for enhanced democratic decentralisation and good local governance. The two organisation's activities and the resulting benefits have the potential of being mutually reinforcing.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RESEARCH SUGGESTIONS

This chapter will retrace all the main findings of this study and develop future research suggestions on questions that have emerged in the analyses.

6.1 Main findings

Firstly, this study has shown that democratic decentralisation and good local governance has not yet been achieved in most Sub-Saharan countries, even though progress varies widely across African nations. Nevertheless, the empirical evidence suggests that within the majority of countries there has not been much progress towards achieving these aims. Secondly, it was outlined that decentralisation can have both positive and negative effects on the quality of life at the locality, while the positive effects, compared with the alternative of continued centralised rule, seem to dominate. Thirdly, it was established that decentralisation has either beneficial or detrimental effects on the locality depending on a variety of factors inside a multi-faceted, inter-dependent, complex model of causalities. The political, economic and social context plays an important role, as do the specifications of decentralisation design.

The analysis showed that the following factors are mostly responsible for the dismal performance of decentralisation in Sub-Sahara Africa: most importantly, lack of political commitment at the centre; then capacity and resource restraints at the locality (both for local governments and civil societies); ineffective downwards accountability mechanisms, lack of meaningful popular participation and inexistence of a viable democratic process at the locality; severe poverty and resulting skill shortage; poor work culture and ethics of local government officials; and lack of a strategic approach to decentralisation. Subsequently, it has been established that AMCOD and UCLGA can most likely make an impact by enhancing central political will, while supporting the local governments in fund raising and building technical capacity is seen as less likely to achieve. More precisely, AMCOD should focus on putting peer pressure on national governments by regularly publicising benchmarking results on the state of decentralisation and local governance in Africa. Moreover, advice on how to best conceptualise decentralisation on a macro-level is assessed as helpful. UCLGA should focus on lobbying at the AU for binding policies prioritising democratic decentralisation and

good local governance. Moreover, through the dissemination of best practices on micro-level design of decentralisation reforms and on managing local operations, UCLGA can benefit the agenda of democratic decentralisation and local governance. Both organisations should intervene before a decentralisation process is initialised, when decentralisation is conceptualised, and when local governments are already fully operational. Moreover, they should cooperate in order to achieve synergy effects so that the greatest possible impact on furthering good local governance across Africa is achieved.

To conclude, this study has opened the black box of decentralisation by examining underlying causalities of how such reforms are affected and what effects they can have on the quality of local governance. Independent and dependent variables influencing decentralisation success, i.e. contextual and design-related factors, as well as outputs and outcomes of decentralisation, i.e. the quality of local governance and life, have been identified.

6.2 Future research suggestions

The chances of democratic decentralisation and local governance to take root in Sub-Saharan Africa remains a widely controversial issue. Centralisation of power and resources is still a wide-spread pattern in Sub-Sahara Africa. Obstacles to effective local governance in many Sub-Saharan countries remain immense. Two conclusions can be drawn: firstly, there is great need for, and room of, improvement when it comes to democratic decentralisation. Hence AMCOD and UCLGA's support to these causes can be very valuable. On the other hand, strong forces exist across Africa that counter-act democratic good governance, making the establishment of good local governance appear to be a daunting task. More empirical research is needed with regard to necessary preconditions for decentralisation success. Issues such as whether there is a chance for decentralisation to take root if local societies are strongly hierarchical, undemocratic and produce local officials that are ineffective and steal government funds, are of high importance. The question arises, whether pan-African organisations could make any tangible difference at all under these conditions, as it appears that they can only tackle central government commitment and decentralisation design. Overall, the chances of democratic decentralisation and local governance to emerge at all in many African nations is at stake here. Further empirical research could substantiate largely

theoretical claims to be found in the literature. As one rare example of a large-scale comparative analysis, Jütting et al. (2004:5) find that in "countries where the state lacks the capacity to fulfil its basic functions, there is a definite risk that decentralisation will increase poverty rather than reduce it. However, in countries with a functioning central state committed to the devolution of power to local tiers of government, decentralisation can be an excellent means of promoting improved representation of the poor and enhancing the targeting of service delivery." Heller (2001:139) argues along similar lines that "weak states cannot successfully pursue decentralization". The author emphasises that decentralisation is so complex and hard to come by, that only in the - in Africa unlikely - case that various conditions are set right, it will have a chance to succeed (see also Larson 2005). But the exact thresholds of the extent of prerequisites needed (e.g. political will, popular democratic maturity and skills base) for good local governance to have a realistic chance of emerging remain blurred. Further research on these issues would thus be very valuable.

It has to be re-emphasised that decentralisation processes are inevitably time-consuming. The success or failure of decentralisation can therefore not be judged easily, as decentralisation is a "lengthy and complex process of reform that, beginning at the center, ideally progressively distributes responsibilities, resources, authority, and autonomy from the center to periphery" (Olowu and Wunsch 2004:2). Moreover, the cause to support democratic decentralisation and local governance in Africa remains viable as the alternative of continued centralisation has firstly proven not to be development-prone and secondly prevents the emergence of local self-determination. In unfavourable environments small steps should be taken at a time.

To conclude, it remains to be seen if AMCOD and UCLGA can have a meaningful impact at all in an average Sub-Saharan country where rule of law and political commitment is weak, and economic prosperity and political maturity of citizens lack behind. Only time will tell, if, and to what extent, AMCOD and UCLGA will be able to further democratic, good local governance in Sub-Sahara Africa.

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ANNEXURE 1: ENGLISH QUESTIONNAIRE ON DECENTRALISATION AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE

Questionnaire on the State of Decentralisation and the (Future) Role of AMCOD and UCLGA

By Gwendolin Aschmann

This research is being conducted in partial fulfilment of my Masters research at the University of the Witswatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa. It has been endorsed and supervised by François Menguelé (GTZ-AMCOD/UCLGA Programme Coordinator). If you have any question about this research or where its results will be used, please do not hesitate to contact me on +237 70911308, or via e-mail: ***gwendolin.aschmann@gtz.de*** */* ***francois.menguele@gtz****.de All survey results will be treated confidentially and results will be reported anonymously.*

Background and Research Question

For several years, the All Africa Ministerial Conference on Decentralisation and Local Development (AMCOD), and the United Cities and Local Governments of Africa (UCLGA) have been active in promoting decentralisation and local governance in Africa, the former from a high-level political position, the latter from the grassroots. Currently the initiatives gather momentum with now promising prospects to restore unity within UCLGA and with the successful September 2010 AMCOD extraordinary session which succeeded in laying the foundations for a well-functioning AMCOD Secretariat in Yaoundé, Cameroon. So far, there is a lack of research on the (potential) impact of both organisations to enhance democratic governance and local development on the African continent.

The research at hand will try to answer the following questions: a) how well does the decentralisation model work in Sub-Saharan countries, in particular to improve the living conditions of African citizens (i.e. poverty alleviation); b) what are the most important factors determining the relative success or failure of decentralisation to alleviate poverty and lastly, c) how can AMCOD and UCLGA help to improve the performance of decentralisation reforms in this regard, i.e. how can a regional approach to decentralisation improve efficiencies of national reform processes? These questions are crucial to strategically focus the GTZ support to AMCOD and UCLGA, and to develop ways of capitalising synergy effects in form of effective collaboration of the project with GTZ projects on the sub-regional and national levels. That is why the BMZ too has expressed strong interest in the examination of the above questions.

The Questionnaire is divided into three sections: state of decentralisation and local governance, obstacles to decentralisation and local governance, and potential value-add of AMCOD/UCLGA. Please fill in these sections electronically and send back the questionnaire via e-mail to the above address **until 05 January 2011**. Kindly answer the questions in relation to and based on your specific experience with decentralisation and local governance in your current country of work. To complete the questionnaire of five pages should not take longer than 20 minutes.

Please fill in the following section

Your country of work:

Name, Function (optional):

Years of Experience on Decentralisation in Sub-Saharan Africa:

1. STATE OF DECENTRALISATION AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE

*Please rate the following categories characterising progress of decentralisation and local governance according to your country context by placing <u>one</u> **X** per line in the "Rating" category.*

Example	Rating			
	Low	**Medium**	**High**	**N/A**
Extent of responsibilities transferred to local governments				X

Meaning
N/A: not applicable or not available You are not able to assess the extent of responsibilities transferred (e.g. due to lack of data)

1) Level of autonomy of local authorities

Indicator	Rating			
	Low	**Medium**	**High**	**N/A**
1. Extent of responsibilities transferred to local governments				
2. Financial means, esp. other than central government transfers				
3. Power to decide autonomously on local issues				
Other: 4.				
5.				
6. **Overall rating of the level of autonomy of local governments**				

2) Level of effectiveness and efficiency of local governments

Indicator	Rating			
	Low	**Medium**	**High**	**N/A**
1. Recent service provision performance of local governments (LGs)				
2. Budget percentage spent on investment vs. administrative costs				
3. Quality of monitoring and /or auditing systems of LGs				
4. Strength of management capacity of LGs				
5. Strength of technical capacity of LGs				
6. Strength of strategic planning capacity				
7. Strength of budgeting / accounting capacity				
Other: 8.				
9.				
10. **Overall Rating of the level of effectiveness and efficiency**				

3) <u>Appropriateness of design of the decentralisation process</u>

Indicator	Rating			
	Low	**Medium**	**High**	**N/A**
1. Clearly structured, coherent legal framework				
2. Appropriateness of pace / sequencing of reform				
3. Effective coordination of different levels of government				
4. Approach providing for both horizontal and vertical (sectoral) planning				
5. Other:				
6.				
7. **Overall rating of appropriateness of design of decentralisation**				

2. OBSTACLES TO EFFECTIVE DECENTRALISATION AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE

*Please rate the following factors according to the severity of constraint that each of them presents to successful decentralisation and local governance in your specific country context: place <u>one</u> **X** per line in the "Importance" Category **[1: very low importance; 5: very high importance]**.*
*Please highlight whether option a, b, both or none of them is **salient** in your context by placing <u>one or two</u> **X** per line in the "Options" Category.*

Example	Importance [very low -> very high]						Options		
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**N/A**	**a**	**b**	**non**
Lack of capacity of local governments *a : technical, b : administrative*				X			X	X	

Meaning
Lack of capacity is strongly constraining, both lack of technical and administrative capacity are important factors

Constraining factors	Importance [v. low -> v. high]						Options		
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**N/A**	**a**	**b**	**non**
1. Lack of capacity of local governments (LGs) *a : technical, b : administrative*									
2. Lack of financial resources at LG level *a: Insufficient amount, b: unreliable supply*									
3. Lack of political commitment at the centre *a: by politicians, b: by bureaucrats/civil servants*									
4. Lack of strong LG upwards accountability mechanism *a: oversight/guidance, b: monitoring and evaluation*									
5. Lack of strong LG downwards accountability mechanism *a: formalized participation mechanism, b: fair elections*									
6. High level of poverty among local population *a: low education, b: low income*									
7.Intensity of corruption, patronage, nepotism, clientelism *a: local elite capture, b: gross misuse of funds*									
8. Lack of meaningful popular participation *a: low democratic maturity, b: lack of civil society capacity*									
9. Inadequate involvement of traditional authorities *a: too much involvement, b: not enough involvement*									
10. Inefficient / ineffective local government officials *a: lack of commitment, b: lack of appropriate work culture*									
Other: 11.									
12.									
13.									
14.									
15.									

Please list up to three factors that you consider as most important factors constraining democratic decentralisation and effective local governance in your country	1) 2) 3)	Comments

3. POTENTIAL VALUE ADD OF AMCOD / UCLGA

*Please rate the following envisaged benefits of AMCOD and ULCGA to decentralisation and local governance in your country according to the expected **added value** by placing one **X** per line in the "Potential Added Value" category [theoretic level].*
*Please estimate according to your experience the **degree of achievability** of the possible aim by placing one **X** per line in the "Perspective" category [practical level].*

Example	Potential Added Value				Perspective		
	Low	**Medium**	**High**	**N/A**	**realistic**	**unrealistic**	**N/A**
Learn effect through provision of best practices [AMCOD]	X					X	

Meaning
You assess a possible learn effect for local governments through AMCOD best practices as not valuable and unrealistic to attain

1) The added value of AMCOD

Envisaged Benefits	Potential Added Value				Perspective		
	Low	**Medium**	**High**	**N/A**	**realistic**	**unrealistic**	**N/A**
1. Improved national framework and practice through provision of best practices on decentralisation and local governance							
2. Improved decentralisation and local governance processes by utilizing AMCOD standards and guidelines							
3. Countries draw greater benefit from informed AU recommendations relating to decentralisation and local governance							
4. Enhanced national political commitment by peer pressure through regular benchmarking							
5. National lessons learned and best practices exert greater influence on AU agenda, leading to enhanced country efforts to improve its reputation							
6. AU policies reflect decentralisation and local governance as prime issues to improve development							
Other: 7.							
8.							
9.							
Please list up to three possible benefits that you consider as having the potential to be most value-adding to democratic decentralisation and effective local governance in your country	1) 2) 3)				Comments		

2) <u>The added value of UCLGA</u>

Envisaged Benefits	Potential Added Value				Perspective		
	Low	**Medium**	**High**	**N/A**	**realistic**	**unrealistic**	**N/A**
1. Learn effect through provision of best practices of municipal development and/or management							
2. Transborder inter-municipal cooperation through UCLGA exchange platform							
3. Giving local governments (LGs) a voice at AU level, reflected in AU policies, translated into national policies							
4. Enhanced voice of LGs at regional and or national level leads to increased funding provided to LGs							
5. LG capacity is reinforced by UCLGA training programmes, technical advice, support to attract funding etc.							
6. AU policies reflect decentralisation and local governance as prime issues to improve development							
Other: 7.							
8.							
9.							
Please list up to three possible benefits that you consider as having the potential to be most value-adding to democratic decentralisation and effective local governance in your country	1) 2) 3)				Comments		

THANK YOU VERY MUCH!

ANNEXURE 2: FRENCH QUESTIONNAIRE ON DECENTRALISATION AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE

Questionnaire sur l'état de la Décentralisation et le (future) rôle de la CADDEL et les CGLUA

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Le présent travail est mené dans le cadre des travaux de recherche en vue de l'obtention d'un Master à l'Université de Witswatersrand, Johannesburg, Afrique du Sud. Il a été validé et supervisé par François Menguelé (Coordinateur du Programme d'appui GTZ à CADDEL/CGLUA). Pour tout éclairage éventuel, bien vouloir contacter l'auteure par téléphone au +237 70911308, ou par mail aux adresses suivantes : ***gwendolin.aschmann@gtz.de*** */* ***francois.menguele@gtz.de*** *. Les résultats de l'enquête seront traités dans la confidentialité et le respect de l'anonymat.*

Contexte et problématique du travail de recherche

Depuis plusieurs années, la Conférence africaine de la décentralisation et du développement local (CADDEL) et les Cités et gouvernements locaux unis d'Afrique (CGLUA) œuvrent activement en faveur de la promotion de la décentralisation et de la gouvernance locale en Afrique ; le premier à partir des hautes instances politiques, et le second à partir de la base. Actuellement, ces initiatives ont donné l'impulsion nécessaire, avec des perspectives prometteuses pour la restauration de l'unité au sein des CGLUA, ainsi que la tenue réussie de la session extraordinaire de la CADDEL en septembre 2010, qui est parvenue à poser les jalons du Secrétariat de la CADDEL opérationnel à Yaoundé au Cameroun. A ce jour, aucun travail de recherche n'a porté sur l'impact (potentiel) de ces deux organisations en matière d'amélioration de la gouvernance démocratique et du développement local dans le continent africain.

Le présent travail va essayer de répondre aux questions suivantes: a) Quel est le mode de fonctionnement de la décentralisation en Afrique subsaharienne, et comment permet-il d'améliorer les conditions de vie des citoyens africains (en vue notamment de la réduction de la pauvreté) ; b) Quels sont les principaux facteurs déterminant le succès ou l'échec de la décentralisation en matière de réduction de la pauvreté, et enfin ; c) Comment la CADDEL et les CGLUA peuvent-elles améliorer l'impact des réformes en matière de décentralisation dans cette perspective, c.-à-d. Comment une approche régionale de la décentralisation peut-elle améliorer l'efficacité des processus nationaux de réformes ? Ces questions sont fondamentales pour donner un contenu stratégique à l'appui de la GTZ à la CADDEL et aux CGLUA, et développer des moyens permettant de capitaliser les effets de synergie sous forme d'une collaboration effective entre le projet et les projets sous-régionaux et nationaux de la GTZ. C'est pour cette raison que le BMZ a également manifesté un vif intérêt pour l'examen des questions susmentionnées.

Le questionnaire est divisé en trois sections: l'état de la décentralisation et de la gouvernance locale, les entraves à mise en œuvre de la décentralisation et de la gouvernance locale, et une possible valeur ajoutée à la CADDEL et aux CGLUA. Bien vouloir remplir les trois sections par voie électronique et les retourner aux adresses électroniques sus-indiquées **au plus tard le 5 janvier 2011**. Bien vouloir répondre à ces questions à partir de votre propre expérience dans le domaine la décentralisation et de la gouvernance locale dans le pays où vous travaillez. Remplir entièrement ce questionnaire de cinq pages vous prendra au plus 20 minutes.

Bien vouloir remplir la section suivante

Le pays dans lequel vous travaillez:

Nom, fonction (facultatif):

Années d'expérience en matière de décentralisation en Afrique sub-saharienne:

4. ÉTAT DE LA DÉCENTRALISATION ET DE LA GOUVERNANCE LOCALE

*Bien vouloir évaluer les catégories suivantes qui caractérisent les progrès effectués en matière de décentralisation et de gouvernance locale selon le contexte de votre pays en marquant **une X** dans la case correspondant à la catégorie « Évaluation ».*

Exemple	Évaluation			
	faible	**moyenne**	**élevée**	**N/D**
Étendue des compétences transférées aux collectivités locales				X

Signification
N/D: non disponible ou non pertinente Vous êtes incapable d'évaluer l'étendue de compétences transférées (du fait notamment de l'inexistence des données)

1) Degré d'autonomie des autorités locales

Indicateur	Évaluation			
	faible	**moyen**	**élevé**	**N/D**
1. Étendue des compétences transférées aux collectivités locales				
2. Moyens financiers, en dehors notamment des autres transferts effectués par l'administration centrale				
3. Pouvoir de décider de façon autonome sur les questions locales				
Autres: 4.				
5.				
6. **Évaluation globale du degré d'autonomie des collectivités locales**				

2) Degré d'efficacité et de performance des collectivités locales

Indicateur	Évaluation			
	faible	**moyen**	**élevé**	**N/D**
1. Performances récentes des collectivités locales en matière de fourniture de service				
2. Pourcentage de budget engagé pour les investissements comparativement aux dépenses d'administration				
3. Qualité des systèmes de surveillance et/ou d'audit des collectivités locales				
4. Capacité de gestion des collectivités locales				
5. Capacité technique des collectivités locales				
6. Capacité de planification stratégique				
7. Capacité d'élaboration du budget/de gestion comptable				
Autre: 8.				
9.				
10. **Évaluation globale du degré d'efficacité et de performance**				

3) Pertinence de l'élaboration du processus de décentralisation

Indicateur	Évaluation			
	faible	**moyen**	**élevé**	**N/D**
1. cadre juridique bien structuré et cohérent				
2. Pertinence du rythme et de l'enchaînement des réformes				
3. Coordination effective des différents niveaux d'administration				
4. Approche proposée pour la planification aussi bien horizontale que verticale (sectorielle)				
5. Autre:				
6.				
7. **Pertinence globale de l'élaboration du processus de décentralisation**				

5. ENTRAVES A LA MISE EN ŒUVRE EFFECTIVE DE LA DÉCENTRALISATION ET DE LA GOUVERNANCE LOCALE

Bien vouloir évaluer les obstacles en fonction de leur importance pour une mise en œuvre réussie de la décentralisation et de la gouvernance locale dans le contexte spécifique de votre pays: inscrire une ***X*** *par ligne dans la catégorie "Importance"* ***[1: très minime importance; 5: très grande importance]****.*
Bien vouloir préciser laquelle des options s'applique à votre contexte en marquant une ou deux ***X*** *par ligne dans la catégorie "Options".*

Exemple	Importance [très petite -> très élevée]						Options			**Signification**
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**N/D**	**a**	**b**	**non**	
Manque de capacité des collectivités locales *a : technique, b : administrative*				X			X	X		Le manque de capacité est fortement restrictif, le manque de capacité aussi bien technique qu'administrative constitue un important facteur

Facteurs limitatifs	Importance [Très faible-> Très élevée						Options		
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**N/D**	**a**	**b**	**non**
1. Manque de capacité des collectivités locales (CL) *a : technique, b : administrative*									
2. Manque de ressources financières au niveau des CL *a: montant insuffisant, b: mobilisation incertaine*									
3. Manque de volonté politique au niveau central *a: par les hommes politiques, b: par les bureaucrates/fonctionnaires*									
4. Absence de puissants mécanismes de responsabilisation vers le haut au niveau des CL *a: surveillance/orientation, b: suivi et évaluation*									
5. Absence de puissants mécanismes de responsabilisation vers le bas au niveau des CL *a: mécanismes officiels de participation, b: élections justes et équitables*									
6. Seuil élevé de pauvreté au sein des populations locales *a: sous-scolarisation, b: faiblesse des revenus*									
7. Intensité de la corruption, favoritisme, népotisme, clientélisme *a: arrestation des élites locales, b: détournement flagrant des fonds*									
8. Participation populaire significative *a: maturité démocratique insuffisante, b: manque de capacité de la société civile*									
9. Faible implication des autorités traditionnelles *a: très forte implication, b: pas suffisamment d'implication*									
10. Inefficacité des fonctionnaires des Collectivités locales *a: manque d'engagement, b: manque de culture organisationnelle appropriée*									

Autres: 11.		
12.		
13.		
14.		
15.		
Prière d'énumérer trois facteurs que vous considérez comme facteurs limitatifs les plus importants pour la décentralisation démocratique et la gouvernance locale effectives dans votre pays	1) 2) 3)	Commentaires

6. ÉVENTUELLE VALEUR AJOUTÉE DE LA CADDEL ET DES CGLUA

*Bien vouloir évaluer les avantages suivants attendus par la CADDEL et les CGLUA en matière de décentralisation et de gouvernance locale dans votre pays selon la valeur ajoutée attendue en marquant une **X** par ligne dans la catégorie [niveau théorique] « valeur ajoutée possible »*
*Bien vouloir évaluer, à partir de votre expérience, **le degré de réalisation** du but éventuel en marquant une **X** par ligne dans la catégorie [niveau pratique] « Perspective ».*

Exemple	**Valeur ajoutée possible**				Perspective		
	faible	**moyenne**	**élevée**	**N/D**	**Réaliste**	**irréaliste**	**N/D**
Effet d'apprentissage à travers l'adoption des meilleures pratiques [CADDEL]	X					X	

Signification

Vous évaluez un éventuel effet d'apprentissage pour les Collectivités locales à travers les meilleures pratiques de la CADDEL, en précisant s'il est inutile ou irréaliste d'y parvenir

1) La valeur ajoutée de la CADDEL

Avantages attendus	Valeur ajoutée possible				Perspective		
	faible	**moyen**	**élevé**	**N/D**	**réaliste**	**irréaliste**	**N/D**
1. Meilleur cadre national à travers l'adoption des meilleures pratiques dans la mise en œuvre de la décentralisation et de la gouvernance							
2. Meilleurs processus de décentralisation et de gouvernance locale en ayant recours aux normes et directives de la CADDEL							
3. Les pays tirent plus d'avantages à partir des recommandations édictées par l'Union Africaine et relatives à la décentralisation et la gouvernance locale							
4. Volonté politique nationale plus accrue par la pression de conformité à travers l'évaluation régulière des performances							
5. Les leçons apprises et les meilleures pratiques au niveau national exercent une plus grande influence sur le programme de l'Union Africaine, entrainant des efforts plus accrus et une meilleure réputation au niveau national							
6. Les politiques de l'Union Africaine présentent la décentralisation et la gouvernance locale AU comme facteurs essentiels pour l'amélioration du développement							
Autre: 7.							
8.							
9.							
Prière d'énumérer trois avantages possibles que vous considérez comme facteurs ayant le potentiel pour faire accroître la valeur ajoutée de la décentralisation	1) 2) 3)				Commentaires		

démocratique et la gouvernance locale dans votre pays		

2) La valeur ajoutée des CGLUA

Avantages attendus	Valeur ajoutée possible				Perspective		
	faible	**moyenne**	**élevé**	**N/D**	**réaliste**	**irréaliste**	**N/D**
1. Effet d'apprentissage à travers l'adoption des meilleures pratiques dans le développement et/ou la gestion municipale							
2. Coopération transfrontalière inter-municipale à travers la plateforme d'échange des CGLUA							
3. Accorder aux Collectivités locales (CL) une voix au niveau de l'UA, répercutée dans les politiques de l'UA et exprimée dans les politiques nationales.							
4. Une voix plus forte des CL au niveau régional et/ou national permet d'accroître les financements destinés aux CL							
5. Les capacités des CL sont renforcées par les programmes de formation des CGLUA, le conseil technique, l'appui pour l'obtention des financements							
6. Les politiques de l'Union Africaine présentent la décentralisation et la gouvernance locale AU comme facteurs essentiels pour l'amélioration du développement							
Autre: 7							
8.							
9.							
Prière d'énumérer trois avantages possibles que vous considérez comme facteurs ayant le potentiel pour faire accroître la valeur ajoutée de la décentralisation démocratique et la gouvernance locale effective dans votre pays	1) 2) 3)				Commentaires		

Sincères remerciements!