



TOWARDS **LOCAL** PARTNERSHIPS

*The Social Interfaces
of Aid in Rural Tanzania*

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PART I

THE THEORY OF PROJECT-LEVEL INTERFACES

We need to resolve the serious theoretical gap in the analysis of social change and rural development that results from the tendency to formulate problems either from the point of view of how peasants react to development interventions without really analysing the nature of the wider encapsulating system, or from the point of view of how external forces determine patterns of change without taking into account how the action of peasants themselves or of other local groups may shape these processes.

Norman Long

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Towards a discursive mode in aid practices

Recent years have seen a wealth of interesting attempts to reformulate the central problems of aid. More and more attention is being placed upon the way in which the aid relationship is construed. The recent reformulations are increasingly open in their political agenda, yet sensitive towards the complexity of the political scene. The openness in revealing assumptions and agendas has also meant that the previously separated discussants—from right and left, from north and south, representing academic circles and practitioners—have much to share.

Today, aid discussion accommodates various attempts to establish sincere co-operation and to construct bridges over cultural and sectoral divisions. If one were asked to explain the historically founded reasons why such attempts are gaining momentum right now, it would be necessary to resort to a number of explanations. One frequently mentioned explanation is that the end of the Cold War has created room for more straightforward aid policies. Another related reason is the spread of multi-party politics and the associated demands for the further democratisation of society. Democratisation is a culturally loaded and highly controversial concept, and interpretations of it have generated a wealth of open dialogue. A third, somewhat indirect, explanation relates to globalisation and the liberalisation of economies which, although they have a dubious impact on economic indicators, have triumphed in that they have fostered political and economic entrepreneurship (through business lobbying, NGOs and other civil society ‘voices’) and have thus created new ‘stakeholders’ demanding to enter the dialogue. A fourth explanation is the maturation of a generation of aid experts who have gained enough insights to make constructive criticism.

For many people in academic circles, especially those with a tendency towards Besserwisser arguments, there is nothing new in an old heaven and earth. They argue that the academics have already been talking for a long time about the obstacles to political participation, the problems of a state-centred planning tradition and the negative way in which such conventions affect the capacity of the whole development apparatus to support development ‘from below’. They also argue that the recent emphasis on partnership, dialogue and ownership is merely sloganism, concealing even more direct western domination. They translate partnership as ideological seminars, dialogue as political conditionalities and ownership as cost-sharing schemes and increased taxation.

There is still ample pastureland between the naive apolitical striving towards dialogue and the cynical wisdom of seasoned experts and academics. I attempt to deal with this field in such a way that the critics are given the opportunity to voice their concerns but the successes of the dialogue are also presented.

Since development co-operation is a vast topic, it is necessary to restrict the analysis to a part of it. In this book, the emphasis is laid upon project-type bilateral and NGO work in rural areas, with Tanzania as a case-study country. The discussion concentrates on the planning and implementation processes. Policy concerns are discussed to the extent that they relate to the project environments.

I analyse the aid relationship in project-type co-operation, emphasising the practical issues of the implementation phase. In order to underline the nature of the approach chosen, I use the term aid relationship to describe the overall ('bilateral') relationship between a donor country and a recipient country, the term aid interface to describe the multitude of social links between a variety of actor categories, and aid encounters to describe contacts between individuals representing different categories. The focus of the study is on the level of the aid interfaces.

My central research question concerns the capacity of an aid project to be sensitive towards the local circumstances. The second issue that I will discuss is the capacity of project level work to reflect or, in the best case, to guide national policy debates.

The first issue, sensitivity towards the local circumstances, is not a new one. It has been discussed for as long as development work has been conducted. Project manuals repeatedly state that one should take into account the social and cultural conventions of the project site. In the most simple interpretations, this is understood as learning the code of conduct and the language of the local people. A project worker is expected to be able to tackle the local problems in the aid relationship after expending some effort on the 'cultural dimension' of the project. There is also a belief that the aid interface that exists between administrative partners tends to be fairly smooth but that the problems are more serious when one tries to reach the 'targeted people', who tend to be poor, marginalised and often lacking in the cultural tools that would enable them to communicate easily with the project staff. Thus the efforts of coping with the cultural dimension has concentrated on the culture of these people.

In my view, the understanding of what is meant by 'the cultural dimension' has changed considerably during the 1990s. It is now more openly acknowledged that the cultural problems of aid interfaces are entangled with political issues. Instead of visualising a direct relationship between the aid worker and a recipient, it is useful to visualise a complex social arena where 'targeted people' exhibit various internal groupings in their political and economic dealings with the local elite. This understanding has penetrated the ways in which projects are planned and implemented. I

perceive the shift in attention as a shift from a strict ‘targeting’ orientation towards a ‘stakeholder’ orientation. This shift means increased political realism because aid workers now understand that ‘the targeted people’ do not live in a vacuum but have their own history—memories of political upheavals, to give an example—and their existing social confrontations.

Regarding the second issue, namely the capacity of project level work to reflect or, indeed, to guide national policy debates, many views are being expressed. Some people working at the HQs in New York and Paris firmly believe that the development machinery is built like a pyramid—that policies invented at the centre spread into the peripheries to be implemented. Policy formulations at the headquarters level are thought to be decisive, and many self-respecting experts prefer to be part of the lofty circles addressing policy formulation. At the apex, the centripetal networking of world-level aid leaders has led to new visions of co-operation in which emphasis is laid upon wide national and sectoral programmes implemented by united donor fronts. When such wide programmes are negotiated, the simplifying agendas (presented in ideological and general terms because of the complexity of the relations amongst the donor agencies) may decrease the sensitivity of the dialogue to the specific processes taking place in a specific developing country under scrutiny.

In such a situation, the implementation work done at the project level seems refreshing, because it can address the policy concerns specifically, sensitively and with a degree of innovative impetus. Projects seem to be a necessary supplement to policy work. The pyramid model according to which policy directives are disseminated from think-tanks via shepherded organisations to shepherded developing countries seems too top-down. A realistic development worker acknowledges the importance of much more humble aims and of a more open attitude towards negotiations and local adaptations. What such workers expect from a project is locally tailored, sustainable and trustful social relations at the project site. Without such relations the total aid culture has an unstable foundation.

Does the reforming of project level strategies provide an answer to the problems of the aid relationship? For aid experts working mainly on policy-level issues, local-level partnerships may sound like an idealistic solution. After all, local partnerships can take different shapes and it is far from self-evident that the progressive coalitions will become dominant. Moreover, much of the viability of progressive local coalitions depends upon the progressiveness of national policy debates. For these reasons, policy issues can easily be given priority over project level approaches. Yet we should be able to see the connection between projects and policies as a two-way relationship. It is important for aid projects with hands-on experience to contribute to emerging policy debates and experimentation. Such dialogue can also provide the adequate legitimisation basis for sustaining vulnerable but progressive local coalitions.

All this boils down to one thing: local is a part of global, and global can only be experienced as local. Projects cannot live their own secluded lives but need to understand the wider political changes. Projects cannot be separate entities, protected by boundaries drawn through a logical framework exercise. Such a secluded life is an illusion. If the project-based approach to development co-operation is to be viable, it needs to open the doors to wider processes. Projects need to be aware of national political debates and to adopt an active attitude towards them. In some cases the experimentation done at project level may provide much needed guidance when national programmes are being planned and implemented. This calls for connections between national policies on the one hand and projects on the other. During the 1990s, there has been considerable interest to establish this linkage. My research investigates whether this shift within the aid debate is being accompanied by a similar shift in the case of real projects.

Local partnership

The title of the book, *Towards local partnerships*, refers to a set of social relationships at a sub-national level. Before we can analyse local partnerships, it is useful to first take a look at development discourse and relate this concept to recent debate on development.

The essence of development cooperation is to establish a form of cooperation which is based on mutual respect and shared objectives. This aim is difficult to attain. The term 'development aid' focuses on the economic inequality between the parties involved. However, the 'donor' agencies are seriously looking for ways to reinterpret the relationship to the 'recipients' and to base it upon mutual commitments. Many recent debates on development aid touch the issue of 'ownership' in one way or another. In this section I briefly introduce the debates. The term 'local partnership' rings a bell for many aid practitioners. It is one of a number of terms that are currently tasted and tested in the aid circles. Before we start discussing local partnership, we should learn to make a distinction between this concept and other closely related concepts.

Partnership: the central government commitment to aid

The concept of partnership is currently used to describe the 'aid relationship', i.e. a contractual relationship between a developing country and one or several developed countries. Partnership is the result of a discussion where the two parties try to explicate their own interests and identify common objectives. Karlsson (1997:6–8) defines a set of qualitative aspects for a partnership. Both parties should be explicit about their values. The process of establishing a partnership should be frank and

open, because openness is a prerequisite for contracts which will be honoured over a period of time. Any contractual relationship should be based on clear standards and the parties should stick to the agreements. Upon entering a fair contract, both parties need to have an equal capacity and access to relevant information to be able to assess the implications of the contract.

Partnership is often connected with national execution. This means that the government of a developing country is expected to speak on behalf of its nation. It is expected to sign agreements and to carry out the key responsibilities related to their execution. National execution means that the donor agencies take only a supportive role in the implementation of development plans. Since a developing country is usually supported by a number of donor agencies, national executions requires a demanding process of donor coordination.

A seminar report 'Making Partnerships Work on the Ground' (MFA:1999) neatly outlines the contemporary discussion on aid interfaces. I shall not dwell on this discussion because the level of analysis is different from the one presented in this book. National execution deals with the overall aid relationship, while I am studying more localised aid interfaces.

Decentralised cooperation: including private sector and civil society in aid interfaces

Decentralised cooperation is a very open term. Basically, it refers to a direction away from a simple situation where the government is the sole representative of a developing country. Decentralised cooperation refers to a situation where the private sector and the civil society organisations are perceived as legitimate partners which can engage in development cooperation on an equal footing.

The concept of decentralised cooperation reflects academic criticism of the developmentalist state. During the 1980s, it was commonly argued that the developmentalist state was trying to expand its influence to cover all fields of life. The state apparatus tends to grow and, if it is not constrained by balancing powers, the inefficiency of bureaucracy impedes societal development. The economists were convinced that the private sector should be given a greater responsibility, while the social scientists argued that a vibrant civil society is a means to create and guide sustainable development.

The concept of decentralised cooperation may have rather academic or theoretical roots but it also has links to specific pressure groups in the western countries. Western private companies are interested in expanding development aid to commercial fields, while western NGOs would like to expand their cooperation with their

1) There are a number of initiatives which aim at bringing donor agencies towards consolidated partnership arrangements. The most influential is the CDF (and PRSP) of the World Bank. It makes use of the experience of donor agencies cooperating during country assessments (CAS of WB, CCA of UN and CSS of EU), of their participation in the Paris Club and other multi-donor forums, and upon the experience of the EU coordination. The process of partnership formation is shepherded by the guidelines of the OECD/DAC.

sister organisations in the developing countries. Due to these vested interests, decentralised cooperation will remain on the agenda of development aid in the near future.

Decentralised cooperation represents a new way of thinking but involves two major difficulties. First, it may prove difficult to combine the ideal of partnership (based on national execution) with decentralised cooperation. In theory, they can be combined but, at a practical level, such an exercise would necessitate a complex system of inclusion. It would require discussion between several donor agencies, the government apparatus, and representatives of the private sector and the civil society. Such an inclusive discussion would be possible only in countries which have a very stable and harmonious political culture. Second, decentralised cooperation is politically too open a concept because it does not define what kind of actors should be included in partnerships. The inclusion of all kinds of entrepreneurs and civic organisations may easily lead into a chaotic situation where the aims of development aid—poverty eradication, creating a stable and democratic society—are undermined.

The concept of decentralised cooperation is a useful entry point to my analysis of local partnership. It clearly underlines the fact that there are a multiplicity of partners involved in any development effort. It shows that a developing country has an internal structure of actors with complex economic and political relationships with each other.

Decentralisation: including local governments in aid interfaces

Decentralisation is yet another theme which adds to the number of actors on the local arena. While 'decentralised cooperation' introduced the private sector and the civil society, the concept of decentralisation involved local government authorities. In recent development discourse, decentralisation has received attention as another method of challenging the rigid and authoritarian state structures.

Decentralisation is usually defined as a process of creating political entities which have definite rights and responsibilities over a specific location. Local government authorities are expected to take responsibility for the provision of services. It is thought that because local government authorities have direct contact with the people that they serve, they are in a position to understand local needs. This *sensitivity* to local needs is a central theme in my analysis. Therefore, I take a close look at the development of local government authorities. I try to analyse whether local government authorities meet these expectations and whether they have the capacity to really serve the interests of the people.

2) This difficulty is well exemplified by the problems experienced by the EU, the mother of the concept of 'decentralised cooperation'. Although the EU has underlined the principle of decentralised cooperation for several years, it still negotiates its contracts (under the Lomé Convention) only with a National Executive Officer (NEO), usually the ministry of finance. The NEO is a gatekeeper who can determine whether a local NGO can have any role to play in their cooperation with the EU.

We can try, once again, to establish an interconnection between related discussions. It is interesting to see whether ‘decentralisation’ and ‘decentralised cooperation’ can be linked with each other. Broadly speaking, this linkage could take two forms. First, private entrepreneurs are interested in dealing with local government authorities as sub-contractors providing services. Second, civil society organisations take an interest in influencing the political apparatus of the local government authorities. The linkage actually assumes also many other forms but these two examples suffice to set the scene.

Community participation: engaging the citizens in aid interfaces

By the side of decentralisation, community participation is another term which brings an additional agency into the arena. Community participation is commonly perceived as a means to involve the ordinary people who would not otherwise be taken into consideration. Community participation is a way to give a voice to ordinary people in aid interfaces.

It is necessary to consider community participation as a separate concept in this context. This is on account of the harsh political realities in many developing countries. Although the central government and local government authorities are expected to represent the views of ordinary citizens, they tend to represent the views of small elites. In addition, the ‘private sector’ and civil society representatives tend to represent fairly narrow sectional interests. The majority of the poor people in rural and urban areas do not perceive themselves as members of these interest groups. They lack the means to express their political opinions and concrete developmental priorities.

Community participation is introduced to aid interfaces primarily through concrete project work. Community participation is usually perceived as a method of consulting people on their needs and aspirations. These consultations are expected to create mutual respect between donor representatives and ordinary people, diminish cultural distance and provide a basis for a trustful relationship.

The idea of community participation is basically to enhance the forms of democratic representation. The idea is good but its practical implementation can easily be conducted in a manner that is alien to those that it is expected to reach. Each culture has its own interpretation of appropriate forms and channels of political communication. The methods of consulting people during community participation can radically differ from the established patterns. Therefore, it has proved difficult to ‘institutionalise community participation’.

Local partnership

Local partnership refers to a set of social relationships at a sub-national level. The above discussion of the aid discourse reveals, six key actors. The social setting for local partnership includes:

1. donor agency and its local projects;
2. central government presence at a certain location;
3. local government authority;
4. civil society organisations at a certain location;
5. private entrepreneurs at a certain location;
6. ordinary citizens.

To simplify, I am primarily interested in the relationship between the first and the last actor: the donor agency and the citizens. However, their relationship is mediated by the four other actors. In any local setting, a donor agency needs to work through intermediaries. It needs to define an appropriate role for itself, for the four intermediaries and for the citizens.

The simple listing of actors hides a complex and dynamic set of interests and social relationships. Each of the six actors has an active relationship with the five others, making a total of thirty relationships. If we transfer the level of analysis from abstract categories to actual social actors, the number of relevant actors at any given sub-national context can be counted in dozens and the number of social relationships in hundreds.

This brief presentation shows that local partnership is connected with a number of discourses which make it a rather complex and demanding object for analysis. Therefore, we need compact tools to cope with this complexity. My intention is to deal with the six categories mentioned above. I try to identify the social situations where the *sensitivity* of aid towards the local needs is strengthened or weakened.

The term 'local partnership' can be understood simply as a descriptive term which defines a social arena. However, it can also be given a moral content. Local partnership can be perceived as an ideal situation where several local actors, with different interests of their own, find a common language and shared objectives. In this version, local partnership is an expression of political activism and political dynamism. It is not what we are looking for?

Analytical approach—'decentring' aid

This book is about the project frameworks in a specific location, namely the Mtwara and Lindi regions in Tanzania. The regions form an area which is often presented as a poor, backward and conservative place where development agencies have much to

do. And indeed, the recent history of the area is marked by considerable donor concern; though the low level of living standards also means that there is a huge task ahead. In southern Tanzania the lesson has been learned that the resources of donors, large as they are in terms of dollars, are still small when channelled into villages plagued by poverty, a limited capacity for external communication and a history of disillusionment as far as external interventions are concerned. The donor agencies have only a limited chance of succeeding unless they redefine their own role and create partnerships in which aid resources are just one of the many ingredients.

This study is conducted as part of the *Finnish Aid in Development* research project. For this reason, Finnish projects are given special attention. The selection of the case-study area, south-eastern Tanzania, is motivated by the continuous and multi-dimensional Finnish involvement through a chain of development projects.

My analytical approach is, however, ‘upside down’ in that I emphasise the analysis of local political processes. Aid is perceived merely as one factor influencing local development—and Finnish aid as a part of the totality of aid. In this ‘arena model’ of analysis, the external interventions are placed in a societal and historical perspective. The focus of attention is on *local development*, with aid playing a minor role.

The selection of this analytical approach underlines the fact that in an aid interface the expectations of all parties are rather institutionalised and that consequently the choices of an individual donor organisation with regard to policy and practice are restricted by the parameters of institutionalised conventions. What the Finnish development agency does is severely constrained by the established conventions (i.e. ‘aid culture’) to be found in Tanzania, because any new ideas or deviating practices tend to be interpreted by way of the historical experience of previous aid interfaces. It takes more than a single donor to fundamentally change deeply institutionalised aid interfaces.

What follows from the analytical framework is that I cannot—and thus do not even try—to derive from this analysis the specific impacts of the Finnish projects and programmes studied. The effects of Finnish interventions are too closely intertwined with the complex historical processes for them to be completely distinguishable. For the recipient, the Finnishness of the Finnish aid is also a trivial issue. Much more important is to ask whether the donor agencies—exemplified in this case-study by Finnish and other donors working in the same areas—have been able to understand the local socio-political situation and make a positive contribution in the local setting. This is what I set out to ask.

Materials and methods of analysis

This book is based on field-work carried out during a number of visits to the area over a period of twelve years. I have had the privilege of taking part in different kinds of

research and project work activities. This has made it possible to talk easily to people in different spheres of life: with administrators, aid workers and ordinary citizens.

During the period of twelve years, I have witnessed major changes in policy framework and in the ways in which aid is perceived. Although the book presents a picture of aid as becoming increasingly sensitive, there are still many open questions. I have used the voices of aid workers, administrators and other people to express their views concerning each other. These 'voices' show the ultimate complexity of aid interfaces. Often, there are trade-offs between efficiency and diplomacy, following rules and bending the rules, taking sides and being neutral. The consequences of the choices are not predetermined. Many people are constantly facing hard choices where each option is coupled with potentially adverse side-effects. As I perceive it, the aid interfaces are loaded with a wealth of moral and practical dilemmas which are inescapable.

If one looks for simple handbooks providing an easily digestible packaged solution for whatever problems, one is bound to be disappointed. This book does not provide recipes for success: instead, it contains questions to be reflected upon, to be answered in other contexts and to be thought about again. The tone of voice is discursive and—occasionally—intentionally provocative.

The structure of the presentation

The main topic of the book is a shift within the aid discourse concerning the way in which the social relationships of a project are constructed. I argue that the emphasis has moved from focusing upon the target group towards a wider inclusion of all stakeholders in project implementation. This shift reflects increased attention to political factors and an acknowledgement of the complexity of changing political relationships. It is noted that it is not enough to identify the needs of the ultimate target groups; it is equally important to understand the role of mediating local institutions that deliver the services to target groups. As mentioned above, the research question is whether this shift within the aid debate is accompanied with a similar shift in the case of real projects.

In order to be able to answer the question, we need theoretical tools which are independent from the aid discourse. In *Chapter 2*, I present four theoretical approaches to the analysis of aid relationships. The first theoretical approach starts from the notion of an aid interface as a concrete encounter between people representing different cultures. On our small planet there can hardly be many social settings that exhibit an interplay of cultural streams to such an extent as does an aid encounter. An aid encounter is truly a locus where extreme poverty and wealth, authoritarian command and sensitive questioning, cool rationalisation and human concern meet each other. The problem of the aid interface is then conceptualised as the problem of people's

capacity to understand each other. The second theoretical approach starts from a different argument. It holds that development aid is based on highly unequal relationships³. The problem of the aid interface is then one of how to solve conflicts over concrete resources. The third theoretical approach argues that the major force directing aid is the discursive conventions of aid discourse. Even when removed from real life, the conceptual schemes, the frames for locating causalities and defining actors, may have an impact on actual social processes. For this reason, disputes over meanings and interpretations are a central part of aid interfaces. The fourth theoretical approach holds that what directs aid interfaces is the institutionalised practices and administrative conventions which are so easily taken for granted.

The aid interface is a difficult object for a social science to deal with. Chapter 2 gives some theoretical interpretations concerning the dimensions that it includes. After the theoretical discussion, I develop a methodological approach suitable for my research problem. I call it the 'decentred' approach (also known as the 'arena model'), because in this approach, the aid project is pushed away from a central position. Instead, the existing social processes in the given location are placed in focus, and aid is analysed only in relation to these on-going processes.

Chapter 3 presents the scene of the case-study. In addition to the region and its people, the variety of the donor interventions is introduced. In this section I also give some concrete data and name the projects. In the remaining chapters I enter the field of social relationships between actors; because of the need to protect the immunity of informants, the names and sites are often withheld.

Chapter 4 is devoted to dealing with cases where the whole local political scene, including a mass of different actors, is interacting. In local politics, aid-based relationships may be secondary to other relationships. I describe the local political scene in the 1970s and the 1980s as a rather concealed and dispersed field, where separate power bases, here called *enclaves*, were formed to tap specific resources. By contrast, the democratisation processes occurring during the 1990s have led to experiments in which the distinctive power bases, for example those controlled by entrepreneurs and administrators "are brought into dialogue with one another".. This process of seeking new *partnerships* is slowly unfolding as a historical change in the way in which local politics is understood. In Chapter 4, I analyse the indigenous processes—but also, through project level case-studies, the role of aid agencies in these processes. I conclude by asking whether the scene of local politics has changed from one of enclave politics to partnership politics.

The contemporary relationship between the local administration and donor agency administration is studied in *Chapter 5*. The relationship is presented in existing literature as an interplay between different management cultures which tends to lead to double administration: donors are allowed to do their own business if they do

3) In order to highlight the unequal basis, I use the term 'development aid' instead of 'development co-operation'.

not interfere in issues which are not their business. The new discursive mode of aid work involves attempts to break free from such role models. These attempts are bound to be difficult; but the future of project type aid depends on the capacity of local administrators and aid workers to find ways of achieving more serious co-operation. In the promotion of co-operation, the conventions of administration need to be given more attention.

The concrete encounters between the 'target groups' and the external development agents are analysed in *Chapter 6*. I ask to what extent the external agents understand the social constitution of a rural community. It is a widely held view that aid agencies and administrators should enhance their understanding of community level affairs. While applauding participatory work, I discuss the limits to pursuing further understanding. I do so from two angles. Firstly, excessive intrusion may draw project workers into a mire of parochial politics. Secondly, the participatory work needed to generate detailed information may end up being an extremely cost-inefficient way of working. In addition to these themes, the aid organisations' habit of making hasty village visits is severely criticised.

The major findings of the case-study (presented in Chapters 3–6) are discussed in *Chapter 7*. Here interpretations are presented concerning the ways in which different actors see the change in aid culture, how committed they are to new practices, and what size of change one can really find at the level of action.

The third part of the book moves out of the case-study towards the more conventional area of discussion concerning national aid policies. My contribution to this wider national discussion is focused on a specific theme: the new trend in aid towards sectoral aid programmes. More particularly, I ask whether the new sectoral programmes are capable of adjusting to varying local situations. Are the national projects flexible enough to cope with significant social and ecological variations in a large country like Tanzania? I also discuss the issue of whether the sectoral programmes are capable of incorporating 'decentralised co-operation' (meaning the inclusion of private sector and civic organisations as recipients/partners) in their operations. Although *Chapter 8* analyses national programmes, the chapter is directly linked to the previous discussion, because all the programmes studied are supplemented with a bilateral project type activity taking place in south-eastern Tanzania.

Chapter 9 explores the field of the aid policy debate. This field is defined by such as 'partnership', 'democratisation' and 'ownership'. When we add 'sensitivity to the local situation' (including the need to decentralise power and to involve the civic organisations) to the list, the political discussion seems very loaded. The key terms are currently being chewed and tasted in many quarters and—understandably—create various kinds of reactions. The chapter explores the discourse, its concrete manifestations and its impacts on aid policies.

Chapter 2

PROJECT-LEVEL AID INTERFACES IN SOCIAL THEORY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Development aid is a special field of human contacts. It involves contacts between people who come from very different cultures, have different mentalities and command highly different stocks of resources. It is no wonder that aid interfaces are commonly seen as problematic. There is a vast body of literature presenting case-studies of misunderstandings, crude power, carelessness, envy and exploitation. Criticism of aid interfaces is so extensive—especially in the popular media—that the reputation of all aid is under threat.

Paradoxically, many practitioners perceive their own contacts as positive and clearly demarcated social contacts (Alho 1980). The practitioners have a sense of commitment and a feeling of achievement. The work done in the project office is advancing and the technical problems can always be handled. The problem of aid interfaces seems to come from elsewhere—from distant bureaucracies, from politics or from other external stakeholders. It is the others who mess up the table. It is we, the practitioners, who need to set the table again.

Aid interfaces require explanation; the different views need to be compared. However, before advocating this or that opinion, we need theoretical tools to analyse aid interfaces. In this chapter, I set the agenda on the theoretical level. Rather than advocating a single tool, I present a number of different theories which all contribute to the understanding of aid interfaces. The theories are complementary, each with its own strengths, fields of application, and weaknesses. Rather than supporting one particular theory, I discuss the merits and demerits of various approaches.

The aid literature is full of guidebooks and manuals that manage to simplify aid interfaces to the extreme. These cookbooks are clear, illustrative and—what is most enticing—they offer simple solutions. My experience is, however, that an aid interface is an extremely complex and demanding object for analysis. Any aid interface is loaded with a history of past encounters. Any aid interface includes references to a number of rules and moral obligations. Any aid interface implicates dozens of stakeholders, some of them thousands of kilometres away from the scene. It is a challenge to confront this multiplicity directly.

What is an ‘aid interface’? This is a question I set out to answer. As a preliminary definition, we can say that an interface is a contact surface between two elements. When we speak of aid interfaces, the focus is placed upon a set of social relationships between various parties directly or indirectly related to an aid project. In academic dis-

discussion, we need to go further and ask what it is that is actually meeting at an aid interface. Is it really people adhering to definite roles derived from their professional capacities? Or is it different cultures that meet each other? Or are we unnecessarily amplifying social distance when in fact the aid interface is composed of rather similar people who are, however, separated by enormous differences in their economic wealth?

In this chapter, I present four different approaches to aid interfaces:

1. aid interfaces as social encounters
2. aid interfaces as power politics
3. aid interfaces as discursive events
4. aid interfaces as institutionalised practices.

A perusal of the approaches reveals a number of distinctive qualities. The first theoretical approach is basically an analysis of face-to-face encounters. The problem of the aid interface is conceptualised as a problem of understanding that exists between two different ways of thinking. Although two persons meeting at a project site may have a simple task to discuss, they may still misunderstand each other because both parties unconsciously bring a heavy referential load of cultural conventions (coming from outside, from previous experiences) into this direct encounter.

The second theoretical approach argues that the will to understand others is not enough; aid interfaces at a project level are in fact shaped by narrow interests, and this leads to power politics. Because the conflicts of interest are deeply rooted, they cannot be simply discarded nor solved through simple tricks. Rather they need to be addressed and, using the available, the ensuing conflicts need to be 'managed'.

The third theoretical approach challenges both of the first two. It focuses on discursive conventions that are taken for granted. The problem of the aid interface is not the lack of serious efforts to understand; nor is it crude power. Rather, it is assumptions that are taken for granted and are shared by all people within the aid culture. Thus all persons, whether working within a donor organisation or on the recipient side, share the same 'code words' and way of reasoning. They know how a project can be packaged. The problem then seems to be the interface between this aid culture and the reality outside its magic sphere.

Finally, we discuss so-called institutional analysis. This is a less theoretically loaded approach; its strength lies in laying bare the social scene of aid in its full complexity. It avoids the tendencies to simplify the social scene—a feature evident in the other three approaches. Furthermore, institutional analysis concentrates on administrative conventions such as making a definite distinction between local workers and 'international' consultants or between recurrent and development costs. It shows that the aid interface is a diffuse interface, because all parties willing to 'play the

game' are expected to work within a predefined role and each party needs to take the predetermined conventions of others into account.

The four analytical approaches are strikingly different from one another. They lead the analysis in completely different directions and produce distinctive results. I nevertheless argue that the different theoretical approaches can be used in one analysis as complementary to each other. Naturally, the research question posed by a researcher determines what kind of theoretical approaches are most useful for a particular study.

On the basis of these four approaches I construct a fifth approach to suit with my research task. I call this approach

5. decentred analysis of aid interfaces.

I have decided to concentrate on local development and to use the local scene as a yardstick for analysing whether aid has managed to provide additional, distinctive changes. Decentring means effectively that aid projects are not given a central role—as if they were the only or even the main actor promoting development—but are regarded as one actor amongst a number of others.

As we shall see in this chapter, interface analysis can itself be subjected to various kinds of analyses. The aim of the chapter is to deepen the level of analysis and to increase the scope for reflective discussion. A reader mainly interested in Tanzanian local administration or developments in the southern regions can jump over the chapter without losing the thread of the main argument.

2.2. EXPLAINING AID INTERFACES: FOUR SOCIAL THEORIES

Aid interface as a social encounter

The first theoretical approach explains aid interfaces using an actor-oriented framework that focuses on encounters between the project administrators and the targeted people. The actor-oriented methodology entails a definite set of choices as to how the term 'aid interface' is understood and what research methods can be used.

The basic question of encounter analysis concerns the capacity of people representing different cultures to fully understand each other. An aid interface is perceived as a situation where people from very different cultural backgrounds are thrown into contact. Often the encounters include persons from the Western cultural tradition and a Third World culture; but, alongside the national cultural heritages, one may note deep differences in economic wealth, administrative conventions and ways of dealing with politics. How can mutual understanding work when we have such a difficult starting point?

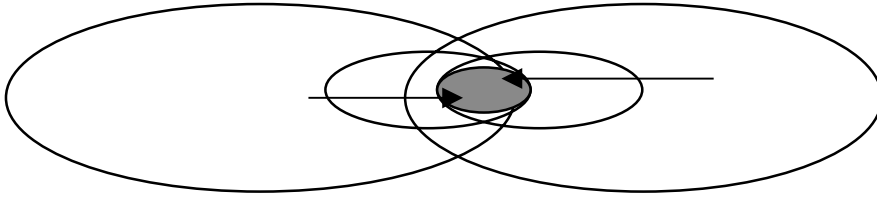
Norman Long (e.g. 1989) has pioneered the academic tradition of analysing aid interfaces as personal encounters in which people with different backgrounds set out to solve a shared problem. Encounter analyses start with concrete situations. We can open an exemplary case by visualising a project officer unpacking her boxes in her new office, placing the planning documents on the shelf and attending the first project meeting. As people size up each other across the office table during this first meeting, the expectations and response strategies start to unravel. Acts and ripostes follow each other, and a pattern for new social relationships starts to appear.

No encounter of this type is an 'innocent' encounter, taking place simply on its own merits. Even if we concentrate on a personal encounter in the field situation, we are still looking at an encounter where memories from a wide spectrum of similar encounters which have taken place earlier and elsewhere are casting their shadows. An encounter between a project officer and his or her counterpart is a socially and symbolically loaded meeting. In his analysis, Long shows what kind of past encounters shape the current one. He takes an empathic stance towards each party and looks at factors which are likely to influence (consciously or unconsciously) on the current encounter.

At first glance, the approach developed by Long seems a clear one. First he establishes a specific scene and then he sets the play in motion. The initial scene is sketched with broad strokes, while more attention is given to the dynamics that follow. This research strategy is rewarding in that it provides a realistic platform—a case—on the basis of which the analysis is expanded towards institutions and interests, social commitments and personal motivations. Any piece of information that is added to the initial skeletal picture can also be used as a (causal) explanation. The analysis is very readable, because the transition from specific encounter to broad political analysis is smooth and lends richness to the writing.

Encounter analysis is a concrete methodology and is easy for development practitioners to use because it employs the common categories and ways of reasoning. After all, any leap into a new project setting requires the establishment of basic social relations in which the counterparts gradually provide more information helpful in explaining their personal motivations and cultural preferences. A person starting to work in a new project environment almost naturally follows a path of expanding the analysis of a social setting and including new persons and institutions in the frame. Using another metaphor, the analysis of interfaces as encounters is comparable to solving a mystery in a detective story. You start with individual clues, and you end up discovering a wide set of less visible connections. This situation is represented in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1 Encounter analysis



The problem of encounter analysis is that when it proceeds from the micro-situation into wider settings, a wider setting is simply referred to, as if it were a self-evident 'context'. This is, in a nutshell, the structuralist critique of encounter analysis. In his theoretical writings, Norman Long has constructed some defences against the critics swarming in the structuralist camp of the theory playground. In Long's words:

"...I wish to stress the dynamic and potentially conflictive nature of social interface. Hence I define a social interface as a critical point of interaction or linkage between different social systems, fields or levels of social order where structural discontinuities, based upon differences of normative value and social interest, are most likely to be found.

The concept implies some kind of face-to-face encounter between individuals or units representing different interests and backed by different resources. The interacting parties will often be differentiated in terms of power. Studies of social interfaces should aim to bring out the dynamic and emergent character of the interactions taking place and to show how the goals, perceptions, interests, and relationships of the various parties may be reshaped as a result of their interaction." (Long 1989:1–2)

While the Long's self-defence is commendable, it is still vague and deserves comment on two grounds: simplicity and imprecision.

One of the problems of encounter analysis is that the initial setting is simplified as a contact between two parties. The analysis tends to have a sort of man-on-the-spot emphasis. In the development aid scene, these two parties are usually 'an aid expert' and a 'recipient'. The parties are said to have conflicting interests. But if this division (based on two highly figurative categories) is taken for granted, much of actual social dynamics is either lost or difficult to understand. The division takes for granted that a person fully endorses the agenda of the organisation, adapts his or her personality to its aims and then sees the other parties as a potential threat to his or her organisation. In many aid interfaces, the situation may be much more complex. A representative of a donor organisation may seek to support the oppressed amongst

the recipients, while a professional representative of a recipient organisation may identify with the goals and practices of the donor organisation. In this kind of situation, a multi-layered web of interests and conflicts exists, and it is far from self-evident where the aid encounter resides.

Another problem in Long's formulation is how structures are perceived. Long uses (in the above quotation and elsewhere) a rather imprecise formulation. In the definition given above Long referred to "different social systems, fields or levels of social order". In his analysis of bureaucratic encounters, Long refers to different administrative levels and broad political processes which are implicated in the encounter. The problem is what 'structures' are and how they are implicated. Michael Drinkwater, who has studied Long's writings in detail, argues that regardless of claims to the contrary, the 'structures' remain undefined regardless of the opposite claims. He shows how Long has adopted elements of Giddensian sociology. The Giddensian formulation of the duality of structures is interesting. Unfortunately, Giddens is also rather imprecise in defining structures (cf. Thompson 1989), and this imprecision is replicated in Long's analysis. The analysis can easily lead to statements in which structure is either seen as an external binding force or a structure is conflated with the properties of an individual (i.e. the individual seamlessly represents structural properties).

The problem relates to central methodological discussions on social causation, and it is not easy to find a way out. The problem is also linked with the difficulties involved in presenting results in a clear form. A literary presentation requires a certain level of hypostatisation of concepts (i.e. making a concept such as structural propensity into a static object).

What is the lesson of this critique? It is evident that no aid interface can be adequately analysed through an actor's perspective only, and that it is not permissible to add a structural analysis on top of an analysis of an encounter—as if it were its natural continuation. Structures need attention that is more direct.

A positive element in Long's analysis of encounters is his repeated attempt to bring a processual element into the analysis. Long shows how adaptation and learning are natural by-products of project implementation. He insists that people are able to reflect upon the encounter, adjust their positioning and create constellations which reach beyond any planned outcomes. The emphasis on reflectivity also lessens the tendency of a researcher to make overt (static and moralistic) generalisations about the development of a project. (cf. Long and Villareal 1993.)

If encounter analysis is conducted, one should ideally expand it to cover other encounters made in different kinds of situations. Aid in a project framework can be tentatively visualised as *a chain of face-to-face encounters*. The chain starts with discussions at the headquarters of government and donors, continues through discussions conducted during field visits and, in the following stages, advances through a wide

set of parallel discussions involving politicians and journalists. Also aid tends to be bureaucratic, and often the face-to-face encounters are preceded or followed by a mass of communication by means of documents. Nevertheless, it may still be possible to single out a few distinctive encounters which have shaped the project in a decisive manner. An analysis of the project as a chain of such encounters at different locations may prove to be useful.

The analysis of aid by means of encounter analysis is rewarding because it seems to make sense. Unravelling as it does out of a concrete situation, the analysis is simply so similar to the experience of getting to know a new setting that the reader has hardly no difficulty in following the text. The scene descriptions in the writing (see e.g. Long and Villareal 1989:103–144) are also such good literature that they create expectations, helping the reader to work through some of the more irksome pieces of contextual and theoretical analysis.

The methodology also has a high degree of relevance for aid-related applied research and project work. The same methodology (in more simplified versions) can be used for locating *problems* in aid interfaces. The methodology is applicable when a project is stuck and an external consultant is called in to solve the problem.

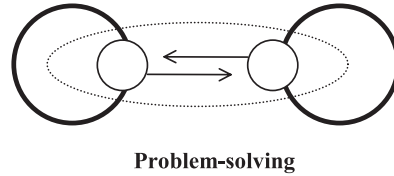
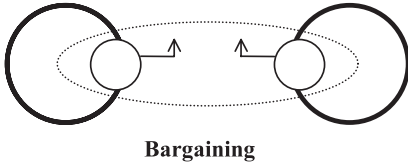
The aid interface as power politics

The second approach concentrates on the *conflicts* that an aid interface either exacerbates or creates. The political theory assumes that a project implementation is a field where different *stakeholders* represent their *own interests*. The variants of political theory differ with respect to how stakeholders are located, what resources are perceived as central, and how overtly the stakeholders are supposed to (understand and) push their own interests.

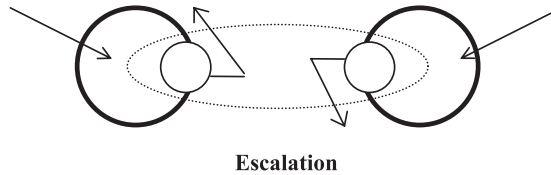
The theory of the aid interface as politics has so many variants that it is difficult to decide on one study as a typical example. I have chosen to focus on a book called "Aid Relationship", written by Jerker Carlsson and Oliver Saasa (1996). This book is suitable because it concentrates on issues of the aid interface at project level and it includes both a clear theoretical presentation and a few case-studies.

Saasa and Carlsson start with the notion that aid relationships are unequal and that there are many reasons for the relationships to develop into open conflicts. The authors have even given subtitled their book "a conflict scenario". They develop concepts which characterise different types of conflicts. These are exemplified in Figure 2.2.

Productive conflict



Too much conflict



Too little conflict

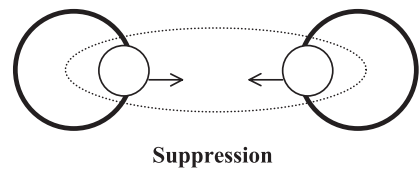
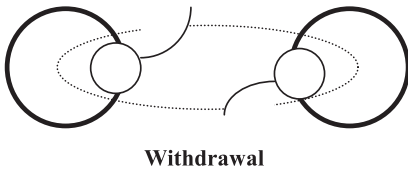


Figure 2.2 Conflict patterns at organisational interfaces

Source: Brown, L. D. *Managing Conflict at Organizational Interfaces*.

Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1983, p. 44.

A potential for conflicts is an integral part of a project framework. Interestingly, Saasa and Carlsson note that a certain amount of conflict is beneficial for a project. The question is not whether to have conflicts or not, but rather how to *manage* them. Another observation made is that it is beneficial to have a certain openness on conflicts because this helps to settle the difficult issues and to develop a project further. One should not have too much or too little in the way of conflicts but enough to keep things going.

Saasa and Carlsson first divide the stakeholders into two united fronts: the donor and the recipients. However, both sides are further divided into several actors, according to the administrative units concerned. Thus the donor side may include head office, local representative and a consultant company, while the recipient side may include various administrative organs and the target groups. The analysis of political conflicts then continues at this more precise level. While emphasis is laid upon the donor-recipient conflict, the possibility of conflicts within either camp is also acknowledged.

The case-study projects studied by Saasa and Carlsson had all been operating for a period of several years. This provides a sound basis for analysing each project as a learning process. The authors do not expect that the project participants would have known, at the time of inception, what strategies and inputs would be the most efficient ones. However, the authors do expect that a project can adjust itself to the real needs of people and to changes in the project environment. A capacity to adjust requires adequate conflict-solving mechanisms. The projects studied exemplify major differences in this respect. Some projects had followed the initial planning document even when local support had totally withered away. Some other projects had restarted planning and then negotiated modifications which seemed to better serve both the recipient administration and the target groups.

The analysis presented by Saasa and Carlsson could be called a simple stakeholder analysis. Like any stakeholder analysis, it shows the 'stakes'—resources and aspirations—that each party has in relation to the project. The analysis follows the narrow logic of applied research in that only parties which are directly involved in the decision-making process are named as stakeholders. Other parties, such as local politicians and businessmen, are omitted as irrelevant stakeholders. It is also apparent that each stakeholder is expected to represent a fairly clear-cut interest group and to protect its own interests. While this is a sound starting premise, it cannot be fully endorsed in an academic study. Rather than expecting stakeholders to rationally pursue their own interests, one should acknowledge that people can also be directed by ideologies, conventions or political coalitions—motivations which lead a stakeholder into quite a different position.

The following two approaches are based on more complex types of social theorising. In these approaches, the simple aid-relationship is given a more open—culturalist, if you like—formulation.

The aid interface as a discursive event

Analysing aid interfaces either through the 'encounter approach' and or the 'power politics approach' is relatively easy, since both approaches are understandable through common sense reasoning. In this section, I provide a more sophisticated and

academic approach—the aid interface as analysed by means of a discourse analysis. The discourse approach is a rather controversial one, because it rests upon a cultural interpretation of implicit meanings. A central method of discourse analysis is a twisting and turning of well-known concepts by means of an analysis which transforms, metaphorically, a cow into minced meat and then into a text.

In this section I study aid interfaces from the perspective of discourse analysis, using the work of Escobar as an example. I describe the aid interface as an event within a cultural domain defined by discursive conventions. At the end of the section I also look at the literary conventions associated with project culture.

Aid culture as a discursive domain

Arturo Escobar has pioneered the utilisation of discourse analysis in relation to the analysis of aid interfaces. He has analysed the ways in which the terminology conceals power relationships. Escobar takes up simple terms like WID (Women in Development) and shows how a concept like this has certain historical roots, how it is used in certain contexts by certain people and, through these premises, has definite meanings. Thus the term WID cannot be used by just anybody and it is not applicable to all matters concerning women. Its field of constructive application is more narrow than what we would first expect. Escobar uses a definite kind of discourse analysis to reveal these limitations. He works backwards, towards the taken-for-granted premises, and shows how these premises limit our ways of understanding the world. Escobar claims that when we use terms like WID we think that we are minded being open-minded but that in fact we have rather limited conceptual tools at hand. The term can only be used at a crude level of generalising over about policy options, a level where more detailed cultural categories are omitted from analysis. In other situations, the usage of the term is merely loose talk. (Escobar 1995.)

Terminology is never innocent. To give another example, the term ‘targeting’ is taken for granted in much of the aid literature. Yet targeting has been historically used in the military language to specify objects to be destroyed. Later, targeting been adopted into commercial language⁴, where it appeared as a term for locating a group of innocent customers. In both cases, a strong *objectification* of ‘targeted’ people is evident. In the process of objectification, a power relationship is smuggled in. It is a task for the powerful to define the target group and it is the task of powerless people to comply with this definition.

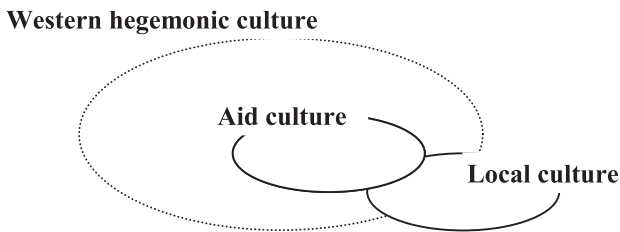
Words like ‘WID’ and ‘targeting’ easily become self-evident terms, parts of a separate distinct ‘aid culture’. But how do we combine the analysis of aid culture with interface analysis?

⁴ There are many terms which originate from military terminology and which have been adopted either directly or through commercial language into aid discourse. System theoretical ‘logical framework’ is one clear example.

In discursive analysis, aid terms are analysed as elements of a coherent system of thinking, their totality constituting an ‘aid culture’. Aid culture is perceived as a discursive domain in which people easily can understand each other easily. Figure 2.3 shows an aid interface as an interface between discursive domains. Aid culture is perceived as a coherent way of thinking—but strictly within the parameters of Western hegemonic culture. Aid culture is an epithet for a certain Western way of putting hoped-for futures and practical action into a common package.

In a project, aid culture is placed in contact with a ‘local’ culture. Here it is important to make a distinction between sharing a culture and having a certain position as a stakeholder. A recipient of aid who has adopted aid culture as the framework for conducting his or her work becomes a representative of aid culture. On the other hand, an aid worker who has spent many years in one country and has adopted its ways of behaviour can be said to represent local culture. We cannot automatically place a person in one category (as a recipient or as a donor). Rather, the cultural domains are constructed on the basis of ‘shared language’ or a discursive domain. One can, for example, find people who share Western values and the language of aid culture, even though such persons would otherwise be called ‘recipients’.

Figure 2.3 Interface between discursive domains



The analysis of discursive domains is a difficult art. One can often say in criticism of an example of discourse analysis that it is an expression of a nihilistic attitude—an attitude where each and every term of aid culture is said to be taken for granted by aid practitioners. Moreover, each and every interface situation can potentially be seen as an epithet of exploitation which is so deeply embedded that there is no way out. The only answer that such a nihilist analyst would then give to an aid practitioner would be the demand to pack one’s suitcases and to pull out from an interface, as if to say: ‘If whatever you do is wrong you should stop altogether’. This advise, when it is given in an academic report, implies a sort of superior attitude which perceives everybody else as a rather stupid person. Aid practitioners have diffi-

culty in understanding such criticism, because it is based on rather abstract interpretation of everyday concepts (i.e. the meaning of a concept is separated from a conventional context).

The defenders of discourse analysis maintain that there is nothing wrong with using abstract reasoning if it is well done. Discourse analysis can be a real eye-opener for many who have learned to take the vocabulary of aid projects for granted. Discourse analysis has a lot to offer to the analysis of power relationships—even when the results may be disturbing.

The problem of discourse analysis is that it sometimes makes the same mistakes that it accuses others of: it uses (non-valid) generalisations. Escobar has, for example, analysed the role of World Bank in generating new terms for aid discourse. In order to make his point, Escobar picks very selective examples from World Bank reports, takes them out of historical and social context and presents them as objectifications in the most simple form. The selectiveness of analysis and its controlled contextualisation allow no room for more open views. Another analyst might have noted that the different branches of the World Bank use the same term in slightly different ways and that the approach of the World Bank has changed over time. Escobar, in his sweeping generalisations, does not have room to admit such variation. As he sees it, 'donors' are all alike and worse than 'non-governmental organisations'. These kinds of generalisations are disturbing and analytically detrimental to the analysis.

Another, related problem of discourse analysis is the scope it allows for the reflective capacity of actors. It is clear that, say, aid professionals, seldom take terms like WID at their face value. We have all come across enough variety in women's movements, gender relations and the breakers of cultural stereotypes to achieve some distance from the most sweeping generalisations. Power relationships are also more complex, because the aid professionals reflect on their own motivations. There tend to be differences between what aid experts write and what they say. Whereas the written documents are usually 'cleaned' of critical analytical comments, the same experts, when talking freely, are able to reveal a sophisticated analysis of the situation. If official reports leave a reader in despair, it is thus useful to remember that aid circles are still relatively closely knit networks of persons who express their most sensitive statements more often through talking than by way of reports.

The problems of a piece of discourse analysis can be overcome by focusing the study on a concrete setting. The 'looseness' of discourse analysis is considerably lessened when the method is applied to the analysis of a particular interface. Rather than working with general concepts (the West and the Rest), one should identify the actors in a historically specific context. Such a case-study can reveal who, in a given project setting, really share the same language and who are excluded from it. This is where a political struggle commences.

The power of literary conventions: aid project as a story

Aid interfaces are a source of daily bread for a huge number of aid experts worldwide. Over the past few decades, the aid business has become professionalised into a career for some and a field of additional competence for others. In any case, the capacity to deal with projects requires a capacity to deal with the standard terms and ways of reasoning that are typical of aid projects.

Over time the formal conventions have become more and more deeply rooted. The standardisation of language has progressed so far that an international expert can jump into another agency's project and immediately use terms which are mutually intelligible. This standardisation provides major advantages for *multi-project people*—people who deal superficially with a large variety of projects and who need shortcuts in order to achieve a basic understanding of a project with a minimum of effort. It is mostly the administrators of the aid agencies who need to deal with a large number of projects. Thus the standardisation of terms and procedures is a tool for quality control.

The standardisation has also a negative impact in that it may create a false conviction that one understands something. For example, a person with a command of general project formulae can read a certain project report and have the feeling of knowing what are the central issues and problems contained in it. However, the understanding covers only the project language—not necessarily the project itself. The false assurance has been generated by the production of *a coherent report* which is *well-structured as a narrative*. In the world of reports, this or that particular report has seemed to be a well-written piece of work. It has been compared with other reports and, given its comparative merits, it has passed the test. The problem is that during the process of comparison we are alienated from the real project (as a complex set of actions which have taken place out there but which are hard to delineate, pin down and analyse separately) and transported into the world of reports (where rationality, coherence and happy endings prevail).

Discourse analysis is an academic approach which takes this alienation seriously. One strand of discourse analysis looks at aid as a practice of *story-telling*. What we construct in project reports (e.g. in evaluation reports) is stories which tend to have a similar kind of structure. In the first chapters of a report, we find good intentions but also problems, hopelessness and confusion. However, the 'hero' and 'snakes' of a story are identified, and the conflict between good and evil is staged. Pure reason is given a sword with which to chop off the head of evil and so ensure peace and a sense of purpose. In the last act the forces of good win and the project is happily guided into safe waters.

According to discourse analysis, the separateness of the whole project is a meta-physical construction. The object-ness of a project is a mental creation which does not correspond to the observable social relations. The story-ness of a project is just as

much the result of mental operations. In reality, projects never enter a virginal landscape where they can shape new ideas in accordance with simple developmental objectives. Discourse analysis can use the deconstruction of a story as a technique to dislocate the parts from their neatly configured places and to show that there are several other—and equally valid—ways to analyse a project. Discourse analysis can show that any project can be interpreted from a variety of angles and that when these interpretations (each possessing its own validity) are placed alongside the official story, the result is likely to be more diffuse.

The aid interface as a meeting point of institutionalised practices

The following approach is tentatively labelled the ‘institutional’ approach. The distinctive feature of the institutional approach is the emphasis placed on the compelling power inherent in the institutionalisation of practices into rules and regulations which, after they have been routinised, seem to have an independent existence and to possess power over ‘reason’. Good intentions are secondary to the conventions residing in our bureaucratised minds.

Conducting institutional analysis requires the systematic and impartial analysis of the totality of a social scene. Institutional analysis needs to be preceded by a systematic identification of all actors and a non-centred analysis of the relationships between the actors. Because of the complexity of the network linking actors, any actor is anchored by a set of expectations and responsibilities that are very difficult to circumvent. Expectations and responsibilities are sedimented into institutional practices. The main part of the analysis then concentrates on conventions and rules and on the conflicting expectations arising from these rules.

Institutional approaches have supporters throughout the social sciences. Economists have developed their institutional economics, anthropologists have their own institutional (substantivist) tradition, political scientists have their own institutional school and so on. Although these disciplinary orientations have major differences, they tend to share a certain ‘conservative’ perspective. In other words, they emphasise the perpetual and binding force of social conventions. There is much in social practices which we take for granted simply because there are institutional mechanisms which reproduce these practices.

I use Desmond McNeill’s book *The Contradictions of Foreign Aid* as a starting point for a discussion of the institutional approach. McNeill does not claim to be an institutionalist—he might call himself only an empirical observer or a political economist. I have chosen this book as a basis because it presents, in a systematic and compelling way, a large number of practices that place individual actors in the aid business into slots which are hard to avoid.

Let us look at an example. McNeill describes the various pushes and pulls that any consultant working in aid project is likely to face in the following way:

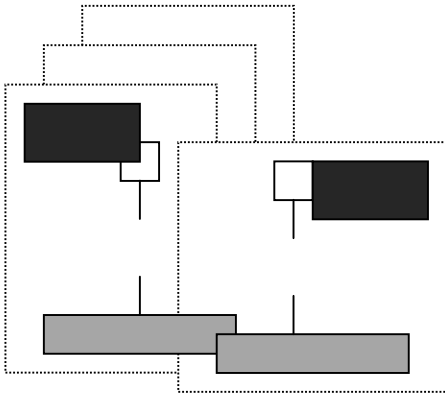
Studies undertaken by consultants will very frequently be politically sensitive. Indeed, if there was no likelihood of controversy their services would often not be required. But the dominant interest of the consultant is to satisfy the financing agency, and this is particularly important in the case of feasibility studies. Indeed the consultant may be said to embody the major contradictions that this book is concerned with. He is answerable to both the donor agency and the recipient agency, but not to the people of either donor or recipient country. He is placed in the centre of a web of confused and conflicting interests, yet his instructions make no explicit reference to those conflicts, although it is implicitly intended that we will resolve them. (McNeill 1981, 60.)

The position outlined for the consultant seems rather awkward. The situation looks even more complex when we take into account competition between many consultants—and many donors—in the same project area. Experienced consultants have learned to sweep all contradictions out of sight and to put their efforts into satisfying the needs of the most important agency—the one that pays the fees. The example shows how ‘experience’—in the worst cases—actually means rule-bound behaviour within an authoritarian administrative framework.

What is special in academic institutional analysis? One might argue that any project appraisal exercise requires an analysis of stakeholders, sectoral policies, available resources and conventions and that if it is done thoroughly this appraisal amounts to an institutional analysis. After all, the project appraisal documents aim to be systematic and to cover all the major aspects of the project environment. Similarly, institutional analysis aims at a systematic investigation of the project environment.

The difference between project appraisal (or planning) and institutional analysis is that the project appraisal defines the core of project activities as its point of departure, any other actor being analysed only in relation to this core. Thus we have, figuratively speaking, a set of concentric circles around the project core. The stakeholders with direct links to the project are placed on the nearest circles, while more abstract and socially wider issues are placed on the outer circles. From the appraisal perspective, such an instrumental orientation is natural and acceptable. From the perspective of institutional analysis, the instrumental treatment of actors may lead one down the wrong track. From the perspective of institutional analysis, even remote conventions (e.g. budgeting rules at donor headquarters) may have a decisive impact on a project's shape.

Figure 2.4 Aid interface as a contact point of institutional practices



Another difference between project appraisal reports and an academic institutional analysis is that the latter may systematically show discontinuities between various aims of a project and consequently identify all conflicts between the various actors. The institutional analysis can freely point to these problems whenever they are important. By contrast, project appraisal reports tend to tackle these issues only to the extent that they can also propose a solution. A typical example is the salary differences between foreign and local counterparts. The project appraisal reports do not mention this problem, because they cannot propose any solution to it. For its part, an institutional analysis can study the conventions and practices of payment and present salary discrepancies as a serious problem affecting work motivation among the local counterparts.

The strength of the institutional analysis is its capacity to take the 'technical' rules and conventions as an issue to be analysed. It is able to point to the administrative conventions as a critical element in determining how aid has been channelled. Administrative practices involving budgeting and the setting of timetables are extremely important when a project is being conceptualised. For example, the basic budgeting distinction between 'investment' and 'recurrent costs' needs to be made in project budgets along predetermined lines. Moreover, there are often strict rules on where investment purchase of different sizes can be made, what are acceptable and non-acceptable recurrent costs, and how recurrent costs should be financed. Many donors have rules inhibiting the direct payment of local staff salaries. This rule, and the ways in which it is by-passed, are significant factors in determining what a project can realistically accomplish.

One might think of the institutional approach as a predecessor of discourse analysis. Both approaches emphasise that some of the taken-for-granted conventions have a strong hold on our ways of thinking and acting. The difference lies in their treatment of empirical material concerning social rules and conventions. The institutional approach takes a step towards the concretisation of such conventions, while discourse analysis tends to take a more distant stance.

The merit of the institutional analysis is that, because of its straightforward social theory, it can use more of its ammunition on the empirical analysis. The reality is shown in its all complexity. Because of the complexity of the reality analysed, the method does not lead to overt political or moral reductionist analysis. Whereas discourse analysis tends to be loaded with moral backbone (good guys vs. bad guys), the institutional approach shows that we all are limited by our positional constraints. Matters are more complex than might appear.

2.3 STUDYING AID AS A PART OF UNFOLDING HISTORY—DECENTRED ANALYSIS

The previous presentation shows that there are different ways to approach aid interfaces, each with its merits and drawbacks. When one is conducting a study on aid, the selection of an approach should be based on the topic to be analysed, the resources available for the analysis and the type of audience that will read the report. Discourse analysis represents a rather academic orientation, while the other approaches are also suitable for applied studies. Encounter analysis, institutional analysis and political/conflict analysis are useful tools when one is looking for straightforward solutions at the project level, whereas both discourse analysis and political power analysis are more suitable for broad debates on policy.

Nevertheless, the most interesting analyses result when different perspectives are combined in a merged approach. The advantage of merging analytical tools is the avoidance of one-sided treatment. The problem of the merged analysis is that the analysis—with its various threads leading to different theoretical discussions—requires a mastery of writing. It is common for the merged approach end up either in very complex verbal acrobatics or with an empirical orientation (though one spiced with important code words and references which hint at the other discourses and try to enmesh the reader in the magic circle of a shared discourse). In the first case, starting to read requires a major effort.

I would like to stress the merits of merging elements of the four approaches presented. Merging theoretical tools means combining complementary elements of various approaches in a balanced way. Among academics, there are continuous debates on minor shifts in emphasis. Some argue that analysis should rely mostly on implied meanings, while others maintain that a more straightforward actor-orientation is necessary. Some champion the historical analysis of conflicts, while others argue that

cultural continuities should be given more weight. These debates emanate from symbolic fights between disciplines. When academic theorising is being furthered, it is helpful, however, to avoid interdisciplinary infighting and make opportunistic use of the fruits of different traditions.

The problem of combining different theoretical elements is that it requires a mastery of textual strategy. But the difficulty should not be exaggerated. After all, the readers are able to draw upon their previous experiences, on the material presented in previous chapters, and so on. Thus it is possible to mentally 'bracket' a part of the theoretical repertoire while another part is being given emphasis. This multiple-entry approach requires co-operation on the part of the reader. A reader should be willing to read the text from beginning to end and to relate not just to a few lines within a text but to the tone and intent of the argument as it is developed throughout the text. It is the totality that matters.

Naturally, the topic, the resources and the audience have a definite impact on the suitable balance between different ingredients. I have made by own selection, which emerges from my research problem—identifying the impact of aid interfaces on local development. I call my approach 'decentred analysis'.

Decentring aid interfaces

I place this study within an emerging genre of academic case-studies which concentrate on project level social interfaces but which, interestingly, decentre these interfaces. These case-studies exhibit a detailed knowledge of social relationships in the project area. They present the scene of social relationships before the project is started and then show what kind of effects the project brings about in the existing social setting. Thus local social relations are given a predominant role and the project is analysed as an important but not the determining factor in shaping the social relationships.

Good examples of this kind of studies are Porter et al. (1991) and Crehan and van Oppen (1994). These case-studies show the density of social rules and expectations that exists before a project has started. When a project is being established it needs to carve out a space for itself. The analysts utilise the advantages of institutional analysis.

Crehan and van Oppen use the term 'arena' to describe the indeterminate power relations that exists in relation to a project and its resources. They argue that

the objective realities that come into being in the course of a development project's implementation cannot be understood without taking into account the web of meanings, out of which the different actors weave their competing strategies. (...) Each group plays its own part, in its own way, in determining the final outcome of the project and while the role of foreign planners and 'experts' may be very influential, it is

not the only role. Even the so-called 'target groups', who are normally regarded merely as the beneficiaries or victims of a project, are in fact self-motivating actors capable of exerting their own influence. (Crehan and van Oppen 1994: 259)

This view of a project as a contested field is contrary to the conventional way of seeing a project. Philip van Ufford calls the conventional view of a project a 'Minister's Model'. According to van Ufford, this conventional view analyses the processes related to the project from the point of view of those high-level persons who are responsible for making decisions on the project. In the Minister's Model, the justification for the proposed action needs to be clear-cut. The emphasis is placed on "an image of efficiency and manageability, of internal coherence and argumentation, as well as of integration between the different organisational levels, and so of effectiveness". (Ufford 1993:139.) The Minister's Model is based on system construction, and one can call it idealistic because it tends to equate the constructed system—a model—with reality. In the words of Ufford,

The first [Minister's] model is idealistic because it takes the desirability and manageability of social change as a point of departure. For this purpose the emphasis is on the question of which kind of change is desirable. The distinction between goals, means and results is based on the idea that the relationships between the different groups of participants in various social fields are relatively unproblematic. Once the goals are formulated by the officials, these are to be implemented locally. This presupposes that these goals are not changed once the activities resulting from the budget decisions start. (van Ufford 1993:138)

The Minister's Model can be contrasted with the 'arena model' which shows the social scene as a complex network of direct and hidden interests.

Minister's model > < Arena model

In contrast to the top-down view, the Arena Model shows a complexity of social relationships reaching far beyond the named implementers and beneficiaries. According to the Arena Model, the real social relations between the different groups of participants constitute a space in which various interests are presented and problems are addressed. Moreover, the launching of a project creates new interests and thus new problems to be solved. As a project advances, the positions of various actors shift gradually. Instead of having clear 'stakes', many actors may have ambivalent roles in relation to other actors. All this calls for constant attention to the social field.

When this type of decentred analysis (i.e. arena model) is adopted as a method-

ological guideline, we readily notice that the activities of a single project seem far more disjointed than they would appear in a project centred approach. Decentred analysis also shows that the results of a project are enmeshed with the on-going social processes and thus as fragile as these other processes. When decentred analysis is conducted, it may be difficult to delineate the effects and impacts of a single project. One may nevertheless delineate some effects of aid projects as a totality. In other words, aid projects as a totality create definite administrative conventions, certain biases in resource allocation and certain social structures. These can be studied without distorting the historical analysis of historically constituted social relations in a specific area.

In Chapters 3–4, I apply decentred analysis to a specific case. I take development in south-eastern Tanzania as the object and look at aid as an input into this indigenous process.

The decentred approach: an in-depth analysis of power relationships

The four theoretical approaches described above provide differing ways of organising an analysis of a social scene, including power relationships, related to aid projects. The large differences in the ways in which power is conceptualised show that it is intrinsically a multi-faceted phenomenon. Consequently, power relationships deserve a multiple analysis. When different analytical tools are combined, we can construct an in-depth analysis of power relationships.

In the decentred approach, I rely on an in-depth analysis of power relationships. Any power relationship simultaneously exhibits elements of a relationship of control over resources and a relationship of control over signs. In other words, the material struggles and the symbolic struggles are closely interwoven. We can consider, for example, a case where the aid discourse identifies ‘public child health care’ as a need and right of every citizen. Whenever a new concept is adopted into the aid discourse, it is at once seized upon by a plethora of social actors who master its use and try to control its application. A power relationship with regard to the need for public child health care has the following dimensions:

1. The struggle to establish or deny the political status of a given need, that is, the attempt to define the need as a matter of legitimate political concern or to categorise it as a non-political matter;
2. Disputation over the interpretation of the need; that is, the process of argumentation that determines who has the power to define the need and thereby to establish what will satisfy it;
3. Clashes over the satisfaction of the need; that is, the fight to secure or withhold provision. (Moore 1994:94, referring to Fraser 1989)

These three ‘moments’ of a power relationship simultaneously create a set of horizons for a politically loaded discussion.

In this model it is not assumed that there is a singular hegemonic power which is able to impose its views on all the people. It is assumed that there is a powerful body trying to make decisions and, along with concrete decisions, to shape the prevailing ways of doing things. The body can, for example, try to use the effective political strategy of defining an issue as a ‘technical’ matter, thus defining its other interpretations as political (and those making such interpretations as ‘troublemakers’). It is, however, assumed that there are always counter-powers that are concerned about how the division of resources is made. During the process of dispute, these counter-powers develop their argumentation to cover the deeper symbolic dimensions as well.

The analysis of power relationships aims to cover these various dimensions. The increased depth of the analysis should make it possible to identify the counter-hegemonic statements and powers. For a researcher, the problem in the identification of counter-hegemonic forces is usually difficult because of the fact that the wealthy and powerful tend to dominate official information dissemination and publicity. In concrete terms, the powerful are able to print their views in nice colour brochures and use their resources to disseminate their views world-wide. The opposing opinions are often printed in a simple format and disseminated through less prestigious channels. In addition, the opposing views tend to exist in oral rather than written traditions. A proper analysis of power relations is complete only when it includes a treatment of the counter-hegemonic practices of marginal actors.

In many respects, my discussion of power relationships echoes constructivist social theorising. I argue, rather provocatively, that the constructivist theorising which is currently very popular in academia is basically an advanced hybrid theory drawing upon the four types of analysis presented earlier in this chapter.

2.4 SUMMARY

In this chapter I have discussed theoretical approaches which can be used to conceptualise aid interfaces. I first outlined four distinctive theoretical approaches and, in addition, sketched my own theoretical orientation. The four theories emanate from academic research and are directed primarily towards the academic audience (which, as a totality, should represent truth). However, they are all fairly comprehensible to interested aid professionals as well.

The common feature of these four theories is the emphasis laid upon socio-political and cultural factors, at the expense of economic factors. In the conventional aid debate, the economic explanations are given priority. They are given priority firstly because ‘development’ is conceptualised on the basis of economic indicators and secondly because the economists have been most heavily involved in creating ‘positive’

analyses oriented towards problem-solving. The four theories studied share a common feature in that they do not promise any panacea for problem-solving. Instead, they promise a better understanding of the problems that exist *within* aid interfaces.

I have underlined the need to use a combination of different theoretical tools in the analysis of aid interfaces. The merging of analytical tools to suit with the research problem is presented as a method which should lead to a balanced and rich analysis.

A major characteristic of my own approach is that I adopt a stance of distance from the 'project framework' and also from the vocabulary of aid practice. This stance reflects a tendency in some other recent analyses. Recent theorising tries to apply a conventional arsenal of social analysis and to place the project *within* the setting of total social relationships. When this shift is made, "the interest of knowledge" is also changed. Instead of trying to produce readily applicable information, academics produce hermeneutical and critical information. Instead of producing packaged information for the top decision-makers, academics produce academic analysis for each other. This distinction, however, reflects a division between roles rather than persons. Since aid administrators also tend to be highly educated persons, there is continuous cross-fertilisation between academic and practical analyses.

I conclude this by summarising my research problem and research approach:

Research problem: reform in the social interfaces of project aid

My research problem is whether project formats are beginning to take a direction where the project is socially embedded in its local environment. The case-study chosen for the analysis of this problem is the set of aid projects which have operated in south-eastern Tanzania over the past three decades.

Research approach: decentred analysis

My research approach is called decentred analysis. This means that attention is primarily devoted to the development of social relationships in south-eastern Tanzania. The aid projects are perceived as a chain of interventions in the local scene. The aid projects are studied in relation to the existing social scene. Both intended and unintended impacts on the local social scene are brought within the scope of analysis. I investigate social impacts on local political culture, on administration and on the relationship between administrators and rural citizens.

PART II

PROJECT-LEVEL INTERFACES IN SOUTH-EASTERN TANZANIA

*Kupotea njia ni ndiko kujua njia.
Every pothole in a road teaches you how to drive better the next time.*

A Swahili saying and a free translation

Chapter 3

THE SCENE: DEVELOPMENT AND AID IN SOUTH-EASTERN TANZANIA

3.1 SOUTH-EASTERN TANZANIA: A SYNOPSIS

Local partnership means collaboration between the various local institutions and the external facilitators. It is expected that the local institutions have the capacity to take a leading role in the collaboration. Before we can analyse the aid situations, we need to familiarise ourselves with the local institutions. In the following, I study the local institutions, placing emphasis on local administration.

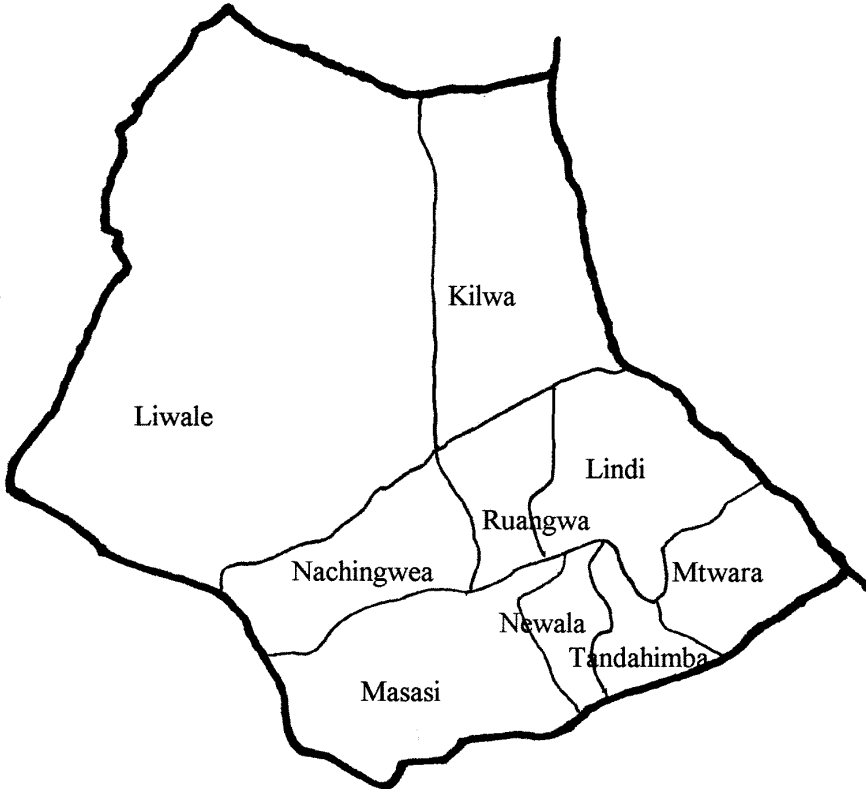
The overall history of aid to Tanzania has been the subject of several studies. Towards the end of the chapter, I aim to show how aid has been provided to the south-eastern corner of Tanzania. Since this area is a relatively poor and peripheral one, aid organisations with their modernising agenda have notorious difficulties in achieving results. In this chapter, I present the aid organisations and their projects. In the following four chapters, I analyse the relationships between the local institutions and aid organisations.

People and resources in South-Eastern Tanzania

The Mtwara and Lindi regions occupy the south-eastern corner of Tanzania. The Mtwara region is currently divided into Mtwara municipality and the districts of Mtwara, Tandahimba, Newala and Masasi. The Lindi region is divided into Lindi municipality and the districts of Lindi, Liwale, Nachingwea, Ruangwa and Kilwa. The administrative distribution is presented in Map 3.1.

The regions cover a large area—84,000 sq. km—and are inhabited by about 1.8 million people. The area includes the vast (1,800 sq. km) Sealous Game Reserve in the northern part of the Lindi region. The population densities are relatively low in many parts of the regions, but population congestion can be observed in parts of Newala and Tandahimba districts. The predominant occupation is smallholder agriculture based on a set of small plots cultivated with a hand hoe. In less populated areas, a rotation of plots and occasional shifting to uncultivated areas takes place, whereas in more populated areas, a more permanent pattern of cultivation (including crop rotation on each plot) is to be found. The main cash crops are cashew nuts, simsim and cassava. The main natural resource used to be hardwood (African Black-

Map 3.1 Districts in the Mtwara and Lindi regions.



wood, for example, has been extensively logged in the area) but recently the small-scale/artisanal mining of gold and gemstones have become important. The government is also planning industrial gas production at off-shore locations near the coast.

In the course of their history, the regions have witnessed a number of economic changes caused by external interventions. The influence on the coastal areas exerted by Arab traders and rulers extends back more than five hundred years. This was followed by the administrative interventions and the propagation of new crops (especially coconut) introduced by the German colonial administration, the influx of Indian traders and the establishment of the cashew nut as an export crop during the British colonial period, and the large number of different development efforts made by the Tanzanian government in collaboration with donor agencies over the past three decades. So far, none of the efforts has targeted the regions as a location for manufacturing industries, and the trials aimed at establishing agricultural processing industries have not succeeded. The regions have remained predominantly rural and agricultural.

The regions have made considerable progress in recent years in terms of enhancing social services and increasing food production. But the road ahead is still a long one. For example, only some 54 percent of children are registered as attending schools. Many children start schooling but then drop out for various reasons. (Regional Commissioner's Office 1996.)

Comparative analyses based on monetary household income characterise the regions as among the poorest in the Tanzania and, indeed, in the whole world. This alleged poverty has led to a lively debate on the validity of poverty analyses and the possible causes of poverty. This debate is well documented in the recent publication edited by Pekka Seppälä and Bertha Koda (1998). Briefly, the notion of the area as extremely poor has been contested on methodological grounds. The debate on the validity of mainstream poverty studies asks whether the Western indicator of monetarised income is a valid criterion for assessing wellbeing in a largely subsistence-oriented economy. In a same vein, the validity of other indicators such as educational levels and the standard of housing is questioned. The critics of conventional indicators argue that the regions still have relatively good access to land resources and that there is a comparatively low level of agricultural proletarianisation. The supporters of conventional indicators point out that since agricultural production is low, there is seasonal risk of hunger periods; this is evident in the relatively high levels of infant mortality.

Amongst those who do accept the conventional indicators but still call the area a poor one, the explanations for the causes of the relatively high poverty can be divided into two categories. The first camp argues that local culture causes poverty. References are made to the conservative, backward and parochial culture. If further explanations are elaborated, the frequently mentioned features are matrilineal descent (which is said to work against a household as a property accumulating unit), shifting cultivation (which directs people away from permanent attachments) and rampant witchcraft (causing jealousy which prevents economic advancement). The arguments coming from the other camp could best be grouped under the heading of the 'underdevelopment argument'. According to this view, external agencies have systematically extracted resources from the south-eastern regions, thus impoverishing them. The blame is placed equally on the central government (which has taxed the regions but provided only limited services), private traders (who have exported the ample natural resources at very low prices) and the donor agencies (which have made numerous plans but implemented them only half-heartedly).

There is certainly a degree of truth in the reasoning of both camps. However, a more synthesising explanation could be arrived at by combining the two arguments in a dialectical way. According to this interpretation, the continuously shifting and often exploitative intrusions of 'outsiders' has disillusioned the local people and strengthened their tendency to avoid dependency relationships. The positive side of

this situation is 'indigenous development', expressed through a reliance upon people's own cultural and economic institutions. The flip side of the situation is the fact that, for more conservative people, the relationship between outsiders and local people has developed into one of mutual suspicion, distrust and uncommitted opportunism. This relationship and the consequent polarisation could be called the 'suspicion syndrome'. The development of the region depends to a large extent on the capacity of public institutions to generate trust and active participation.

3.2 THE HISTORY OF LOCAL ADMINISTRATION IN SOUTH-EASTERN TANZANIA

The relationship between central and local administration has had a number of twists and turns. Historically, the first attempts at wider organised governance are associated with Arab influence in the coastal areas. The Arab form of governance developed over several centuries; it was most strongly felt in the coastal towns and was fully enmeshed with Islamic law and governance. The following German colonial administration showed a sporadic interest in developing the South-Eastern Province and its administrative structures. The German colonialists aimed at implanting their own administrative structures in the area. However, the Germans were less interested in putting major efforts into the area, for three reasons: first, the lack of interest on the part of settlers in occupying land in the area; second, political resistance in southern Tanzania; and third, the lack of existing traditional systems of governance which could have been utilised to build a colonial administration. The Germans ended up extending the Arab system of local rule from coastal areas to the hinterland. (Liebenow 1971.)

The British colonial period saw a consolidation in the organisation of local administration. After a period during which the basic structures were reorganised, the national policy turned towards indirect rule in 1925. This meant that colonial officers started to look for 'traditional' leaders and forms of governance. In south-eastern Tanzania, the local traditional form of organisation was very diffuse, and the colonialists were forced to 'upgrade' or invent traditional leaders. Thus the so-called *wakulungwa* were nominated and given powers in the chiefly hierarchy. The experiment started to crumble fairly soon, and towards the end of the 1930s—a decade earlier than in other parts of the territory—the colonial administrators started to move back towards direct rule. They selected *liwalis* who were answerable only to the district commissioner. Soon after this system was established, changes in overall colonial strategy led the local colonial administrators to initiate new experiments. In south-eastern Tanganyika, district councils were established some four years prior to the Local Government Ordinance of 1953. The colonial administrators also tried to experiment with tribalism, forming an Umakonde Umoja, a combined unit comprising the Mtwara and Newala districts, which existed from 1949 to 1954. A more

serious experiment was the establishment of Newala as the first (and almost the only) multi-racial Local Council in Tanganyika. During this experiment, Europeans and Indians were given a proportionately high representation in a common decision-making (or rather, discussion) forum. (ibid.)

As the historical narrative indicates, administrative developments were generated from above, partly reflecting the national reform agendas and partly the whims and interests of district administrators. Whatever the official administrative structure was, the key district administrators held the policies under their control. This situation started to change during the second half of the 1950s, when political activism became fully established.

At the time of independence, the South-Eastern Province (soon to be split into the Mtwara and Lindi regions) had gained a reputation as a problem area where initiatives from above were received without any enthusiasm. The colonial administration had been run by a few foreign administrators and a number of mission-educated support staff. Gus Liebenow (1971), in his excellent analysis of the local political history, shows the arbitrary pattern of colonial administration. The African people did not, however, all keep a low political profile. Liebenow nicely shows the evolving split between 'modernists' and 'traditionalists' (and intermediate groups) among Africans during the late 1950s and the 1960s.

Before independence South-Eastern Tanzania gave some support to the United Tanganyika Party and even provided a basis for Masasi African Democratic Union. After independence, however, TANU emerged as a strong party. It was soon noticed by TANU leaders that locational/ethnic multi-party politics would harm the drive towards national cohesion and consequently the opposition was banned. At the same time, the party structure of TANU was increasingly centralised. Other, more concealed strategies were used to create the same centralising effect; for example, newspapers written in local languages (other than Kiswahili) were banned. The whole political culture evolved towards centralism. Soon South-Eastern Tanzania became one of the areas where no official political arenas other than those governed by TANU/CCM politics existed.

The later development of the central vs. local government interface follows the same pattern as elsewhere in Tanzania. The central government placed the political aim of equality above all other aims. Simultaneously, it started to demolish all the power bases outside the TANU/CCM hierarchy. District councils (with their potential for evoking ethnic/locational/parochial identities) were seen as a source of such independent power. Their operational independence was curtailed and they were placed under a politically controlled and heavily top-down-oriented administrative hierarchy. Central government took the active role of formalising and standardising the operations of district councils. Thus circulars, guidelines⁵ and plans started to flow out of Dar es Salaam.

A major change took place when local government authorities were abolished in

1972. The district-level administration was brought under the control ('supremacy') of the political party in the so-called decentralisation (actually deconcentration) reform. The reform placed emphasis on regional and district level committees as a part of the central government structure. The local administrative organs were supposed to follow the party guidelines⁵ and simultaneously integrate the initiatives from village level into rational district-level plans.

The years up to the independence of Mozambique in 1975 were plagued by the spilling of the Mozambican war across the border. The Mtwara region is populated by the same ethnic groups as the northern areas of Mozambique, and it was natural for Mozambicans to take refuge on the Tanzanian side of the border. This led to the establishment of large military bases and refugee camps in the Lindi and Mtwara regions and the seclusion of the regions as a restricted war zone. This naturally had a detrimental impact on the development of any political structures that might have relied upon local initiatives.

Mtwara and Lindi were among the first regions to be included the villagisation programme in the early 1970s. The programme was implemented quickly and systematically because—according to official policy—the scattered population was at risk from the war in neighbouring Mozambique. Villagisation took place in 1972-4, thus coinciding with the abolition of district councils in 1972.

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

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

During the 1970s and early 1980s, the central government tried to deepen its penetration into the rural areas by strengthening regional administration and estab-

5) The policy of combining political and administrative functions by, for example, appointing the party secretary simultaneously as a regional commissioner aimed to strengthen the supremacy of party over administration. However, this policy of kofia mbili (i.e. 'two caps') tended to function the other way round and to increase the power of administration over policy matters. (McHenry 1994:58-60)

lishing parastatals. The regional administration, guiding the village councils and influenced by the CCM, came to have a supervisory administrative position. Much in the way of the resources was also channelled through parastatals. One parastatal which was important specifically for south-eastern Tanzania was the Cashewnut Authority of Tanzania. This body attempted to market cashew nuts, the main cash crop of the area, but failed to operate in an efficient manner. The Cashewnut Authority of Tanzania is an exemplary case of the operational difficulties that beset the centralised parastatals, operating with donor support, during this period (Ellis 1980; Seppälä 1998).

The economic inefficiency of sectoral top-down administration forced the government to make a major administrative reform and to revive district authorities in 1984. In this reform, district councils were brought back into existence as locally elected independent bodies. The district councils were given a wide mandate to provide social services and undertake development initiatives in their areas.

The reform was implemented in a half-baked manner, and its impacts were diluted by the fact that regional authorities were kept subordinate to the central government structure and given wide supervisory powers over the local authorities. Moreover, a large part of district council funding and staff continued to be allocated by the central government. The districts in south-eastern Tanzania had a very poor record of tax collection, and for this reason their room to manoeuvre was very limited (Therkildsen and Semboja 1992). In practical terms, the key administrators identified themselves as answerable to higher ministries rather than to the elected district councils. These were given a mandate to make decisions concerning a small part of income sources and expenditure. Often the high-handed key administrators bent the allocative decisions, thus ignoring district council decisions. The lower-ranking administrators were given very limited decision-making power and an equally limited operational budget. The practice of political decision-making was far removed from the model of democratic decentralised structure.

Looked at from below, the reform of 1984 was a matter internal to the central government structure. After the reform, a part of central government was nominally called local administration. However, its manpower and finances were allocated from above. The administrators were circulated from one location to another to prevent the establishment of parochial economic and political networks⁶. Even the candidates for district councils were carefully screened by the party leaders. All these measures meant that the independence of local authorities was limited.

When central government resources were distributed, local government staff and projects were among the least favoured. The south-eastern regions have been particu-

6) Different local government officers have been recruited by different central government bodies. The Prime Minister's office has recruited senior officers, the Local Government Service Commission has recruited middlelevel officers, and district councils have recruited the low-level staff.

larly adversely affected by low staffing levels. The qualifications of staff working in these regions has also been below national average. One reason is the reluctance of qualified people, if offered post in the south-eastern regions, to accept the offer.

Current administrative structures and resources

In the following I discuss the current situation⁷ in local administration. I take up two issues, namely the parallel existence of various State bodies and the financial constraints under which the local government authorities work.

The complex administrative structure

The administrative structure includes the central government and the semi-independent local governments. Central government works largely through a line form of administration in which regional offices are the local apex organisations, supported by the District Commissioners' offices and further subsidiary (division and ward level) bodies dealing mainly with law-and-order issues.

However, some service ministries (e.g. Works and Education) have their own representatives implanted as officers at a local level. The degree of independence in the local operations of the service ministries varies from one ministry to another. Since ministries work partly independently and partly through regional and local government administration, their operations tend to confuse the administrative charts.

Outside the central government administration, but financially almost fully dependent on it, are the local governments. The major task of the local governments is to provide services such as education, health and water to the inhabitants of a district. Each local government has a staff of some twenty administrative officers who deal with other developmental issues (e.g. agriculture, forestry, community development); these other departments are very poorly resourced. The lack of resources has a detrimental impact on work commitment.

When the administrative set-up is analysed systematically, one is bound to notice the multiplicity of government agencies working in rural settings. I have noted the simultaneous existence of:

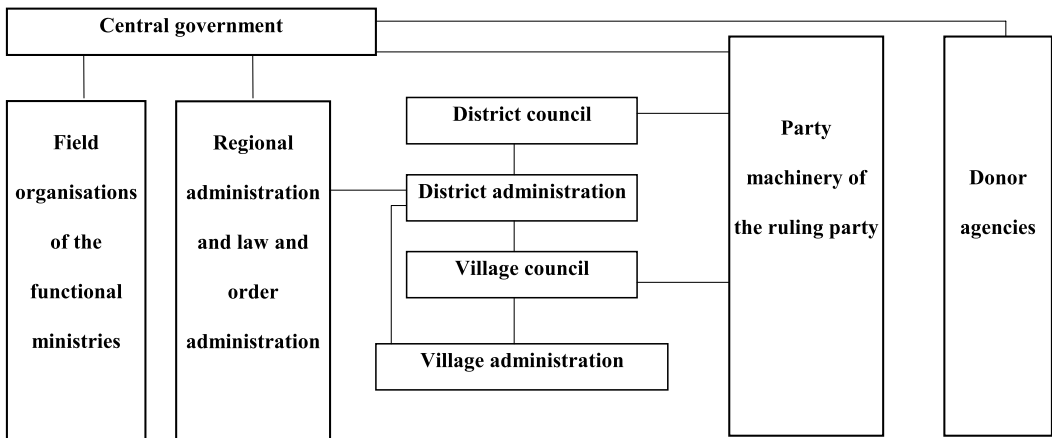
- local government (district and village authorities);
- general central government administration (regional administration with representatives down to division level);

7) 'Current' means here the situation after the local government reform of 1984 and before the reforms implemented in 1999/2000.

- functional ministries with their own administrative system;
- parastatals, marketing boards and cooperatives; party structures.

These are illustrated in Figure 3.1⁸.

Figure 3.1 Local-level administrative structures in Tanzania



In Chapter 4, I discuss in detail the functioning of this organisational structure. I argue that despite attempts to coordinate policies at the local level, the diffuse centralised funding system (each organisation having its own pot and its own donor contacts at the centre) has had a tendency to create a disunited local political space.

The financing of administration

State administration is classically perceived as a central actor in the orchestration of development efforts. In the peripheral area of south-eastern Tanzania, the administrative machinery has great difficulties in establishing a firm grip and penetrating the rural areas. The regional capitals Mtwara and Lindi are both situated on the coast of the Indian Ocean. The road network from these towns to hinterland is limited, and the roads are generally in bad shape. Moreover, administrators have had limited resources for travel from regional and district headquarters to rural villages. Apart from the villagisation of the 1970s and the consequent party/village organisation, and the provision of basic social services, the developmental impact of State administration has been very slight.

8) For comparison, see the figure on the committees of Central and Local Government and Party compiled by Semboja and Therkildsen (1991:5).

The division of financial responsibilities between the central government and the local authorities is as follows:

The central government is responsible for:

- all regional administration (administered by the Prime Minister's Office)⁹;
- very limited regional development projects;
- line ministries with their regional and district level projects;
- the payment of salaries for key officers and technical staff (e.g. teachers) working formally under the local authorities.

The local authorities are directly responsible for:

- the salaries of their auxiliary staff;
- some other recurrent costs;
- very limited district level development projects.

The local authorities receive income from two sources: central government allocations and their own taxes and levies. The central government allocation covers some 80–90 percent of the expenditure of local authorities. This allocation is tied to pre-determined expenditure, items, mainly salaries.

The central government earlier financed some regional and district level development projects from its budget, but during recent years development expenditure (while planned) has not actually materialised. This is evident from Table 3.1, which presents the planned and actual expenditure for the Mtwara region.

Table 3.1 Central government funding for the Mtwara region from 1994/95 to 1997/98 (shs. billion)

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

⁹ The responsibilities were transferred from the PMO to a separate Ministry for Regional Administration and Local Authorities in 1998.

The table shows that the central government allocations administered through the regional budget have been stagnant or decreasing. Moreover, the actual allocation has recently been lower than that of the planned budget. Since recurrent costs are tied expenditure, the deficit in funding hits the development budgets. Over the last few years, the real expenditure on development projects has been close to nil. This reflects the situation at the national level, where the government was able to fund only 10 percent of its total development plans in 1996/97 (Financial Times 4/7/97). Thus development activities are fully dependent upon donor funding, and district-level development projects funded directly by the central government (via regional authority) have almost ceased to exist.

For 1997/98, the regional development budget of Mtwara included plans for the expenditure of some shs. 200 million, with shs. 73 million being reserved for the regional level and roughly shs. 30 million going to each district. By sector, the largest allocations were for roads (shs. 61 million) and rural water supplies (shs. 56 million). However, it is doubtful whether the central government will actually make the money available to implement the plans.

The district councils also have their own independent taxation rights. The forms of taxation are development levy, license fee and crop levies. Since the development levy has been very unpopular (the collection rate for this levy has occasionally been as low as 30 percent) and has generated only a little income, district councils have concentrated on other forms of taxation, especially crop levies.

The poorer districts use practically all their own income for recurrent costs. For example, the 1997/98 development budget of the Mtwara district (with 200,000 inhabitants) contained the following figures:

Table 3.2 The budget of the Mtwara (rural) district for 1997/98 (*)
(shs. million)

<i>Planned income</i>		<i>Planned expenditure</i>	
Planned own income		Recurrent costs	
Taxes	47	Salaries	41
Crop levies	67	Allowance payments	32
Business licenses	13	Other uses	71
Restaurant licenses	1	Dept payments	11
Other fees	11		
Capital income	7	Development costs	
Interests	1	Education	11
Other income	6	Fund for women and youth	15
		Other development	5
Central government allocation for the salaries of central officers	32		
<i>Total</i>	<i>186</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>185</i>

(* Note that the budget excludes the expenditure governed by the central government. This includes teacher's salaries, for example.)

(Source: Halmashauri ya Wilaya Mtwara 1997)

The budget shows that only very limited development activities can be carried out.¹⁰ A further problem is that the leading administrators may transfer even these small resources from development activities to recurrent activities during the budget year. Thus the actual allocation to development projects tends to be much smaller than what was planned. The fund for women and youth is a suitable target for cutting expenditure if this is needed. In all districts, priority is given to the operational requirements (especially mobility) of the top administrators. Below the top level, access to normal operational resources has been minimal; the officers are largely office-bound and rightfully frustrated by the underutilisation of their skills.

There are considerable differences between the districts in their taxation potential and actual income. The allocations reserved for development activities also vary considerably. This is can be clearly seen in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3 District councils' income in the Mtwara region.

	Planned income in 1996, Shs. million	Planned income in 1997, Shs. million.	Development expenditure as a share of total expenditure in 1997, %
Newala	570	223 (*)	17.3
Tandahimba	-	345 (*)	28.2
Masasi	500	588	41.6
Mtwara (rural)	115	186	16.7
Mtwara (urban)	150	504	5.7
<i>Total</i>	<i>1335</i>	<i>1846</i>	

(*) Tandahimba district has been carved out of Newala district, and thus the income of Newala for 1997 is considerably smaller than that for 1996. The income of Newala for 1996 should be compared to the combined income of Newala and Tandahimba for 1997.

(Source: Mkoa ya Mtwara 1997)

The actual amount of taxes collected in these districts has increased from shs. 397m in 1994, shs. 483m in 1995 to as high as shs. 1731m in 1996. The change in Newala district has been highest and is partly attributable to vigorous tax collection and partly to increased cashew nut levies.

It is difficult for districts to make realistic estimates concerning their own income.

10) To give an idea of its small size: the development budget would not have been adequate to buy a bottle of soda for each citizen.

The crop levy is a major income source and varies considerably because of changes in the weather-dependent harvest and fluctuations in market prices. The estimates of the four districts erred by an average of 37 percent in 1994–6. In every second case, the estimated income was less than the actual revenue collected. This shows that there was no systematic tendency to either underestimate or exaggerate potential tax income.

In south-eastern Tanzania, the crop levy on cashew production has recently generated a sizeable income for some districts, particularly for the Newala and Masasi districts. The wealthier districts have recently been able to initiate some of their own development projects. The Newala district managed to collect shs. 920m (by December) in 1996 while Mtwara collected only shs 85m. The difference of own tax income per capita between Newala and Mtwara districts was almost seven-fold.

From the operative perspective, the district administration is a tool for tax collection, an information channel for political and administrative orders and an arena for a number of small projects of its own (road maintenance, youth groups etc.). District administrators have played a part in land allocation and registration and in the utilisation of other natural resources. The role of district councils in service provision is nominally large but is in practice directed from above. District councils have even been bypassed as channels for the payment of salaries to their major employee groups, namely teachers and health workers¹¹.

One should add that the problems of administration in south-eastern Tanzania also have a cultural element. The difficulties in administration are partly caused by the bad reputation of the south-eastern regions as burial ground for the career of a progressively minded administrator. The regions have gained a reputation as places where the living conditions for an administrator are unsatisfactory and from which, if an administrator is not active, the transfer opportunities to well-endowed regions are minimal. This has made administrators working in the more prosperous regions hesitant to accept a transfer to these regions, thus causing a decline in educational standards amongst administrators there. Moreover, the existing staff is less motivated than elsewhere, because of the limited opportunities in the surrounding economy.

3.3 THE HISTORY OF AID INTERVENTIONS

Aid projects never arrive in a virgin landscape. Aid arrives in a historically moulded setting, takes part into the on-going historical episodes and becomes a part of a wider set of relationships. This is hardly evident if one peruses project reports, which tend to create their own, ahistorical time-scale of a project cycle. In this section I try to break free of the project cycle frame and connect aid to history. This perspective provides interesting hypotheses concerning the administrative and social interfaces of aid over

11) *All this will change as the Local Government Reform Programme is implemented in 2000–03. See Chapter 8.*

recent decades. The issues involved here are studied further in the following chapters.

The predominant feature of aid interfaces is the *statist* (i.e. etatist) approach to development. Aid is negotiated with the state authorities and administered in collaboration with the administrative machinery of various state bodies. Since aid is defined as an element of foreign relationships, the sovereignty clauses give the State this commanding position. Aid projects operating in a peripheral region need to acknowledge this fundamental fact and legitimate their activities in the eyes of the central government.

Historical evidence shows that the government of Tanzania has tried to define the administrative counterparts of aid projects and to limit the permissible alternatives to a few, fairly similar, options. This applies equally to the socialist era of Ujamaa policies and the later period of capitalist orientation. Thus development projects, whether conventional or more experimental, have developed within the parameters set by the prevailing government policies. In many substantive and allocative issues, however, the government has been very permissive (Rugumamu 1997:258).

The main donors working in the Mtwara and Lindi regions have been the World Bank, (the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland (until 1996 Finnida), the British aid agency ODA (now Department for International Development, DFID) and Unicef. Each of these organisations has exhibited a degree of continuity in the sectoral orientation of its interventions. In the following historical narrative I pick up their major activities and discuss their solutions for finding a 'counterpart organisation'.

When the Mozambican war began to near its end in the mid 1970s, major aid projects started in the area. Finnida was requested to make major regional plans for the Mtwara and Lindi regions. The planners arrived during the period of villagisation and what they finally produced was a description of the natural resources and the population distribution after the villagisation exercise. They also made analytical notes on the development constraints and proposals on addressing these. The planning exercise took about one year, and the official counterpart for the work was the regional authority (Finnplanco 1975).

These Finnish activities did not lead to further results, but strong Finnish involvement continued with the planning of an extensive water project. This project was organised under the auspices of the Ministry of Water; partly because of low Ministry staffing at the local level and as a result of the implementing agency's approach, the project was carried out without the participation of the local administration. The project continued for two decades and produced major results, though at the expense of sustainability (see e.g. Therkildsen 1988).

During the 1970s, the World Bank started its interventions with regard to cashew nuts, the main cash crop in the area. The Bank loaned money and provided expertise for the construction of large cashew processing plants. The task was perceived as a national level project, and the administrative channel was the central government, in

particular a parastatal called the Cashewnut Authority of Tanzania. For a number of reasons (including inappropriate technology, villagisation, inefficient parastatal organisation and the ecological ones), cashew production slumped just at the time when the processing capacity had been created, and consequently the whole investment was wasted. (Seppälä 1998c)

The ODA launched a regional planning project in 1980, starting from the point where the first Finnish planning exercise had ended. The planning work concentrated on the issue of how to increase agricultural production in the regions (URT 1981b). However, there was a change of government in the UK, and the planning project was terminated, with the exception of some small initiatives in the area of agricultural development. The agricultural projects were specific projects run in collaboration with the regional authorities.

The next round of regional planning was offered to Finnida in 1986. Although local authorities had recently been established, they were still weak, and thus the regional administration was perceived as a natural counterpart. The project was based on the idea of supporting existing regional projects, some of which had been promoted by the regional administration, while some constituted remnants of the previous ODA activities. The economic crisis of the period, together with management problems, resulted in a very slow start to the project. In the early 1990s, Finnida decided to terminate the contract with its implementing agency and chose a new *modus operandi*, this time still using the regional administration as an official counterpart but placing strong emphasis on participatory working methods (Finnagro 1996). In addition, Finnida was involved in road maintenance project in the early 1990s. A second phase of this project was launched in 1999 (see Chapter 8).

After a period of licking its wounds, the World Bank launched a second major effort in the area of cashew nuts during the 1980s. This time the aim was to tackle the ecological problem of fungus disease affecting the cashew trees and lowering production. The zonal agricultural research station, local cooperatives and regional authorities were utilised as channels for administering the project¹². The ODA later started to support agricultural research and collaborated with the World Bank in the cashew improvement project. The ODA terminated this project in 1996 but entered the area again with a local government project and a water project in 1999. The World Bank also returned to the area by selecting it as a pilot area for a massive rural poverty eradication project launched in 1999.

Unicef has also been active for two decades in south-eastern Tanzania. In 1979 it began operations with a basic services programme in the areas of health and water. In 1987 the focus was placed upon children's health, and this orientation has been maintained up to the present day. Unicef's approach has developed throughout the period. In the current phase, Unicef has a locally employed regional coordinator supervising

12) For an analysis of the cashew projects and policies in south-eastern Tanzania, see Seppälä 1998c.

activities, while the local government authorities have committees to run the project. The system of child monitoring extends down to village and *vitongoji* (village section) levels in the project areas. Although the project has not gone forward without problems, it can point to a considerable improvement in child survival rates.

I shall now briefly discuss some features brought to light by this short history of aid projects. Firstly, it can be seen that the large projects have been organised predominantly under the aegis of administrative collaboration with either a central ministry or a regional authority (which is also a part of the central government system). The donor agencies have conducted their activities largely in accordance with their own technical plans, and technical considerations have often been predominant, leaving the issue of administrative sustainability on the sidelines. It has only been during the 1990s that the donor agencies have started to seriously discuss the administrative sustainability of their projects. During the 1990s, the new potential counterparts have been local government authorities and civic organisations.

Secondly, the key organisations have shown long-term commitment to the area studied. The individual projects have, however, been characterised by discontinuity: sudden termination of activities or changes in orientation. The word discontinuity also describes well the 'historical memory' of aid interventions: new projects are planned without proper analysis of past experiments. For the recipient administration and citizens, the impact of shifts in orientation must have been bewildering.

The current list of donor agencies is long and includes different kinds of agencies. In addition to the four donors Finnida, ODA, WB and Unicef with their long-term involvement, a large number of large and small donors have entered the Mtwara and Lindi regions. The list of current and recent donor agencies includes at least the following organisations:

Multi-lateral organisations

- UNDP: credit to women
- EU: urban water supply
- UNICEF: child health monitoring
- WB: cashew production
- WFP: food aid, cattle multiplication centre

Bilateral organisations

- DANIDA (Denmark): vocational training centre
- Finnida/Ministry for Foreign Affairs (Finland): regional planning, wide rural integrated programme, rural road maintenance.
- JICA (Japan): road construction
- ODA/DFID (UK): agricultural programme, urban administration
- GTZ (Germany): health care, volunteer service

Non-governmental organisations

Action Aid (UK): rural poverty alleviation

CODE (Canada): libraries

Concern (Ireland): rural poverty alleviation

Médecins Sans Frontières (international): health care

Swedish Red Cross (Sweden): health care

Save the Children (UK): health care (planned)

Sydsvenska handelskammaren (Sweden): support for Chambers of Commerce

Trade Aid (UK): restoration of a historical monument

Religious organisations

Anglican Church: health care, education

Catholic Church: health care, education, exporting

One can see a bifurcating pattern in aid inputs, with some projects taking a very narrow technical approach while the others adopt a wider multi-sectoral approach. In other words, the donors have decided either to take a narrow slice of the cake and push forward without looking to the side or to get involved with the existing bureaucratic practices (i.e. taking part in state-citizen relationships which includes both domination and service functions) as a third wheel. The bifurcating pattern shows that the peripheral semi-monetarised and subsistence-oriented economy is a hard nut for the donor agencies, conditioned by their logical framework thinking, to understand; they are thus still experimenting with various approaches.

When the overall impact of the aid projects is assessed, it seems modest compared with the amount of allocated resources. After all, the regions still have very low per capita income figures, malnutrition is rampant, and the educational level is very low (cf. Seppälä:1998b). But the overall impact of past donor interventions needs to be placed in perspective. It is easy to follow the conventional project framework and assess the stated aims of the donor interventions in relation to the reached results. However, in many cases the stated aims have been overblown and unrealistic. If the achievements are assessed against the operational resources, the picture is more positive. After all, developing an area as large as the Benelux countries with a population of almost two million people is a huge task. Given the level of poverty and the scarce administrative resources, aid can be expected to make only a limited impact.

Having said this, one may still ask whether the indirect impacts of aid have been more significant than the direct operational impacts. The indirect impacts of aid projects include the funding of the state administration. The aid projects have provided the means (plans, staff and vehicles) for the government to maintain its presence as a controlling body for economic and social development. The donors have provided concrete means enabling parastatals, cooperatives and regional administra-

tion to work. If the donor inputs had not been forthcoming, the administrative development would presumably have taken a different path. According to this argument, aid is a conservative force in the service of statist development.

Hindsight is a privilege of an observer who can use knowledge of later events to evaluate the success of previous undertakings. As an observer, I have the opportunity to abstract to a level above the nitty-gritty of the local politics faced by the man-on-the-spot. Moreover, as an observer I am not directly facing the complex political pressures arising from the international politics of aid—pressures that the people responsible for planning tasks had to face. I have criticised the donor agencies on working almost exclusively with the central government. Can one seriously ask whether the Tanzanian Government should have the right to control the allocation of aid resources? If one perceives a legitimisation problem in many concrete interventions, is this an adequate basis for criticising the right of the central government to act as the main conduit for aid projects? Is there a freedom of choice for a donor agency apart from accepting or rejecting the central government's position? How important is the unspoken but continuously prevalent agenda involving support for the State in order to guarantee peace and stability? These questions do not have any straightforward answers. Nevertheless, they are central questions that the donor agencies need continuously to address when they are making concrete decisions on the allocation of their resources. The following chapters provide concrete examples of situations in which such decisions are made. The chapters demonstrate that the above questions create diverging opinions, constant debates and attempts at conciliation. The triangle of State, donor and citizens is fraught with tensions. I shall not provide any definite answers—merely food for thought so that readers may develop their reflections upon this complex field.

Chapter 4

THE IMPACT OF AID ON LOCAL POLITICS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter we conduct an excursion into the politics of south-eastern Tanzania. The question to be answered is: *How has the existence of a stream of aid projects affected local politics?* Has it led to an increase in democratic practices within the local community? Or has it decreased the importance of democratic institutions and practices? Has it strengthened the capacity of administrators to do their work? Or has it insulated local administrators from the needs of citizens? These are questions of vital concern when we try to understand the long-term impacts of aid projects¹³.

The starting point for the discussion is a *normative* perspective of ‘local democratic political culture’. It is increasingly argued that the existence of democratic practices at local level (referring to a community or an administrative area) is a precondition for sustainable development. Democratic structures bind people together, increase the sense of responsibility and increase the commitment to common affairs. State-led national initiatives aimed at enhancing democracy have their importance, but they appear as empty shells if they are not backed by democratic structures at a local level—the level where basic services are provided, disputes over shared resources are negotiated and safety networks are sought. The recent emphasis on decentralisation, democracy and good governance development work is a reflection of this train of thought.

What I set to do is to use this normative perspective as a yardstick for measuring past development efforts in south-eastern Tanzania. My primary object of analysis is the development of an ‘indigenous’ local democratic political culture. I try to see how democracy has been perceived over the past three decades, what institutional structures have been put in place and what kind of social dynamics they have generated. Having set the scene, I then proceed to analyse the direct and indirect impacts of aid projects on local politics, given the administrative conventions and financial muscle of such projects.

Before one gets into the empirical analysis, it is necessary to take a closer look at two issues. Firstly, what constitutes local democratic political culture? Secondly, how can an aid project influence local politics?

13) A related question concerning the impact of aid on local politics has been raised within the development aid discourse. In this discourse the question is whether the conventional project-type of aid advances the agenda for democratic governance, or whether it is a hindrance to democratisation and the aid resources should instead be concentrated on programme aid. I shall not enter the debate on aid instruments directly in this chapter. See Chapter 8 for comments on this discussion.

What constitutes local political culture

I use single yardsticks to measure whether local political culture is democratic or not. If it is democratic, the various political actors share a common language and a common platform from which to make political statements, and the power distribution is such that different actors need to take each other seriously. If, on the other hand, the political culture is undemocratic, the political actors do not understand each other and lack a shared platform, or the more powerful actors simply do not care about the views of the less powerful ones.

The term local political culture is a heuristic one, covering formal and informal institutions. In any location, there are likely to be a few political institutions with official functions, thus providing a ready-made setting for analysing the local political culture. However, a systematic analysis of political actors, political issues and political forms of expression may show that the official political debate only constitutes a tiny fraction of all debates taking place; in addition, there are more concealed—informal—arenas for making political decisions. If critical voices are pushed too far into informal political arenas, the quality of the political debate decreases considerably.

If we were to measure the level of democracy in a given local political culture, we would analyse the following elements:

- the openness of public institutional forums for political discussion
- the range of themes covered in these institutions
- the efficiency of information dissemination concerning political issues
- the set of legitimate actors allowed to participate in the discussions in a serious manner
- the rule of the majority and the protection of minorities in decision-making.

The local political culture is not a hierarchical and clearly demarcated arena. Political discussions may be distributed over various public forums. Some legitimate actors may be more vocal in some institutions, while other actors may take a leading position in another. We can speak of the existence of a democratic political culture if

- public institutions are capable of accommodating political discussion;
- the variety of themes is wide, covering topics other than just the core technical issues;
- actors other than those directly linked to the institution are also allowed to express their political opinions;
- information concerning the political processes and decisions is distributed widely;
- the decisions taken are respected during the implementation that follows.

The characteristics of the political culture can be studied using these concepts. Yet the formal criteria are empty in the sense that they do not reveal how *polity* is actually constituted, patterned and given meaning. In order to understand this, we need to move to a yet higher level of analysis (but not of abstraction) and ask how various actors conceive political power, how they place it within their own social universe and what hopes they place upon it. Is political culture (or polity) a separate field of activity, owned by some actors, or is it a part of common pasture? Are political decisions made after debate in open (formal or informal) arenas, or is the decision-making taking place behind closed doors? Do the decisions reflect the prevailing local ideas on religious and moral order, or do they merely transmit technical and instrumental values? How does power smell and taste to the powerful and to the others?

Aid project and local politics

Hypothesis: A historical shift in the impact of aid projects

There is no lack of attempts to analyse the political arena in rural Tanzania. The researchers have touched themes like local political culture, democracy in local governments, multi-party politics, the integration of traditional forms of governance into local politics, the role of local social movements in a liberalised economy, the advocacy and brokerage traditions in local patronage politics, the opportunities for resistance within and 'exit' from politics, the existence of civil liberties in rural areas, customary and modern 'law and order', and so forth. All these issues, which are currently floating around in academic Africanist circles, are also being addressed by serious aid practitioners.

In my discussion of the local political culture, I argue that it was under strong central control from the early 1970s until the end of the 1980s. Although various local political and administrative institutions were established, these were shepherded by central government institutions. Central government control was exercised through a multiplicity of organisational structures. The multiplicity of organisations at the central level and the corresponding lines of command to the local level led to a weakening of local politics. Although attempts to deal with this problem were made, the result was still a diffuse local political culture. The economic and political crisis (as well as external pressure) have led to considerable changes during the 1990s. A more open political configuration has emerged, and the political culture has become more tolerant. This means that various actors are increasingly able to present ideas on alternative ways of using resources, thus challenging the status quo. The emergence of political actors outside state circles is a clear indication of this change. The multi-party democracy of the early 1990s has been a part of this change, even if the opposition parties have been rather toothless. The political statements expressed by various non-governmental organisations also constitute a new phenomenon. During

the 1990s the political culture of patronage has slowly started to crumble. The old leaders are also recognising the importance of creating political alliances. This has meant an opportunity to promote initiatives that vitalise location-specific political discourse. However, the level of institutional development and communication systems is still a practical obstacle to the emergence of active local politics.

My first hypothesis relates to the role of aid projects in the formation of local political culture. I argue that one can perceive a historical shift in the orientation of the projects as far as their ways of dealing with local politics are concerned. The first period studied is that of the 1970s and 1980s. I argue that aid projects then had a predominantly instrumental and technocratic relation to local politics. If possible, the projects relied upon upstream connections to parent ministries, thus minimising their dependency on the local political actors. I call this period an era of *enclave aid*. In contrast to this period, the 1990s have witnessed serious attempts to include various local actors in the debate on local politics and governance. The period exhibits a number of socially inclusive ‘governance-oriented’ aid projects. I call it an era of *partnership aid*. During the period of enclave aid, projects supported the status quo, whereas during the period of partnership aid, they have taken advantage of competitive politics.

My second hypothesis concerns the mechanisms of impact that the aid projects have generated. I argue that the major impacts on local politics have been unintended rather than consciously planned. They have mainly resulted in the strengthening of certain administrative institutions and conventions at the expense of more markedly political institutions.

The intentions of donors with regard to the shaping—or even ‘construction’—of the political landscape do not necessarily coincide with their actual influence. Verifying the extent of the influence that donors have been able to exert upon local politics is a matter of empirical analysis.

Empiria: The multiplicity of aid projects in a specific region

The method for analysing the causal linkage is based on a decentred analysis in which the primary object is a geographically specific area during a historically limited time period. In this case, the object is south-eastern Tanzania from the early 1970s to the present day. As shown in the previous chapter, the number of aid projects that have worked in the area has been rather large. From the perspective of a local politician or an administrator, one might perceive a continuous stream of aid projects. Since projects vary in terms of scope and seriousness, it is not possible to put them in the same basket and to claim that they have a similar kind of impact. However, using case-studies concerning representative projects, one may illustrate the kinds of impacts that the projects have generated.

A key element of the decentred analysis is to place the aid interventions in a historical frame. If the historical analysis shows a change in the local political culture, one can ask what has actually caused the change. Is it the aid projects, or do the changes result from indigenous processes? The decentring of aid projects should help us to put adequate emphasis on indigenous processes and to avoid giving unnecessary credit to aid.

4.2 LOCAL POLITICS AND AID DURING THE 1970s AND 1980s: REINFORCING THE ENCLAVES OF POWER

The evolution of local political culture

National politics versus local political culture

A conventional history of Tanzanian political history argues that throughout the 1960s and the 1970s, the central government, enmeshed with the ruling party, increased its own role. The statist orientation received active support from donors. During the process, local administration was brought under the control of the central government, while villagers and businesspeople were eliminated from the power struggle. (Samoff 1979; Mutahaba 1991)

The government, through a well-established party machine, had a high level of control over official politics and constructed a strong national ideology. However, beneath the layer of official politics, unofficial politics went on in various more and less openly acknowledged forms. From the late 1970s onwards, villagers reacted to the statist command policies by withdrawal into the informal sector. The informalisation of the economy further weakened the capacity of the central state to maintain its presence and legitimacy in rural areas. Consequently, the 1980s witnessed the weakening of its administrative grip on local development.

The picture is complicated by the fact that the government was not capable of controlling the activities of individual governmental organs. Rather than being a monolithic unit, the State was thus an arena where various actors and interest groups could express their own agendas and conduct their own business. When one looks at the forms of political decision-making in general, it is fair to say that a sizeable share of the resource distribution and decision-making occurring at levels below the top echelons of power was conducted through separate institutional units—parastatals, cooperatives and ministries—with definite administrative power. The situation might be described as one of diffuse politics, since power existed in distinctive administrative units and was exercised over distinctive resources.

The manner in which political and administrative decisions are made has a definite impact on local political culture. In the one-party era, the political discussion

was largely limited within politico-administrative circles. As Samoff (1979:45) states, "despite Tanzania's very political understanding of the nature of underdevelopment, national policies have almost entirely relied on administrative solutions." The media had limited access to information before the decisions were already made and, at this late stage, they were contacted mainly because political mobilisation campaigns were to be launched. Even the circulation of political rumours was limited because of the poor access to interesting information.

The basic features of centralist politics are the following:

- legitimisation of decision-making at the central level
- the avoidance of open decision-making at the local level
- reliance upon the hierarchical culture of political patronage
- an emphasis upon technical expertise and the division of labour
- a narrow and fixed understanding of the developmental role of each institution
- the dispersal of power into separate administrative units.

At the level of development theory, centralist politics can be seen as a direct consequence of the emphasis on technocratic specialisation and the division of labour between institutions. The specialisation agenda is an inherent part of the modernisation ideology. Modernisation was a matter of planned change—a positive agenda where each and everybody was expected to do his or her own part. The question to be asked is what the place reserved for politics was.

Local administration and local politics

The term 'local government' refers to a body which has definite independent decision-making power and the economic means to make use of this power. In the history of Tanzania, the term local government in this sense can be used only for certain periods, and even during these periods the actual independence of local governments has been only partial. Although local governments (called district councils in rural areas and municipalities in urban areas) have existed as separate bodies with elected leaders until 1972 and again after 1984, their independence has been severely curtailed during both periods. The differences between the three historical periods is better understood by means of an empirical analysis of the political structures and economic resources during each period than through a legalistic interpretation.

The local governments that existed until 1972 had serious limitations in their operational capacity. They had staff with inadequate training, and their wide responsibilities were not matched by corresponding sources of revenue. Thus the locally elected councillors had very little to decide upon. The removal of powers was so systematic that it led to the gradual abolition of the council as an independent institution. As Mutahaba (1991:82) says, "for all practical purposes (...) local autonomy in

the District Councils died in 1969". We can generalise and say that the formal criteria for a local political forum existed but that, because of capacity constraints, the local political debate was very limited.

The reform of 1972 removed the independent local governments from the organisational landscape. Some observers have interpreted this as a death blow to the local political discussion. The government replaced the local councils with a hierarchy of party representatives, however. The hierarchy functioned from village level through district to regional level. The village party representatives were expected to come forward with local plans and present them to the development committee at district level. Thus the annual planning cycle provided an opportunity to compare various local initiatives and discuss local priorities. According to Mutahaba (1993:59), the development committees also screened the proposals of technical agencies before they were forwarded to the centre. This view suggests that a local political forum did exist and that many political actors had access to this forum.

The problems of the 'integrated development organisation' (1972–84) were both political and technical. The political problem had its roots in the composition of District Development Councils. The party-elected representatives had a limited status compared to that of the administrators, particularly the District Development Directors¹⁴. The latter were given directives from above, and their loyalties lay in that direction. Thus they gave priority to developmental agendas that had high priority at the rational level. The related technical problem was the fact that the District Development Council (and its District Development and Planning Committee) had no control over revenue and thus no responsibility over the use of their 'own' resources. Consequently, the lower levels of administration (i.e. villages and districts) tended to make plans involving unrealistic budgets. This gave the centre an opportunity to chop proposals according to its own wishes and turned the whole planning cycle into a parody of its intended structure.

In south-eastern Tanzania, the Mozambican war and the vigorous policy of villagisation cast a shadow over local politics during the 1970s. The two factors meant a considerable practical and financial burden, limiting the capacities of people to engage in district-wide politics. Instead, development turned in the direction of economic self-sufficiency and political parochialism.

The reform of 1984 brought locally elected and legally independent councils back into the institutional landscape. This reform had limited impacts, for a variety of reasons. Firstly, the councils were granted only limited taxation rights and were thus kept financially dependent on central government allocations. Secondly, the various ministries struggled to retain control over their technical staff and financial allocations. Thus the power of local governments was conditioned by the decisions made

14) As Hyden (1983:93) comments, "people were often consulted by government and party officials, but the decisions about priorities and the design of programmes remained the prerogative of the officials".

in the ministries. Thirdly, the tier of regional administration was preserved, and the regional administration was given discretionary powers over the local governments. In summary, the reform was curtailed on many fronts. This naturally had an impact on the development of local political discussion. Although the formally independent forum was established, the level of decision-making power remained rather limited.

I would again like to emphasise the importance of the *multiplicity* of public institutions as a major explanation for the limited interest in generating political debate at district councils. Throughout the 1970s and the 1980s, the state operated at the local level through local authorities, central line administration, service ministries, parastatals and cooperatives. Each of the state organs had its own sources of revenue, its own administrative set-up and its specific development projects. Although they may have been represented on (regional and district level) development committee meetings and although they were governed by the same general policies, each organisation also maintained its institutionalised right to guard its own resources and to use them as it saw fit. The environment was fairly hostile to the granting of any uniting role to local authorities (when they existed)—they were not seen as strong and representative enough to coordinate and direct resource flows at the local level. Local authority relied on the party structures, but ‘party supremacy’ was not strong enough to bring the various locally represented administrative organs—each with their own strong links to their respective headquarters—onto a common political platform where shared activities and the use of resources could be rationally decided upon¹⁵. Instead, each organisation had its own strong leaders, and these leaders guarded their own resources, backed by their respective ministries. The problem of a diffuse local political culture was partly created by the prevalent management culture, which was very much top-heavy and which allowed the sectoral leaders to control their own resources. The decisions of these leaders could always be backed up by suitable party rhetoric and technical rules, thus insulating the sectoral initiatives from overall development prioritisation.

In retrospect, regardless of major administrative changes, the overall picture of the local political culture of the 1970s and 1980s exhibits clear continuities. Many changes were made towards a participatory political culture. But regardless of these changes, central interventionist administration created inertia at the local level. Under the prevailing circumstances, the district level could not develop into an arena for serious political activism.

In order to study the political culture of the period, I have chosen three case-studies. These illuminate the way in which political and administrative decision-making was conducted from the early 1970s to the late 1980s. The case-studies are selected so that they represent the whole spectrum of political institutions and actors:

15) Such a coordinating function was prescribed for the Prime Minister’s Office and the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Development Planning at the central level. However, they did not have the capacity to coordinate financial allocations to various state institutions, especially when it came to activities at a local level.

- official politics: the role of district councillors
- civil society: religious organisations and ethnic affiliations
- the private sector: the neglected actor.

In section 4.3 I shall analyse a corresponding set of three case-studies for the more recent period.

The role of elected district councillors

Local government (before 1972 and after 1984) made provision for elected councils. In south-eastern Tanzania, the councillors tended to be people with wisdom accumulated as a result of age and local experience rather than persons with professional expertise. The district councillors, representing one ward each, had very little to discuss, as the administrative and political guidelines coming from above hindered their decision-making power. Especially in the case of the major budget items of health and education, the central government earmarked the money allocations for specific purposes. Although district councillors formally had a strong position as the representatives of the ruling party, in practice their influence was limited. Many commentators call them rubber-stamps at the end of a decision-making process. There were, however, usually a few members of every council who, because they were experienced retired administrators, maintained a high profile as councillors. One should also note that some of the politicians originating from south-eastern Tanzania gained stature in national political arenas.

Much of the central vs. local government interface was mediated through the hierarchy of the party committees. The ruling political party was given 'supremacy', and the party representatives were neatly inside the administrative structure. Party nominations were made from above, creating a patron-client relationship in which a subservient politician was allocated some (mainly negative—i.e. inhibiting and controlling) power over his area. This pattern seriously undermined the role remaining for a district councillor. For a normal villager, district council politics were largely non-existent. Most decisions were made in the closed circles within the administration and treated largely *as if* decision-making was a simple administrative matter. The villagers were subjected to politics through campaigns that were launched repeatedly for various reasons. A good example is the campaign to increase food security through demands that all households should cultivate one acre of cassava. In the south-eastern regions, this campaign was realistic in the sense that most households had access to land which was suitable for cassava. However, the method of running politics through top-down campaigns was not very favourably received.

The disillusionment with politicians at the local level was also increasing, and the reasons for this were obvious. Wembah-Rashid (1983:117–162) has studied the

State-villager relationship during the villagisation campaigns in the 1970s. He maintains that the administration and the party placed much emphasis on political education and had some success in the initial years. However, when locally handled and largely voluntary resettlement was followed by a compulsory and standardised resettlement scheme which divided and destroyed existing resources fairly arbitrarily, political education lost its impetus. Wembah-Rashid paints a picture in which, by 1981, the villagers had formed a clear view on how public services could be upgraded but had a negative opinion about the capacity of the local leaders to attract state resources and get improvements organised.

Civil society: Limited role for religious organisations and ethnic affiliations

Civic organisations had very limited role to play in local politics from the end of the 1960s to the end of the 1980s. Many organisational forms were banned as immoral or against the public interest. The government, on the other hand, created a number of political and administrative organs which provided channels for anyone interested in public affairs. These included village councils with their committees, village projects and trading corporations, cooperatives and party branches. All these organisations, however, had a strong government stamp on them.

Religious bodies constituted an exception outside the government sphere. In south-eastern Tanzania, the population was divided into Muslims (largely dominating coastal areas), Christians (in the vicinity of mission stations) and adherents of traditional religions. The Muslims were represented by the Bakwata organisation, which maintained close links with the ruling party. The main activities of the Muslims were associated with religious matters. Muslim leaders were active in village politics, and religion was a factor in other loyalties as well. Among Christian churches, governed by missionaries, activities were more clearly directed towards development. Catholics and Anglicans ran schools, hospitals and dispensaries and engaged in various other projects. Father Ildefonce was known to run a whole variety of businesses in Mtwara town and the surrounding regions.

John Wembah-Rashid (1983) has made a detailed study of village politics in Nakarara village near Newala town. He shows how religion and clan affiliations were the two dominant forms of self-identification. These factors played key roles in the selection of a neighbourhood when people were settled in new villages, first voluntarily and later under pressure. In the village studied, the residential areas were divided into predominantly Muslim and Christian quarters. The Moslems were active in the party and the people's militia, and this had definite political implications.

Noteworthy is the fact that the first group and the party and peoples' militia membership in Nakarara composed of Moslems. The Christian population was too snobbish to stand the regimentalisation that accompanied this group, especially TANU Youth League and the Peoples' Militia, because of the nature of their early activities, were equated to the position of the colonial tarishi (a personal police of a colonial officer). And the saying goes that the colonial tarishi was better than these, as the former was paid, while TANU business was voluntary and too demanding. (...) The point being made here is that the apathetic response of the predominantly kin-oriented Christian group to participate in the new national secular political leadership brought a negative effect to them. This choice allowed the Moslems to take advantage and come to the leadership ranks. (...) By looking at the bases from which the new leadership operated, it is obvious that the national political ideology was being hijacked to satisfy personal or group, sectional or ethnic interests. Or expressed differently, national politics could only be accepted within the framework of local interests, which in the village meant personal or established group—although this phenomenon is a common feature in political practice. (Wembah-Rashid 1983:173–174)

Within the two regions, the impact of the religions varied from one place to another, and thus the analysis cannot be generalised as representing an overall pattern (cf. Wembah-Rashid 1998). Similarly, the degree of attachment to clan groups varied considerably. In general, the movement of people because of rotational labour migration, shifting cultivation, land pressures and other factors slowly caused a decrease in the social cohesiveness of residential groups. The social and cultural divisions still constituted fertile soil for politically active persons aiming to find a local clientele.

In this context it is worth pointing out that if the village politicians merely used the party for their own purposes, the central party leaders were just as happy with the limited interests expressed by village politicians. The forms of civic organisation mentioned fell neatly into the slot of localised village interests. They were not given a platform or a voice with which to discuss district or regional development issues. In this way, political activism was confined to conveniently parochial venues and to limited topics.

The private sector: The neglected actor

During the era of Ujamaa policies, the government called the private sector actors racketeers and directed foreign aid either to the parastatal corporations or to groups of small-scale artisans. Vague attempts to include the private sector as a beneficiary of aid were made for several decades, but ideological constraints (both in Tanzania and in the donor countries) proved to be biased against the genuine implementation of any such initiative.

Private sector ventures outside agriculture can be broadly divided into industries,

trading and other services. After nationalising the major industries, the government moved towards control over smaller private sector ventures. The establishment of District Development Corporations (DDCs) was a convenient means to run the small projects. It allowed for direct politico-administrative control over activities while leaving the operational level with some independence. Alongside the DDCs, the cooperative unions and the national companies had some operations (processing natural resources and agricultural output) in the regions. If one peruses the regional five-year plans, one can easily see that only these organisations are given official recognition.

During the period studied, the most systematic initiative aimed at strengthening the private sector was the operations of the Small Industries Development Organisation (SIDO), which also established regional offices in Mtwara and Lindi towns. The offices processed loans, provided some consultancy services and had a small industrial centre, but all these activities started to dwindle in the 1980s when external funding dried up. The leaders of the SIDO regional office in Lindi maintained that the lack of industrial development in south-eastern Tanzania was due to low local purchasing power, relatively low educational levels and the problems of transportation (Mkumbo and Kiyenze 1993). It is, however, clear that there was extensive small-scale artisan-type production in the region but that this was carried out in smaller enterprises than those with which the SIDO was accustomed to cooperating. The regions were home to a lively network of microenterprises. Through such enterprises, the villagers managed to develop a complex system of local production and marketing which covered the two (externally rather isolated) regions and provided most of the daily necessities (Seppälä 1998d).

Aid projects and local politics

Project approaches and developmental agendas

How did the aid projects shape the local political culture? What kind of political intentions and motivations guided their project approaches? Did these intentions materialise in local politics? What kind of unintended consequences did the aid projects have for the local political culture?

In the following I claim that for donors the political regime of centralised politics was fairly suitable. They tended to perceive their developmental input as a technical matter within a specific sector. Although they worked at a local level, they had agreed upon their task with the relevant ministries. Thus ministries such as Agriculture, Water Development and the Prime Minister's Office had their own projects, which by-passed the local government authorities in their operations. The donors organised their activities through sectorally defined *enclave aid*.

I also claim that many of the political implications of enclave aid were due to unintended consequences rather than to an intentional political agenda. The developmental intentions of the donor organisations were spelled out in a technical manner. Although the donors had equality-oriented policy statements affirming that it was beneficial to work with smallholders, women and youths, the decision to work in the poor south-eastern regions was often seen as adequate proof of a poverty orientation. Since most of the people in the area are poor, further targeting would be just fiddling with nuances, so the argument went.

Local partners

When we look at the aid projects of this period, we can easily see that the projects were planned in collaboration with the representatives of the central administration. For a donor organisation, it was important to be collaborating with a central ministry which preferably was situated high in the ranking order of the ministries. This was the only guarantee of financial support over the project cycle.

Since the donors preferred to identify a heavy-weight partner high in the administrative hierarchy (preferably a well-funded ministry), local governments held little attraction for them. The local governments (when they existed as a separate entity) were not consulted during the planning process. They were also by-passed in the allocation of development expenditure. Consequently, the funding of development was dispersed over line ministries, and the development expenditure of the local governments remained at a low level. This tendency naturally strengthened the orientation of district councillors towards petty parochial issues.

The aid projects had very little interest in civil society actors. The existing civic organisations were either small informal social groups (i.e. socially constituted multi-purpose entities such as burial groups or location-based circumcision groups) or parts of the religious or party hierarchies. None of them had any appeal to aid organisations as a partner institution.

The private sector was also placed completely outside the range of potential institutional partners. The main integrated development/planning projects in the 1970s and the 1980s reflected the mistrust of private sector actors. The Finnish regional plans took hardly any notice at all of the private sector (Finnplanco 1975:389–391). The British RIDEP was very supportive of private small-holders but did not perceive the development of private manufacturing or services as essential in any serious way. Instead, it ended up listing cautious remarks for any proposal tending in this direction (URT 1981c:140–142). The first RIPS plan which followed designated youths as one major group of beneficiaries and accordingly proposed some initiatives for the support of small-scale non-agricultural producers. However, the main thrust was directed towards cooperatives and formal groups as mediums for entrepreneurship.

The normal informal sector entrepreneur was still seen as too anarchic a partner (Ulkoasianministeriö 1986).

In order to highlight the choice of partner institutions made by aid projects, three case-studies are presented. They are as follows:

- minding its own business: the Finnish water project
- intervention in big business: support to cashew processing
- natural resources utilisation: fishing sector projects.

The impact of donor interventions are pointed out in all the case-studies. After case-studies, the overall impact is discussed.

1. Minding its own business: The Finnish water project

Finnish involvement in the water sector started with a feasibility study in 1972 and continued for more than two decades. During this period substantial improvement in the access to water was achieved in the south-eastern regions. The project started with an exceptionally careful planning exercise conducted under the rubric of "water master plan". The planning was carried out by a Finnish consultancy company, and the implementation phase that followed was started in 1978 using a very technical and production-oriented approach. It was not before the final stages of the project, and after considerable criticism, that some participatory elements were added to the project management and the village-level encounter.

The water project has been subjected to several studies (Wilander-Prajogo 1986; von Troil 1986; Sitari 1986; Therkildsen 1988; Porvali et al. 1995). The studies give a fairly similar view concerning the management strategy of the project. In this brief discussion I summarise the key elements which led to the creation of an independent project administration outside the Tanzanian administrative system.

Firstly, particular 'special circumstances' directed the choice of management approach: in the late 1970s and early 1980s, economic hardship was crippling the whole society. It became difficult to buy even daily necessities through official channels. In this situation, the government's strategic choice was to allow the donor agency to take full control over the project (Porvali et al. 1995:276). Tanzania was keen to 'run' towards development, and for the sake of efficiency the donor agencies were given freedom to go ahead with no strings attached.

Secondly, this peripheral region had very few qualified engineers and technicians in the government service, and thus the cooperation would otherwise have been unbalanced in professional terms (von Troil 1986; Finnwater 1986:28). The project could have started to operate slowly, first enhancing administrative and technical capacity and only later getting involved with extensive implementation. However,

the project team was geared towards quick results, and the slow route was not chosen. At this time, double administration was a widely used system for managing aid projects, and it ensured secure and high profits for the consulting company.

The water project was classified as a 'national project' and placed administratively directly under the Ministry of Water, Energy and Minerals (Maji). This arrangement provided necessary recognition in the capital but left cooperative arrangements on the spot at a nominal level. The regional water engineer was an employee of Maji, but he was sidelined from the project organisation. The system of double administration quickly became institutionalised: the Finnish water project established its own offices, and whatever consultation there was between the parties was organised for the sake of sharing information rather than for decision-making purposes. (Porvali 1995:277)

Changing the focus of encounter analysis from office to village, we inevitably arrive at similar observations. The water project identified water sources, made technological decisions and selected sites for water outlets on its own. While consideration was given to the fair and equal distribution of water sources, practically no steps were taken during the initial years to consult villagers and involve them in the operation of water points. When these steps were taken, they were taken slowly and rather mechanistically. The ownership of the water outlets was unclear for the villagers, who thus did not put enough effort into their maintenance.

What would have been needed, given the administrative and economic constraints, in order to break away from the easy option of double administration and to advocate local political coordination during this period? Certainly steps would have been needed on the Tanzanian side. The Tanzanian administrative system did not support the decentralisation of decision-making to local agencies. Cooperation with the technical and well-funded Maji and the weak ministry in charge of community development was lacking. The general administration at district and lower levels was politically controlled and weak compared to the functional ministries. However, government salaries were still relatively good during the 1970s, and the private sector (if donor agencies are not included in this category) did not compete for government officers. Unicef, working on a more modest scale, was better able to coordinate its activities with those of the regional water engineer's office. It would have been fairly easy to train people in the skills needed for siting wells and installing equipment where such skills did not already exist. With a concentration of effort on management and training issues, the project might have been able to work in much closer cooperation with local administration and the citizens. This would have necessitated some courageous political choices in project strategy.

2. Controlling economic resources: The Cashew Authority of Tanzania and the World Bank

Southern Tanzania has one major cash crop: cashew nuts. This commodity has been produced in substantial amounts since the 1950s. Production increased continuously until the 1970s, when it suddenly slumped, to recover only partially in the 1990s. The slump in production can be mostly explained by poor producer prices, the vilagisation programme and, thirdly, the unreliable payment system for producers. While the first and third explanations are associated with the relatively inefficient cashew marketing system, run by a parastatal called the Cashew Authority of Tanzania (CATA), the second explanation is connected to national politics. None of these factors were inherent in the local politics. All of them originated from wider political decisions. (Ellis 1980; see also Seppälä 1998.)

Donor involvement in the shaping of cashew nut production was relatively minor during this period, but involvement in processing was substantial. The World Bank provided credit for the construction of eight factories, and the Bank of Sicily a loan for two more factories. The establishment of these ten factories resulted in an increase in processing capacity of 92,500 tons of raw nuts during the second half of the 1970s, giving a total processing capacity of 113,000 tons. This was far above the actual production after the slump at the end of the 1970s. (Ellis 1980:3; Jaffee 1994:14–16.)

The intentions behind the creation of the processing capacity were positive: cashews had previously been exported unprocessed; the construction of processing plants was aimed at channelling a larger portion of added value into the local production cycle and thus increasing local employment. But the manner in which decisions upon the matter were made paid very limited attention to the actual conditions under which the local people were living. Just prior to the construction of the factories, farmers had been getting very low prices for the crops that they sold. Although international prices increased substantially between 1977 and 1981, the farmers did not benefit from the increase. Clearly, the intervention in cashew processing was conducted without much regard for the concerns of the local inhabitants.

In making this judgement, we enjoy the benefit of hindsight. People making investment decisions in 1974 did not have control over the whole production chain. However, if the planning of processing capacity had been conducted in conjunction with local bodies on which farmers were represented, it would have been easy to recognise the alarming price trends and to react with corrective measures. Certainly, when the second investment decision was made in 1978, there should have already been information at the local level on the plight of the farmers. But investment decisions were made as a concern of the central government and were motivated by the national need to generate foreign exchange. The World Bank's approach was dictated by narrow project thinking which forced the officials to push through extensive programme loans hastily and without major local-level dialogue.

The example shows that the local resources were administered according to central level decisions. Although CATA had its headquarters in Mtwara, it was implementing its policies in conjunction with institutions primarily concerned with non-local developmental impacts. The manner of decision-making was technocratic, thus reflecting the enclave model of local aid politics.

3. Utilising natural resources: Fishing made efficient

South-eastern Tanzania has a long Indian Ocean coastline and a number of inland lakes and rivers. In this example I discuss the attempt made towards support for fishing. A common element in the fishing projects was the emphasis upon the efficiency of fishing. Little or no regard was placed upon the social conditions of fishermen.

The justification for the fishing projects was couched in the terms of the natural scientist. An increase in the protein content of the local diet was a major explanation given for donors' attempts to support fishing in the regions. Since the area is to a large extent infested by the tsetse-fly, the keeping of cattle is limited, and fish has traditionally been a major source of protein¹⁶.

The reference to an incorrect diet is an arrogant top-down justification because it relies upon 'scientific' arguments completely unconnected with the local perception of the problems of food production and consumption. The justification, built upon an idea of an incorrect diet, is a western idea which highlights the distinction between the outsiders (eating proper food in their home areas) and the local people (with the 'wrong' dietary habits).

During the 1970s and early 1980s, the main approach to support for fishing was the modernisation of the branch. The donor-funded (and largely donor-written) five-year plans are the clearest proof of this orientation. The plan for 1975/6–1979/80 indicated that the fish catches could best be increased by developing offshore fishing. The local fishermen were working with traditional equipment and had no capacity to venture out to offshore sites. Thus modern boats with engines and new types of nets would be required. In addition, the traditional drying of fish was regarded as an inadequate preservation technique, and the development of modern ice-making facilities was envisaged as an additional solution. The proposed solutions were similar to those already implemented by the government through the establishment and equipping of the Lindi Regional Fishing Company, though on a modest scale. (Finnplanco 1975:159–168.)

The British ODA took over the task of regional planning after the Finns. The ODA and the regional authorities still argued that the modernisation of the fishing

16) At the same time, a similar kind of reference to a low protein diet was made the regional party authority when it ordered that all villages should, regardless of the tsetse fly, acquire cattle to be managed on a communal basis (Hasset 1985:29).

sector constituted the way ahead. The fishing project was redesigned as a national level project. Again, major plans were prepared for providing vehicles for administrators, equipment for large-scale offshore fishing and ice-making facilities and a lorry for the marketing of fresh fish (URT 1981c:127–133 and 213–216). These ideas proved difficult to implement. All the previous attempts had petered out because foreign exchange constraints had made an import-based solution non-viable. Happily or not, the British withdrew from the region, and not much happened along the suggested lines. The local administration had witnessed a second round of donor-led planning leading to big words and small results.

In the plans it is noticeable that fishing was perceived as a sector on its own merits. Some vague ideas were presented on the possibility of privatising the proposed marketing facilities. In all other situations, government fisheries officers were expected to do the development work and control the sector. The proposal to make offshore fishing a national project indicates the dominance of a national perspective in efficient resource utilisation. While this is perfectly rational as far as government (and perhaps also the efficient use of donor expertise) is concerned, the solution underlines the fact that fishing was first and foremost perceived as a technical problem. Relations between fishermen and the Ujamaa fishing communities or between fishermen and fisheries officers was not perceived as problematic.

With the support of the ODA Don Hassett, a British anthropologist, conducted a piece of research on local fisheries in Kilwa district (Hassett 1983). The research included a detailed inventory of local fishing methods and proposed the upgrading of traditional fishing through better access to fishing gear. This proposal was not followed.

It is striking that all the plans mention the problem of dynamite fishing (destroying the coastal fishing areas) that had existed since the end of the 1960s (Finnplanco 1975:175; Hassett 1983:20–21; URT 1981c:129). The plans mention the government campaigns against this destructive fishing method. However, there is no analysis of how to curb the practice. We shall return to this topic in Section 4.3.

Discussion: Aid projects as political actors

The happy marriage of central government and donor agencies was the stepping stone from which the donors ventured out to organise the local level projects. The aid projects were planned and accepted by these two actors, and even the implementing agency on the recipient side was commonly the local branch of the central ministry. In this way, the local political discussion was largely avoided.

Since aid projects were perceived primarily as technical interventions within a given sector, the developmental objectives could be spelled out clearly as definite production targets. Very limited analysis was reserved for ways of mobilising the inhabitants to support a project. It was expected that the local officers could manage

this part of the work. No conflict of interests was publicly admitted to exist between the administration and the primarily rural population.

The project designs tended to support the prevailing political structure. Here it is more important to note what the projects excluded than what they included. The projects were targeted towards aims which were seen as important in helping the majority of citizens. Considerable attention was paid to identifying the most efficient ways of improving living conditions in rural areas. However, all the active and central roles were reserved for aid experts and key administrators. The other actors were expected either to passively follow the guidelines or reactively take up new opportunities. In this way, the top-down administrative culture was reproduced and strengthened.

The marginal political actors did not simply withdraw from politics. Instead, one may identify a kind of instrumental attitude that they developed towards the central political actors. The marginal actors used the existing resources for their own purposes, to maintain their power positions in more localised settings and to engage in parochial disputes. This instrumental attitude has a double effect: in formal terms, the marginal actors seem to take part in the political machinery, but in substantive terms they are reproducing their own symbolic universe. From the perspective of central power holders, this instrumentalism was convenient in the sense that it allowed them to manage their own power enclaves without disturbance. The only problem arising from this subtle form of resistance channelled into instrumentalism was that the centrally planned projects did not manage to make a developmental impact on the spot.

Table 4.1 summarises the politico-administrative impacts of the aid projects during the period studied. The table shows that while the planned impact are easily visible, the unplanned impacts have substantial importance in the political field.

Table 4.1 The impact of the enclave orientation on local politics

	<i>Direct impacts</i>	<i>Indirect impacts</i>
<i>Planned impacts</i>	<p>Administrators are trained, administration provided with tools and transport</p> <p>The amount of resources to be controlled by public institutions increases</p>	<p>The relative weight of the administrative unit supported increases</p> <p>Administrators are subjected to performance-oriented administrative culture</p>
<i>Unplanned impacts</i>	<p>The external inputs create a bias towards the sectoral distribution of resources</p> <p>Income differences between administrators increase</p>	<p>The relative political power of a local council decreases</p> <p>The need for administrators to legitimise decisions locally decreases</p>

4.3 LOCAL POLITICS AND AID DURING THE 1990s: SEEKING PARTNERSHIP ARRANGMENTS

Local political culture

A democratic political culture is composed of a platform for presenting political statements and of political actors who are able to address each other on that platform. A local democratic political culture exists when local actors have an idea about the important political decisions to be made and which affect their lives, and when they have a say on these matters. In this section I ask whether a democratic political culture is emerging in south-eastern Tanzania.

I argue that we can identify a definite increase in *political entrepreneurship* in south-eastern Tanzania during the 1990s. This means that new actors have entered the political debates, and the old actors have adopted a more open view of political debates. The old and new actors are also actively seeking new coalitions and making

partnership arrangements on an *ad hoc* basis. These initiatives are slowly breaking the old 'culture of silence', in which decisions were made behind the closed doors by the few power holders.

I have identified four major explanations for the increased political activism. The first is the conscious strategy of the donor agencies to seek local partners, both for the sake of increasing the sustainability of their own operations and in the interests of strengthening local politics. The second explanation is the economic liberalisation which has radically reshaped relations between the State and the civil society. The third explanation is the accompanying emergence of multi-party politics which, although having limited importance in district councils, has still had important effects on people's perception of politics. The fourth and final explanation is the surge of surplus money originating from steadily increasing cashew nut sales which has inspired various actors to create strategies to claim their slice of the cake.

While the local political scene has changed fundamentally, the old politico-administrative conventions are deeply embedded in the state structures and in the expectations of the citizens. Therefore one needs to be cautious when analysing the depth of the change. Beside the impressive changes, one can also detect more conservative ways of making politics—this is also exemplified in the case-studies.

With this introductory caveat, I venture to describe the local political culture of the 1990s. I highlight the following features of local politics:

- various local actors are making moves towards ad-hoc coalitions for the promotion of new project ideas;
- the marginal but potentially influential actors such as councillors are seeking ways to influence political discussion;
- the media and rumours are used as tools for expanding political discussion;
- the donor agencies are actively seeking new forms of partnerships.

These claims need to be substantiated in the analysis that follows. If they can be substantiated, the question is still whether these changes are so fundamental that they reach down the level of individual citizens and increase the legitimacy of the political culture. One can also ask whether the increased integrity of the local political culture has led to the furtherance of democracy.

Local politics: New actors—and old actors in new hats

In the 1990s, the district-wide local political scene in south-eastern Tanzania has had the following actors:

- local Members of Parliament, some of them occupying important positions in the government; the President also originates from the area
- regional administration, having some projects of its own and a supervising role with regard to the most of the significant developmental issues in the area
- district administration, mainly providing (with central government funding) social services but also having some projects of its own
- district councillors, each representing a ward (consisting of 3–5 villages) and officially providing a link between village and district, although with very limited efficiency and thrust
- the ruling party CCM, with an established network from regional level down to village level
- the opposition parties (especially NCCR-Mageuzi, Chadema and CUF), with established offices in major towns but lacking representation in district and village politics
- District Development Funds, originally established by the district councils as their semi-independent arms to operate in a field officially closed to them
- Cashew Authority of Tanzania, having earlier had substantial operations in the field of cashew marketing and processing but currently more active in policy advocacy and supervision
- cooperatives, now reorganised but crippled by a lack of funds
- donor agencies, divided officially into multilateral, bilateral and NGO donors but actually having many similarities in their modes of operation
- businessmen, although divided into people of Tanzanian and Asian origin, having a mouthpiece in Chambers of Commerce and with direct links to administration
- churches and missionary stations which have stayed in the political discussion because they command the art of keeping a low official profile but getting intimately involved in local productive and service provision schemes
- local NGOs, lacking paying membership and consequently crippled by donor dependency
- traditional political authorities, marginalised for a long time but currently being pushed forward into the political field, especially in Masasi district.

For all the actors, the general academic disclaimer to the effect that ‘none of the actors mentioned are a homogeneous group’ holds. Rather, some individuals have made coalitions across the lines, so that, for example, some politicians have joined hands with particular officers and businessmen for specific purposes. Indeed, the art of making coalitions across the official role boundaries is a characteristic that deserves to be mentioned.

How has the political debate changed the political actors? Amongst the actors named, only NGOs and opposition parties have emerged during the 1990s; all the others have long-established roles in local politics. However, all these other actors have changed their own profiles or have been pushed towards new roles during this decade.

The same thing can be put in slightly different words. During the era of centralist politics, it was possible to identify a set of political roles: those of the decision-makers, the controllers, the brokers/middlemen, the technical support staff, the innovators and the innocent targets. The political roles were tied to definite agencies. Thus businessmen were, for example, only allowed to work as a kind of technical support staff or were sometimes given the role of middleman. In the era of coalition politics, these distinctions have become blurred. One can identify administrators who obviously perceive themselves as brokers, villagers who appear as innovators and businessmen who aspire to the role of decision-maker. Although such personal features were there earlier, they have only recently acquired a positive status—as something that can be legitimately introduced into public arenas.

At the same time one should emphasise the importance of ‘infrastructure’ for the political culture. Simple technical matters such as publishing announcements and disseminating information are extremely difficult in south-eastern Tanzania. The district offices commonly have only one or two computers and very poor copying facilities. Local printing houses exist within the region, but the use of their facilities requires budgeting a long time in advance. Similarly, the telephone connections and the road links within districts are usually very poor. Telephones exist primarily in the district centres, and not even in all of these. The road networks are designed to facilitate the marketing of agricultural produce rather than administrative communication. A newly established Tandahimba district is perhaps the extreme case in that a major part of the area is not accessible except by means of a circuitous route through Newala district.

All these infrastructure problems are all the more formidable because of financial constraints. Efficient and frequent communication requires a lot of resources. In a primarily ‘oral’ culture, the most cost-efficient means of communication may turn out to be less effective. The strengthening of democracy is simply a costly exercise. This is a practical constraint for the development of a democratic local political culture.

In the following case-studies I study the kinds of political initiatives that can be identified in the area. The case-studies cover a set of issues similar to those that were dealt in Section 4.2. Thus a historical comparison can be made between the two periods. The four case-studies describe the ways in which district councillors, semi-public organisations, civic organisations and entrepreneurs are taking part in politics. The first case-study shows that the district councillors have still fairly limited means of influencing decision-making. The second case-study describes interesting attempts to form semi-public coalitions of local organisations to deal with the problems of service provision. The third case-study delineates the attempts of a local NGO to carve itself out a convenient role. The fourth case-study describes the attempts of entrepreneurs to organise and play a visible role in politics.

In brief, the four case-studies deal with the following issues:

1. Official politics: the role of district councillors
2. Semi-public politics: reviving a rural water scheme
3. Civil society: the emerging NGOs
4. The private sector: an increasingly active player

After presenting these case-studies, I again discuss the role of aid agencies in local politics.

1. Official politics: the role of district councillors

Looking for an active role

The councillors vary in terms of their personal capacities and the resources needed to concentrate on local politics. The educational level of district councillors is generally low but in every election it is slowly improving. While some councillors may have previous experience in administration, some have mainly religious and ethnic credentials. The variety of councillors represents well the various social interests in the society. This advantage seems to lose its shine when the councillors are confronted with the hardened expertise of the district administrators.

District councillors are expected to be the democratic link between the citizens and the political organs. Their capacity to fulfil this task has been limited because:

- the bulk of financing is allocated by means of administrative arrangements that by-pass councils;
- council meetings take place only every third month and provide limited opportunities for open discussion;
- many councillors lack expertise in reading technical reports.

Because of the system of council committees and the rarity of full council meetings, the chairman of council has considerable power. An active council chairman can bring local ideas up for common discussion, while a selfish chairman can use his power to collect 'rent' on allocative decisions. Councillors have managed to oust a selfish council chairman in at least one district. They also forwarded accusations and in effect ousted a District Executive Director who was keen to make changes in a rather conservative council. These examples show that council does have definite power.

Do the councillors fulfil the function of uniting local politics into a coherent discourse? Do they manage to integrate the voices emanating from various interest groups and political processes into a shared platform? This has still to take place. Currently the district councillors are mostly occupied with advancing the projects in their respective wards. They have also paid considerable attention to their personal allowances for attendance at meetings. Some improvement in personal remuneration took place in 1997. Such remuneration has a direct impact on the degree of commitment and the role that the councillors perceive as reasonable.

The capacity of a councillor to influence the projects within his or her ward is fairly limited. The bulk of resources is used to cover recurrent costs, and particular development projects at the ward and village levels are often scrapped when the council is facing budget constraints. The councillors are placed in a difficult position. If they publicise existing project plans which are aborted at a later stage, the publicity campaigns will backfire on them. Some councillors have opted to maintain a low profile within their constituencies, and ward development committee meetings, for example, are organised only irregularly.

The Local Government Reform Programme, planned since 1996 and launched in 1999, has generated great interest among councillors. As a preliminary step, most of the councillors in south-eastern Tanzania have participated in councillor training concerning their current rights and obligations. The leading councillors have already been exposed to the impacts of the reform on the political powers of councillors. These impacts of the reform are further discussed in Chapter 8.

2. Semi-public politics: reviving a rural water scheme

Coalitions for a water project in Newala

In this case-study I discuss an attempt to solve a major developmental problem by establishing a local political coalition in order to have enough muscle to make a large-scale investment. Newala town is located in an upland area where the water supply is a constant problem. In the 1950s, the large Makonde Water Scheme had already been established to alleviate the problem, but it collapsed soon after the government abolished water charges in the early 1960s. The Finnish water project repaired some of the existing facilities and constructed new ones in the 1980s. But again, after some years charac-

terised by erratic fuel supplies and a chronic lack of spare-parts, the water schemes became largely inoperative. The collection of water has emerged as a heavy task for women and men, and the high price of water increases living costs substantially.

The problem of water has been simmering for a long time. When citizens and politicians started to make more demands for the alleviation of the water problem in the early 1990s, the district administration soon noticed that the repairing of water schemes would be an expensive matter. Since the district council did not have adequate resources, it started to look for support from the Ministry of Water which, with donor assistance, would be able to solve the problem. When the Regional Commissioner took the issue up again, the District Commissioner (representing central government) called a meeting at which the district council, the Newala Development Foundation (NDF)¹⁷ and the Newala cooperative union were represented. The parties decided to start a private company together. The idea was to privatise the water company and to fund a part of the expenditure through user charges. However, when the prominent leader of the NDF was asked to register the company in Dar es Salaam, he registered it as a branch of the NDF. External donors were also invited to inspect the scheme to determine whether they could support the branch. Despite the fact that they were aimed at further alleviating the water problem, these developments caused serious friction between the NDF and the District Commissioner. This friction made it into the national press and reached a stage where unexpected accusations were made. The row died down when the key personalities withdraw or were replaced, but the project was already at a standstill.

After a while, a new District Commissioner revived the plan. He put all his personal influence and stamina into the scheme. However, he wisely decided not to be on the board of the new company himself. In this way he was able to calm down political ambitions and take on a more appropriate controlling function. The new start has resulted a major feasibility study, a precondition for proper planning work.

3. Civil society: the emerging NGOs

The right form but no substance

Non-governmental organisations are emerging in all parts of Tanzania. In the areas where the general standards of living are higher, the NGOs tend to have more resources and active members (Kiondo 1995). The south-eastern regions are less well endowed with surplus resources, and consequently local NGOs have great difficulties in getting properly established. In this area, the new NGOs tend to be offshoots of government organisations (GONGOs, government-organised NGOs) or donor-

17) The NDF provides an example of development funds getting their resources mainly from cashew levies, as explained above. The board of the NDF has been composed of very prominent administrators and businessmen, either residing in Newala or originating from there. A detailed account of the NDF's operations and political characteristics and of popular support for it has been written by Andrew Kiondo (1995:145-52).

dependent NGOs. However, these links should not be regarded as negative by definition. Because of them, such NGOs are capable of participating in modern partnership politics. They understand the requirements for development work and are capable of presenting new ideas to the official bodies. The following case-study shows, however, that the positive formal aspects are not all that is needed.

The NGO studied, here called LIRISCU, is a relatively new organisation which has started its operations in Mtwara town but which aims to cover the whole region. LIRISCU has taken all the right formal steps to start its operation. It has been properly registered, it has found office space, the board has been selected, and various thematic branches have been established. LIRISCU has even managed to print a leaflet and has established a formal connection with a national NGO.

The problems of the LIRISCU become apparent when one looks at popular support for the organisation. The executive secretary, with a background in cooperative work, is capable in administrative matters. The organisation is, however, very much dominated by this one person, with other members of the leadership being less vocal. And some of the branches which are supposed to be running their own projects really exist only on paper.

The plans are wide in scope: the organisation's leader mentions the aim of trying to start a committee with representatives from every ward. The leader goes on to state that after selection, the second step is to organise a seminar for the committee in order to provide them with information on what Poverty Africa is doing. After the seminar, each of about one hundred wards is to be visited, and a "Centre Poor" is to be established in each one "to negotiate their poverty situation, every week if possible". Every ward needs to be visited regularly to check on how many groups they have formed for economic projects. Every economic group in a village can select a representative, and the representatives together form the ward development programme's leadership. In the words of the director:

So in this case we are trying to help some beneficiaries in order to facilitate their requirements and to win this game of poverty situation in these regions. That is why we are saying that in order to solve this policy of the country of the poverty alleviation schemes we need to reach our beneficiaries through this programme.

While this is all interesting, it is also somewhat vague and far beyond any realistic perspective. Even a large bilateral donor project cannot expect to operate with this degree of intensity and coverage. LIRISCU also has some more concrete plans and has pledged funding, but these plans have not created enthusiasm among the donors (NGO and bilateral) working with open agendas in the region. An aid worker maintained that the misplaced targeting in actual operations is the reason for the lukewarm response in the agency that he represents:

I was not very much convinced about this approach as such and about organisation's structure. I found a bit of double standard in his approach because on one hand he was trying to address the local community but the strategies that he was trying to use was gathering more to the other level of people. The benefits would go more to the other level of people, not to the real lower community, so called target group which he was claiming.

According to the LIRISCU leader, the reason for his limited success in attracting donor interest is the tendency of government administration to monopolise the whole contact surface with donors.

Sometimes when these NGOs from outside are coming to this country, the intuition is that they are here to facilitate our requirements. But actually what solutions they have when they come here are modified after meeting with the government people who mobilise them wrongly about the activities of local NGOs. That is why they do not help us according to what requirements we need.

When the donors need to help us, the government people are interfering differently, with some sort of accusations: "These LIRISCU people, they cannot succeed in anything; they do not have any money; you are just wasting your resources" and so on. When they all [donor agencies] come here to facilitate the beneficiaries, the government people are interfering and say that those people in local NGOs cannot success in anything. and always the government people receive their cars, and they organise their seminars, but not the beneficiaries. When donor agencies make their seminars they invite the government officers but not the NGO leaders.

The LIRISCU leader speaks about harassment from the government side. Still, he seems to get on quite well with the local government officers on a personal level. The problem of creating a trustworthy relationship with donor agencies is, however, very awkward. LIRISCU seems simply to lack a concrete task and the sources of income necessary for starting to operate in a meaningful way. The initiatives undertaken tend to dry up, as the donor agencies, although they talk a lot about supporting local NGOs, find it difficult to support an NGO lacking a popular base.

One may suspect that there is also a kind of 'rural bias' in donor agencies. It seems to be a disadvantage to be a town-based organisation and to have office space. The same level of organisational development in a rural setting would most likely have attracted donor support.

4. The private sector: an increasingly active player *Incorporating the private sector into aid projects*

In the 1990s, the liberalisation of the economy has meant a considerable boost for private sector activities. In south-eastern Tanzania, the major changes can be seen in trading activities, which are increasing. This is especially true during the October–January period, when cashew income is available to farmers. A flourishing sector of rural and urban microenterprises has developed and expanded (Seppälä 1998e). Major industrial ventures are still lacking in the regions. There are, however, some initiatives aimed at expanding from artisanal mining, a flourishing new field, to more sophisticated mining ventures.

The private sector actors have been energetic in forming local organisations. The Chambers of Commerce constitute the main organisation for medium and large-scale businessmen. It is, however, divided into two separate units, largely (but not totally in south-eastern Tanzania) on racial lines, so that businessmen of Asian and African backgrounds have their own organisations. One agenda item for the Chambers of Commerce has been the improvement of bookkeeping practices in order to reduce the arbitrariness of taxation. The organisation has also helped members to cope with the VAT tax reform. The other activities of the organisation, as a pressure group in local politics, have been modest.

During the early 1990s, Southern Tanzania Economic Commission was established in Dar es Salaam with the aim of lobbying for the allocation of governmental resources to south-eastern Tanzania. The Commission relied partly upon an influential politician and businessman, Alex Khalid. Like some of his other major involvements (e.g. establishing a bank in Newala), the Commission has faded along with the reduction in his personal influence.

As far as the Asian-dominated business community of Mtwara town is concerned, the national organisations for cashew nut traders and the gemstone traders are worth mentioning. Cashew nuts and gemstones are the two commodities that have great regional importance.

Small-scale artisans have lost their traditional support when the loans of SIDO have dried up in the 1990s. Instead, some of the artisans have managed to form a local organisation to promote the interests of small-scale producers. The organisation's aims are to organise trade fairs, display local products and help in marketing. This kind of small initiative is an example of organisational resources which, because of severe financial constraints, have difficulties in becoming properly institutionalised.

The impact of aid projects on local politics

A change in the local political culture has clearly taken place, and it is obvious that the donors have been instrumental in this transformation. Donor agencies have been able to fund seminars and forums which explicitly aim to activate administrators to become 'demand-oriented', businessmen to seek work opportunities, local NGOs to increase popular participation in their activities and citizens to make demands upon all the decision-makers. The donor agencies have also increasingly involved these actors as planners, facilitators and implementers of their projects. The result of these activities is that the innovative and courageous individuals, almost regardless of their organisational background, may be incorporated into project work.

Seeking partnership arrangements

Aid projects are increasingly willing to look for partners amongst the local actors. The list of candidates includes local governments, civic organisations and private sector representatives.

As far as partnership arrangements with local governments are concerned, aid projects exhibit clear intentions. The donor agencies are looking for ways to place the project ideas on the agenda of district councils in order to increase the legitimacy of projects. The councils are willing to take on the role, even if they still have a limited capacity to actually dictate the orientation of the projects. The donor agencies are less willing to place financial resources directly under the supervision of the district authorities, the main reason being that the district authorities lack the sort of up-to-date auditing that would satisfy the demands of the donor agencies. Another related problem of financial control is connected with the slowness of district administration in disbursing money for specific projects. Only recently have Unicef and Finnida made the first attempts to provide funding to the district councils with limited strings attached.

The aid projects are slowly starting to show respect towards the councillors. But the prevalent attitude is that the councillors are fairly ignorant about bureaucratic rules and even the wishes of citizens and that consequently the donors need to train them in participatory methods. This approach underlines the practical (financial, information) constraints that face the councillors.

Civic organisations are inspiring partners for aid projects. They are often perceived as the ideal partner because they are expected to represent the people and because they facilitate the adoption of novel ideas. They constitute a contrast to the bureaucratic state organisations, which are difficult to steer. To a certain extent, however, this perception is based on rather schematic ideas. Often the civic organisations simply turn out to be weak partners. They are sometimes closely linked to the administration, a fact which decreases their independence. In south-eastern Tanzania, the

number of the civic organisations is fairly small. As a guesstimate, one could say that only one in a hundred of the adult population is a member of a NGO or a CBO (using the simple criteria for a community-based organisation of having a name and an elected chairperson). The small number of organisations constitutes a natural constraint for partnership arrangements.

The private sector is a popular partner candidate in the current aid discourse. In south-eastern Tanzania, the donor agencies have tried to incorporate private entrepreneurs either as development 'partners', as 'target groups' or as auxiliary local procurement agencies. The variety of roles available to the private sector has occasionally made it difficult for donor agencies to analyse the relationship and make necessary distinctions within the private sector. This unclear situation has slowed down the building of a constructive relationship.

Following the initiatives started during the first phase of RIPS, but involving a considerably greater degree of variety in actual implementation strategies, the second phase of the RIPS programme has experimented with supporting specific groups of microentrepreneurs (Finnagro 1996). The programme has been particularly instrumental in organising (together with a small local NGO formed for the small entrepreneurs and a larger international NGO) a trade fair for local entrepreneurs. It has also supported blacksmiths and initiated small loan schemes. Unicef has also shown interest in supporting the income-generating activities of women (Kabalele and Koda 1992), although its main area has remained maternal/child health care. New initiatives also include a plan by Fair Trade (a British NGO) to rehabilitate an old German *boma* in Mikindani township as a tourist attraction and some minor support originating from the Swedish Chambers of Commerce towards refurbishing the regional offices of the Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture (CCTIA). These initiatives show that the change in the discursive field is also reflected in the activities. The entrepreneurs are expected to organise, form pressure groups and make proposals which concern their own operations.

The degree to which aid agencies commission work from private sector operators constitutes another link. Local medium and large-scale operators have actively sought a role as constructors, transport providers and importers for aid agencies. Since many donor agencies still effectively support the government structures, the work commissioned would effectively involve private supplies to the public utilities. In this connection the government's regulations and practices should in principle set some limits to the operations. The government has regional and district tender boards which organise public purchases. The boards have, for example, purchased school furniture and food through public tendering. However, the official bodies have very limited resources of their own for their purchases, while in order to enhance financial control, the donor agencies still conclude their own deals, by-passing the tender boards. For example, the German aid agency has supported the reno-

vation of a large number of health centres, making direct contracts with local building companies. A forthcoming test case for the integration of governmental and donor purchases is a planned Finnish road project. The project is oriented towards road maintenance, and one of its key elements is the training of small-scale labour-based local contractors who could then bid for the maintenance work.

This short discussion has shown the kind of initiatives undertaken to integrate the private sector into development aid. The examples show that there are a variety of practical ways of enhancing links. The initiatives show a division: the donors direct their targeting towards small-scale producers, but when it comes to the purchase of services, they deal mostly with large-scale producers.

The four case-studies are the following:

1. Support for economic liberalisation: cashew production and marketing
2. Natural resources utilisation: RIPS, dynamite fishing and local politics
3. Concern and targeted support for rural water supplies
4. REDET: enhancing local democracy

The case-studies include an analysis of development in a specific sector/project. The first study shows the methods which the various political actors have created in order to influence the use of the large income from cashews. The second study shows how a donor agency has taken on an advocacy role in a local conflict over a natural resource and has brought a local problem to national attention. The third study deals with the international NGO establishing a presence at a community level. Finally, the case-study on REDET exemplifies a modern project directly focused on the widening of the political discussion.

1. Support for economic liberalisation: cashew production and marketing

As mentioned earlier, the World Bank was heavily implicated in the collapse of cashew production during the 1970s. The Bank has since tried to improve its reputation, and it has partly succeeded in this. Throughout the 1990s, the donor input into cashew production and marketing has been fairly influential. The World Bank has been pressing for the liberalisation of marketing. The Bank and the ODA have together run a major Cashew Nut Improvement Project, which introduced the commercial use of sulphur for fungus control. The project subsidised the price of sulphur considerably and created a core clientele for sulphur—so that, even when the subsidies are withdrawn, there will still be a demand for sulphur among wealthy farmers.

The main strategic component of the cashew interventions has been a reliance on private or semi-public institutional arrangements. The project has managed to boost both the commercial importation of inputs (mainly sulphur and blowers) and the

exportation of output (cashew nuts). The semi-public institutions are used only when the economics of scale so dictate. The Cashew Authority of Tanzania has been largely by-passed, and its role has been reduced to that of a body dealing with the overall policy environment. In this way, the projects have influenced the relative power positions of the political actors.

What is local political debate about? The most lively debate tends to relate to unexpected new economic resources which, because they are not bound by allocative rules and conventions, can be controlled in a novel way. In south-eastern Tanzania, the most prominent source of money, and one within the reach of a variety of actors, is cashew income. Naturally, farmers are expected to get the main part of income, but the various parties have tried to find ways to lay hands on a share of income, either directly (by taxing the cashew income) or indirectly (by selling services to farmers). The amount of money is substantial. The acting director of the Tanzania Cashewnut Board estimated that nuts worth 34 billion shillings (USD 56 million) were bought in the Mtwara and Lindi regions during the 1997/98 buying season (Daily News, 10 February 1998).

The local politicians have created various arrangements to gain access to the funds. Firstly, the district authorities are allowed to impose crop levies, and they have done so effectively, even raising the level of taxation. The district authorities have allowed the District Trust Funds to impose a levy on cashew income, primarily to be used for major development projects such as building secondary schools¹⁸. Secondly, the cooperatives have the role of the basic collection point for cashew nuts, thus working as intermediaries between the farmers and the businessmen. This entitles them to impose a levy as well. Thirdly, the regional authorities, with the formal consent of local authorities, have also established crop input funds that use a share of the cashew taxes to procure cheap shipments of sulphur (used for reducing fungus disease in cashew trees). Finally, the Cashew Authority of Tanzania imposes a levy on cashew nuts because of the services that it provides for the cashew growers and the industry.

The aid project had an impact on the way in which the local politicians and administrators dealt with the issue, because the project was instrumental in the establishment of input funds. The financial accountability of these input funds has, unfortunately, been beyond the reach of the normal councillors. The aid projects have also had an impact on the marketing policy of the products.

The political element of cashew taxation has three aspects. First, who actually controls each of the mentioned organs? Second, how much in the way of a levy is each of the parties allowed to take? Third, who are beneficiaries of the money collected?

The degree of political control exercised by the actors is difficult to establish with any precision. However, it seems clear that members of parliament, through their

18) The main reason for using District Trust Funds is a legal one: the district councils are not allowed to use their tax income for secondary education, and they have circumvented this regulation by establishing semi-independent Trust Funds.

positions as links between the local and national levels, play a multiple role. They are represented in district councils and they have close links to regional and district administration. Some of them have been active in establishing development funds and local NGOs. Certainly, members of parliament have a role in influencing various bodies while straddling different roles. The same can be said about the few key administrators in regional and district administration. Because of their position, they have the right to take part in political discussions at various levels of administration. They sit on the boards of development funds and input funds. In addition, some administrators can influence the activities of donors and show a keen interest in doing business. Thus we can see that behind the variety of bodies we can identify a politico-administrative elite which has a capacity to pull several strings simultaneously. This has effects upon the shape of political culture. Because of 'straddling' politicians and administrators, the various political forums become involved and thus the political scene becomes more united.

When it comes to determining the size of the slice, the reliable tracking of the political debate is rather difficult for an external observer. The government has an interest in controlling the level of local taxation because of the bad experiences of the 1970s (when the farmer's share of the shipment price fell far below 50 percent and the farmers stopped producing cashew nuts). However, the key players have the political muscle to extract more levies for purposes which they find useful.

Who has benefited from levies? In general, the levies are motivated by sound development concerns. Almost all the levies are also motivated with 'economies of scale', implying that a service can only be procured cost-efficiently when it is conducted on a large scale. The beneficiaries of the services have mainly been middle peasants: farmers with large enough farms to be able to afford sulphur and farmers sending children to secondary schools. Since these middle peasants have also produced most of the cashew crop (Derbyshire and Gongwe 1992; Tanzania cashew 1994), they have efficiently received back their own money. Naturally, a portion of the funds is used for administering the schemes, and some money vanishes into thin air.

2. Natural resources utilisation: RIPS, dynamite fishing and local politics

RIPS is a major integrated development project funded by the Finnish development agency. One of its sub-projects has been a Marine Environment Protection Project (MEPP) which addresses the ill-conceived practices of natural resource mining in coastal areas. The main target is the reduction of dynamite fishing, but the project also addresses salt production (destroying mangrove forests) and limestone harvesting (destroying coral stone formations). The special feature of the project is an advanced participatory approach which tries to get local fishermen and other producers involved in political campaigns aimed at protecting their sources of livelihood

against the exploitation of natural resources organised by rich businessmen and administrators.

In its initial phase, the project created a network of fishermen covering several villages. Some seminars were held for village representatives; but, what was more interesting, a video recording of the seminars was taken from one village to another and shown to the fishermen. This method proved to be successful in terms of generating interest and prompting some fishermen to record cases of dynamite fishing and identify problem areas. Since some government officers were involved in dynamite fishing, the project became soon very politicised. However, the local films were also shown to the local administrators and even to the national leaders. This led to much debate and to support for the stricter control of dynamite fishing.

If we compare it with the initiatives made in fishing sector in the 1970s, we find that the MEPP has differed considerably. While the emphasis was earlier placed upon new technology, the MEPP has been dealing with existing social confrontations. The 'conflict management' approach has been highly relevant for the project (as it seems generally to be for natural resource projects, which otherwise tend to be at a standstill because of complex and historically deeply rooted conflicts). The MEPP has managed to initiate a local NGO of fishermen called 'Southern Zone Confederation for the Conservation of the Marine Environment' whose aim is to represent the common interests of fishermen. (Finnagro 1998:72–76.)

The results of the approach selected were first rather localised; although publicity against dynamite fishing was disseminated widely, the practice was difficult to restrict. The legal measures seemed to have very limited effect because of the isolated locations of fishing villages. What has proved to be a more efficient control measure is the social control emanating from within the fishing communities, combined with publicity work directed at the higher-level authorities. The campaigning triggered interest on the part of the authorities and finally led to intelligence work followed by a massive army operation to catch the people engaged in dynamite fishing. Although the method was far removed from those advocated in books on conflict resolution, it brought the necessary result: dynamite fishing stopped.

3. Concern and targeted support for rural water supplies

Concern is a large Irish NGO which established its office in Mtwara and started to operate in Mtwara rural district only fairly recently. The major aim of Concern is poverty alleviation. In order to reach this goal, the organisation has chosen an approach in which targeting and preliminary planning work is conducted extremely carefully. Concern is also sensitive towards participatory issues and puts heavy emphasis on identifying the genuine needs and aspirations of the targeted population.

The first year of Concern's work related to the establishment of its presence and to identifying the right modalities for its work. During this phase, the project coordinator negotiated with local administrators and local NGOs. As a result of these discussions, potentially vulnerable wards were selected for further studies. The project conducted a participatory rural appraisal in the wards and established a rapport with them. The process led to the identification of the priority wards and—going down to the sub-village level—the priority tasks. Water supplies emerged as a major problem in many sub-villages in Mtwara district.

Concern was soon facing the problem that the local NGOs and CBOs are limited in number and capacities. It had to embark upon the long road of negotiating with each community about modalities and financial responsibilities, establishing water committees to control the process, using animators to train the committees and following the political process. The slow process has been beneficial in the sense that the project has managed to mobilise sizeable local contributions.

4. REDET: enhancing local democracy

While many aid projects talk loudly about democracy and good governance, they still tend to perceive these as instruments for more 'real' development tasks¹⁹. There are, however, also projects which aim directly at enhancing democracy. The project called REDET deserves to be mentioned in this context. REDET (Research and Education for Democracy in Tanzania) is a development project run by the Department of Political Science at the University of Dar es Salaam and funded mainly by the Danish Development Agency. It is a project explicitly planned to mobilise local politics even outside the formal district council structure. It aims to create new, extensive coalitions for the benefit of a united local political culture. The project has established a local discussion forum for dealing with current political issues in Mtwara district. The secretary and chairman of the forum are persons who do not hold important political or administrative posts in the area. Participants at its meetings are key officers, members of parliament, a few councillors, religious leaders, representatives of the magistracy and the police force and representatives of opposition parties. Even personalities who took part in the last parliamentary election but were not elected are invited to participate in the forum. In addition, similar forums have been established in a few wards and villages in Mtwara district.

After having functioned for one year, the project has managed to create debate on the priority issues and political concerns in the district. The minutes of the REDET

19) An interesting comparison can be made with the British Urban Partnership Project, which is starting in 1999. The project aims to improve the governance capacity of the Mtwara municipal council by improving the skills and working conditions of the administrators. Once financial accountability is improved, financial support will be directed towards locally prioritised development initiatives. The success of the project will then be measured by the increased capacity of the council to collect its taxes. On the whole, the 'democracy' agenda is placed at the service of development agenda.

discussion forums show that citizens are keen to take part in political discussions. Although the village and ward level meetings primarily dealt with concrete development problems, the discussions also touched the issues like the accountability of the national leaders. The doings of district level actors were also questioned. The participants requested information from the District Lands Officer on land tenure policies and from the District Development Foundation on the use of its income. Although the discussion group is a weak pressure group, an analysis of the topics of discussions and the recommendations arising from them shows that the potential for sharp political criticism is always there.

The impact of aid projects on local politics

In the 1990s, aid projects seem to be more attentive to local political issues than during the previous decades. This means, first and foremost, that the planned impacts are more clearly evident and the unplanned impacts are decreasing in magnitude. But the unplanned impacts are significant. The aid projects, while full of the will to create sustainable and locally anchored institutional arrangements, have considerable problems in putting their exalted political aims into practice.

The impact of a partnership orientation on the reshaping of aid interfaces is summarised in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 The impact of a partnership orientation on local politics.

	<i>Direct impacts</i>	<i>Indirect impacts</i>
<i>Planned impacts</i>	Marginal political actors get some resources Aid projects identify new partners	Increased aid coordination
<i>Unplanned impacts</i>	Struggle over resources creating <i>ad hoc</i> political partnerships Elite may use the new channels (NGOs, private sector) to consolidate its power Increase in the coverage of openly politicised issues	'Participation' may undermine formal political channels of influencing policies

As the table shows, the aid projects can, through their intervention, activate the local political scene. The support given to marginal political actors has a positive impact in a society where the 'voice' and political resources are very unequally distributed. One should, however, be aware that the local elite is not willing to share political power without a struggle. Members of the elite are keen to take advantage of the new opportunities offered by the development work done through NGOs, Development Funds, savings societies and private trading enterprises. When aid projects seek new partners, and when they scratch the surface of the partner organisations, they are most likely to find retired administrators and groups of middle-class activists in key positions. It is very difficult for an aid project to determine whether the new partner is primarily a political body or an income-generating scheme for its leaders. Since no organisation is purely a political body, one needs to be able to make a judgement as to whether the political activity is a serious matter or merely a front.

The aid organisation also needs to pay attention to the selection of the political channels that they support. In the name of participation, the aid projects can develop new channels for influencing decision-making on resource distribution (primarily concerning aid resources). These channels may undermine the official political channels based on elected councillors. If the citizens take the view that the elected councillors have very little to offer, while the aid projects, when properly received, can deliver substantial material benefits, the overall impact of aid projects on the 'democracy' agenda may be negative. The only justification for creating completely separate channels of influence is the contention that the official channels for exercising influence are actually totally undemocratic and beyond repair. This justification would not hold water in Tanzania.

The case-studies presented above show that aid projects have managed to activate a number of political discussions on specific issues. Has the change in political climate had an impact on the quality of political debate in south-eastern Tanzania? The analysis of national newspapers shows that south-eastern Tanzania is regularly portrayed as an area with its own problems. At least half of all reports still relate to two major issues. These are the poor quality of the road network and the price of cashew nuts. There is no doubt that these two issues are of great importance to the inhabitants of the area. Yet they are apolitical in the sense that they do not divide the citizens into groups with conflicting interests. It is clear that all local inhabitants would benefit from good roads and high producer prices. Touring national politicians are aware that these issues are 'safe bets' in the political discussion. The national press has not yet highlighted major themes that the district councils had taken up as the locally divisive hot potatoes. As I see it, the problem is partly a technical/resource problem. The local political debates are still fairly tame, partly because they lack appropriate mechanisms for disseminating information and publicising such debates.

4.4 AID PROJECTS AS POLITICAL ACTORS

As the examples show, the local political scene is changing. Although the number of political actors is increasing and new common platforms for challenging the existing power enclaves are emerging, a definite 'political elite' still seems to be strong. What has really changed is the perception of politics: actors are more willing to try out new roles and to seek partners in the directions that would previously have been unheard of. Given these changes, one can conclude that the culture of politics is changing. Politics is not changing in a democratic direction in the sense that elected representatives have ultimate control over political decisions. Rather, politics is changing in this direction in the sense that more and more issues are being discussed openly and new interest groups are making demands in the field of political issues.

At the beginning of the chapter, I claimed that donor agencies have been instrumental in activating the local political culture. Now it is time to assess the impact of donors in this field. I identify three broad ways in which the donor agencies have influenced local politics.

Firstly, the donor agencies have started to form new coalitions for the *management and implementation* of their projects. The expertise necessary for implementation can be drawn from cooperatives, NGOs, retired officials and personalities who are known to have skills and charisma. These experiments are encouraging because they show that the state is capable of accepting new initiatives. Development is no longer the monopoly of the state.

Secondly, the donors are making *funding arrangements* which draw local actors into partnerships. The donor agencies have provided resources for development work which really boost the activities of cash-strapped (or more precisely, recurrent-cost-committed) local authorities. The largest donor agencies have annual budgets for development activities which exceed even those for the combined development activities of local authorities and the local projects of ministries. When allocating the funds, the donor agencies may insist upon local participation in funding. Since governmental 'counterpart' funds are not always available, the donor projects enjoy a good negotiating position when trying to include other (paying) local partners in the project framework. As direct beneficiaries, citizens in particular are expected—as individuals or through interest groups—to participate in gap funding.

Thirdly, the donor agencies have established and supported important *ideological forums* for discussing political issues and reflecting upon concrete development problems. Although the donors are accused of maintaining a seminar-cum-daily allowance culture, with the potential effect of insulating administrators and politicians from the local realities, one should still give them credit for their serious attempts to encourage discussion.

Although the donors have influenced the political scene in several ways, their role should not be exaggerated. Certainly one cannot parade the donor agencies as *the*

exemplary actors in a bleak landscape. After all, there are still some donor agencies which like to make their own decisions and run their own projects without much regard for existing systems. Even for the more radical agencies, the way towards open politics has been fairly long and winding. At the same time one can identify administrators and villagers who show creativity and who struggle, under various pressures, for more democratic practices of governance.

In addition, it is not easy to separate the influence of donors from other, on-going changes. As the examples show, the donor input tends to constitute an addition to an existing political process. Whereas the donor agencies may have a vital role in financial terms, the political decisions invariably involve the local political elite, which is not prepared to give up its power. The importance of the local elite is increased by the fact that the elite is capable of staying around for a long period of time, thus accumulating social networks, whereas the donor agencies are always in a hurry—packing their suitcases just after they have established a constructive role. Thus it is fair to conclude that the donor agencies do not by any means control the local political scene. They are still too shy, too scattered and too much in a hurry to achieve such a position.

It is theoretically possible to take a step further and argue that donor involvement has been instrumental in the *construction* of political actors²⁰. In this vein, I ask whether the donor discourse and practices (local but to an even greater degree national and international) have been instrumental in terms of shaping the understanding of who are legitimate political actors. During the era of *enclave* aid, the donors perceived the central state as the only real partner. This aim coincided with the intentions of Tanzanian leaders. The administrative-cum-political leaders had established a definite political culture of patronage, and they used even aid interventions to reproduce this framework. During the era of *partnership* aid, the donors have changed their definition of possible partners. The donor-led discourse concerning economic liberalisation has, for example, rehabilitated businessmen as legitimate political actors. Similarly, the donor-led discourse concerning 'good governance' and administrative reforms has helped local administrators to show that they have interests and needs of their own, instead of their being mere instruments for serving the true beneficiaries. And finally, the donor discussion on NGOs and civil society has shown citizens that establishing local organisations is not a criminal activity but actually a positive element for local development. Once the donor discourse has advanced in these directions, the political self-understanding of businessmen, administrators and civic activists is also strengthened. This development has wide repercussions for the political arena. The fact that the range of legitimate political actors has

20) *This part of the discussion is deriving inspiration from constructivist social theories. These theories have a sister-relationship to Terence Ranger and his idea of the invention of traditions. The basic idea is that the cultural appropriation of a social entity takes predominance over material forms of social interaction. If a social entity is culturally given recognition, the totality (including history) will be re-interpreted to correspond with the cultural perception.*

widened constitutes the clearest impact made by the donors.

Finally, one needs to ask whether the change in political culture really makes a difference. Does partnership politics mean a substantial change or does it merely mean a 'new deal' within the local elite²¹?

The diplomatic answer would be that the change in political culture is only starting and that once it is fully established, democratisation will involve even peripheral villagers. A realistic answer would not be based on prognoses but would simply look at the indicators of economic equality and political participation. However, we do not have reliable statistical material for such an objective analysis. We must therefore take a more circuitous route in our search for answers.

One definite yardstick is the dissemination of information on the political debates. In modern setting, this means the existence of media which follows the political discussion and makes it more open. In traditional settings, the oral dissemination of political discussion is prevalent. In this respect it appears that the level of district is an intermediate level which falls between the two established traditions. The modern media requires a larger audience with purchasing power in order to take root. In south-eastern Tanzania, the only exception is Radio Kanda ya Kusini which, with donor support and under the tutelage of the national radio corporation, regularly broadcasts local programmes. Meanwhile, traditional oral political discourse is effectively limited to smaller spatial units. In an area where walking is the main form of transport and where the number of cars travelling to different corners of a district is very small, political debates and rumours (also called 'Radio Makomeni' in Mtwara town) spread only slowly.

Another yardstick of the efficiency of the 'voice' of marginal actors is the spread and level of activity of opposition parties. The opposition parties participated in the district and village council elections in 1995, but they did not manage to make any real impact in south-eastern Tanzania. This has seriously restricted their role as mediators of criticism to the official forums. What the parties have managed to do is to establish offices in major towns and the biggest villages. These offices function on very low budgets, and they are lying low, except when national party leaders venture into the area on tours. In an election year the political discussion is more hectic, and the opposition parties have good opportunities to put forward dissenting views on local politics.

21) *An interesting comparison can be made between the political initiatives of the 1950s and the 1990s. During the 1950s, the colonial administration experimented with partnership politics. The councils included, in addition to elected divisional councillors, representatives (i.e. diwanis selected by the district commissioner) of teachers, progressive farmers, deacons, businessmen and others. In Newala, the council was even expanded with representatives of Europeans and Asians, making it the first multi-racial local authority in Tanzania. (Liebenow 1971:200-26.) The intentions and modalities of the proposals for expanding the range of political actors during the 1990s correspond with these plans. Unfortunately, both experiments include a similar seed of elite bias as far as the selection of actors and their representatives is concerned.*

Chapter 5

ENCOUNTERS IN THE OFFICE

5.1 AID PROJECTS: FOSTERING OR HINDERING GOOD GOVERNANCE?

The main criticism of project-type aid is that, due to a wrong administrative approach, the project impacts are not sustainable. The projects develop a temporary administration of their own which undermines the existing administrative structure. Is this criticism justified? In this chapter, I study the effect of various projects on the district and regional administration in south-eastern Tanzania during the 1990s. I look at aid interfaces in which the donor administration and recipient administration play central roles. I argue that the conventional project approach, with all its well-meaning orientation towards definite objectives, tends to perceive the local administration simply as a tool; the project plans are made as if only the 'target group' represents real people with real needs and as if the local administrators were simply waiting to be used for whatever purposes. This instrumental orientation has a negative impact on the motivation of local administrators. This pattern is difficult to avoid, even in the case of more progressive projects. The analysis of local administration should have a humanist starting point where the views and interests of administrators are also taken seriously.

Before we can analyse these aid interfaces we should be acquainted with the internal strengths and problems of the local administrative. In order to give these issues proper attention, I analyse separately the management conventions and administrative resources at the district and regional level. Only after establishing a holistic picture do I start on an analysis of aid interfaces.

I have identified—often using broad brushstrokes—five themes occurring in recent discussion as factors explaining the problems of local administration. These are:

1. Management culture
2. Corruption
3. Operational resources of administrators
4. Additional tasks
5. Work commitment versus local attachment

The prevailing hierarchical management culture is often accused of being the major cause of problems related to good governance. The African mode of administration is described as top-down, authoritarian and lacking in flexibility. The development

of informal power structures is also perceived as a problem. The administrative structures are subject to ethnic and parochial favouritism, and the leaders are said to be socially soft—subject to the ‘economy of affection’.

A second, frequently cited explanation is the selfishness of administrators, which leads to predatory corruption. According to this view, the administrators are inherently corrupt, and because of their tendency towards corruption, no amount of resources is adequate. Only a proper system of ‘law and order’ might keep this tendency within bounds. When analysing the corruption explanation, we need to look at the role of aid workers: do they increase the opportunities—or even get involved in sharing the profits?

A third, equally justified explanation for governance problems is the scarcity of resources (especially salaries) in the local administration. The administrators need to use a part of their working time for their private business, because they could not make a living otherwise. Thus minor activities to top up one’s earnings are a necessity. The question is what is an acceptable amount of sideline activity—when does a sideline activity actually become an element of corrupt behaviour?

The fourth explanation is important, yet it has not received adequate attention in the management debate. According to this explanation, the source of inflated cultural differences is the fact that the donor administration is there for a specific purpose, geared to one aim, whereas the local administration has a multitude of functions. From the narrow perspective of the project format, a number of the tasks of local administration are not useful, and some are directly harmful to cooperation. For example, the tasks associated with maintaining high esteem for the ruling party may look irrelevant or even harmful from the perspective of an aid worker with more pressing tasks at hand.

The fifth and final explanation relates to the circulation of officials from one district to another. Circulation has the effect of increasing social distance between the officials and the citizens. Circulation is defended by arguing that it keeps the effects of ethnic loyalties within bounds. On the other hand, it may reduce the willingness of officials to learn about local circumstances.

Each of the five explanations illuminates a distinctive dimension of the problem, and I shall deal with each of them separately below. A balanced judgement can only be achieved by combining the five dimensions.

A separate question is then whether aid projects have managed to alleviate these problems—or whether they are a part and parcel of them. In some studies (e.g. Hyden 1983), the problem of management in aid projects is presented as arising from the collision of a rational Western management culture based on achievement with a non-Western management culture based on status hierarchies. Differences in communication patterns are commonly highlighted: Western managers are praised for their clear and transparent reporting and meeting culture, while local administra-

tors are said to lack interest in reporting and discussing through official channels. When such comparisons are made, the irrationalities of the donor organisation are swept under the carpet, and the local administration is analysed in contrast to the idealised Western model. In other words, the structure of donor organisation is analysed by means of a formal model, while the local administration is analysed through its informal practices. A preferable way would be to try and stick to analysing the observable management practices on both sides.

Management seems to be a soft point in projects, even in those based on careful planning and sensitive targeting. Every so often the critics of project formats start to complain about the management problems that development projects face. I have already noted the possibility of a collision of different management cultures. However, before Western ‘medicines’ are applied, it is useful to distance oneself critically from the culturally *a priori* statements of the Western management discourse and from its alleged relevance to an understanding of development interfaces²². The impact of aid projects on local governance should be analysed holistically so that the effects on corruption, salaries and incentives, additional tasks and circulation are also taken into consideration. This is what I set out to do.

The broad framework for the discussion concerns how an aid project can minimise harmful unintended effects while striving towards intended effects. The Western experts involved in development projects have broadly three alternative ways in which to react to the problems of administering a project. The aid workers can build a parallel administration which has sole control over resources. Alternatively, they can try to assimilate themselves to the local administration. Finally, they can try to reform the recipient administration. While the first alternative is morally condemned as ‘unsustainable’, the second, while solving many problems, also tends to create new ones. The radical alternative is then the third one, namely recognising the problem on both sides and trying to reform negative aspects.

In discussing these alternative administrative strategies, one must also take into consideration the efficiency of the strategy to be selected. Aid experts often argue that the most politically correct administrative strategy (i.e. assimilation) is likely to be less efficient in terms of resource use. A politically correct administrative strategy may require using decision-making systems which are very slow and cumbersome. In addition, the financial control over resources may be less transparent when the politically correct administrative strategy of assimilation is applied. One needs to remember that we do not live in an ideal world and that compromises between politico-administrative sustainability and economic efficiency must therefore be made.

In this chapter, I discuss the functioning of local administration and the impact

22) *The problem with the conventional management discourse is its tendency to create a conceptual apparatus which, because of its high level of abstraction, tends to fuse together analytical appraisal with some ideal perspectives—to mix together how things are with how they ought to be. According to Alvesson (1993:47), management books tend to tell us more about the culture of management consultants than about the organisations that they are supposed to analyse.*

of aid projects on its administrative capacities. The material is based on observations made during the 1990s in south-eastern Tanzania. Section 5.2 concentrates on district and regional administration, commenting on the five issues associated with good governance. In Section 5.3, I go on to analyse the effect that an aid project has upon local administration, and vice versa. I analyse the same set of five factors using the decentered approach. In the final discussion I return to the question of the trade-offs between politico-administrative sustainability and economic efficiency

5.2 LOCAL ADMINISTRATION: COPING WITH SCARCITY

Management through hierarchies

When we discuss local administration, it is important to make a distinction between the roles of top management and those of the technical officers. The pattern of management in local administration is very hierarchical, and the top leaders have wide powers. Mamdani (1996) has called the cultural heritage of colonial chiefly power "decentralised despotism", stating that the colonial chiefs were allocated decision-making, administrative and judicial powers. The concentration of power in the hands of undisputed leaders meant that policy could be expressed and modified only through patron-client relationships. Mamdani argues that the legacy of decentralised despotism is still evident in contemporary Africa.

A crucial factor shaping local administration is the manner in which authority is constructed around formal positions. Certain positions, such as that of District Executive Director (DED), are allocated almost limitless power. Leaders occupying such posts are able to interfere in any sectoral plans, use financial resources regardless of accepted budgets, and nominate people for specific tasks. Other officials are well aware of the hierarchical nature of the administration. Lower-ranking officials are unwilling to take the initiative, because they think that this would be interpreted as disobedience. As a Tanzanian joke goes: A junior official went to see the big boss, who scolded him: "Why do you come here; why don't you go to your immediate supervisor?" When the official started to follow the formal path of authority and approached only his own supervisor, the big boss came storming into his office and shouted: "Why don't you tell me what's going on in your department?"

A position of authority may well find expression in all kinds of arrogance. A local expert claims that arrogance has established roots in the culture of administration, and allegedly arrogant leaders may in fact have been merely transmitting orders that were actually coming from still higher echelons of the hierarchy: "I think the arrogance is part of the kind of government system that we have been having during the last 20–30 years where the element of the freedom to negotiate and to make decisions after negotiations between the parties concerned on specific issues was there in

theory. But in the practice this was not so because in the one-party system (...) you needed someone really bold to be able to say no to certain decisions which had been made at the top."

The exercise of authority is directly related to the dissemination and withholding of information. Information is a scarce resource and a concrete source of power. Since the production of information is directed towards supplying the top officials, who also have access to information from national forums, the leading officials have a privileged position as far as information is concerned. It is very easy for them to become the gatekeepers of information. The hierarchical nature of authority means that the leading officials tend to select only a few loyal clients with whom they share their information.

This information problem is well illustrated by the following statement:

In the district level, for some years I was amazed at [the existence of] almost a system of control of information. (...) There is a positive anti-information spirit. But there are a number of reasons. If you have a control over resources, if you have information, it means that somebody else doesn't. But also, if you have a control over resources you have also control over process and you are more likely to keep your own view and see that things succeed from your perception. Again, I have witnessed a long top-down and hierarchical process where you were responsible to your boss and, if the boss before you—who is a part of the top-down system—said "here, implement this" and if you did not make it successfully, you were blamed. So it is part of insecurity. You can be more likely to succeed if you handle yourself information and resources. Because of that system people find it very difficult to take criticism as something constructive.

One should also note that the local management culture in south-eastern Tanzania is very much governed by oral commands. In the systems of authority, being able to make a statement and issue directives is a right reserved for powerful leaders. The production of knowledge and expertise²³ is conducted at a lower level, as a part of technical implementation. The separation of command and special expertise is pronounced, and it is reflected in the way in which various kinds of reports are handled. The local system of governance assigns a very limited role to written documents. To put it simply, written documents are most useful when they do something: order, deny or restrict. Written documents which have the signature of a person in authority at the bottom are read. In a management culture in which only clear directives are read and the other information is disseminated orally, it is an extremely cumbersome process to distribute all relevant information to every potential party.

Because of the emphasis on oral communication, official meetings are an impor-

23) *The local system of producing and reproducing knowledge includes a variety of oral and written traditions. An interesting issue is the discontinuity between these traditions. For a discussion, see Koponen (1998).*

tant forum for the dissemination of information. The problem is that the need to maintain social hierarchies may smother the function of information dissemination and decision-making. This functional tangle makes official meetings rather ritualistic affairs at which the power hierarchy of the office is reproduced.

Corridor discussions cover practically every imaginable topic but may nevertheless omit or distort some important facts. Thus, for example, information on timetables for future meetings and on amounts of available finances may be completely unreliable. Another interesting feature of corridor discussions is the manner in which accusations and criticism are made. Spreading rumours is a quick way of commenting on new plans and rules. Rumours tend to personalise management problems.

The resources of local administrators

The developmental role of the local level administrators is largely determined by the financial resources that they command. The salary levels of the administrators declined by some 80 percent in real terms during the 1970s and 1980s. Although some salary increases have lately been implemented, the normal salaries are still far below the level of the 1960s and below subsistence level. Current monthly salaries range between shs. 30,000 and 70,000, depending on the position. The low salaries force many administrators to look for supplementary sources of income. An administrator comments: "Some people in this office rely on their salary only. I don't know how they can manage. They are paid five percent extra for housing. That is nothing. Five percent out of 50,000, what is it? I cannot pay even the electricity bills from my salary. But I am luckier—I have the government house." In the southern regions the per capita annual income is about shs. 30,000. If we assume an average household size of six persons, we see that the basic income of an official is roughly 3–4 times the income of an average peasant household. But while it is considerably higher, it still does not provide the money for luxurious living. Officials commonly live in crowded two-room apartments and either walk or use a bicycle to get to work. They are officially entitled to holiday allowances and moving allowances (when transferred) but in practice these funds are not available.

Compared with salaries, the rates for overnight allowances are high. Currently an official visiting district or regional headquarters is paid shs. 10,000, while a visit to a village provides income amounting to shs. 7,500. It is no wonder that work tasks providing allowances are sought after. The shortage of funds at the district level means, however, that the council can provide very limited opportunities for employees to obtain allowances. Such opportunities are also heavily biased in favour of the senior administrators.

The operational resources of the local administrators are very scarce indeed. For example, some regional planning officers are unable to make phone calls, because the

department does not have the money to pay telephone bills. Documents are difficult to file because of a lack of good quality folders and shelves. All administrators working in a district rely on one or two cars. One district officer said that he had made only two trips to ward centres during the past year. But officials have learned to get around these problems. Thus there is remarkable system involving sending letters by ordinary buses passing through a village or with officials and traders travelling to the destination of the letter. An official can send an urgent message to the other side of the region within a day or two if he is convinced of the importance of the effort. Similarly, transport is very scarce, but officials can, when the need arises, use private motorcycles and buses to reach their destination. The task of overcoming practical problems is not formidable once an official is well established in the area. The problem is more one of whether taking matters into one's own hands will be supported by the higher level officials and whether they will make available the funds necessary to cover the costs.

Corruption

The distribution of official resources to various officials is far from even, and corruption increases income differentials between them. The known cases of misuse of resources by certain leading officials amount to a value of millions of shillings. In earlier decades, corrupt officials were merely transferred to less exalted posts, but lately the Government has started to show increased commitment to the fight against corruption, and some officials have faced prosecution in court.

Besides instances of outright corruption, there are cases where resources are allocated according to the letter of administrative ordinances but where behaviour nevertheless deviates from what is proper. A typical example is the ability of leading officials to extract advance payments for the entertainment of guests while visiting Dar es Salaam. The regulation states that an official needs to report to the paying authority only costs exceeding a specific portion of the advance payment. If the official takes an exceptionally high advance payment (say, ten times more than what is required), he is therefore eligible to withhold a considerable money without presenting receipts. He is also eligible to maximise the normal daily allowances and hotel costs. In a resource-poor local authority, such payments can be a considerable drain on operational resources.

Corruption is not just the privilege of leading directors. Minor officials who control or distribute resources are also able to extract money for "tea". A typical case involves the person responsible for distributing medicine at a hospital. Even primary school teachers may demand extra payments for showing commitment towards the teaching of a child.

Ordinary people are well aware of the inadequate salaries of administrators, and

though they do not like the situation, they show some tolerance towards corrupt practices. For them, the important question is whether officials show commitment towards their tasks or simply squander resources. If officials do their work properly and keep the "eating" within limits, their behaviour is regarded as normal and reasonable.

Additional tasks

Local administrators are used to a situation where they are expected at short notice to drop their ordinary work and take on special commitments. Surprisingly often there is an exceptional situation which requires forgetting routines. Whenever a higher-level delegation comes to town, the administrators are recruited for preparatory work. They need to see that the delegation has a busy programme, good transportation, comfortable hotels and all the information that it may require. The administrators are also expected to deviate from routines when new policy directives are announced. Ordinary administrators are used as messengers to teach the citizens, give them advice and motivate them to support the new policy. When these tasks are allocated, the lines of command may be modified; roads and community development officers may, for example, find themselves explaining new policies on the pricing and distribution of fertilisers. In addition, natural and political disasters create exceptional situations demanding the full attention of administrators. It is taken for granted that if a district is proclaimed a famine area the officials must attend famine meetings and take their orders from the leaders responsible for combating hunger.

In addition to work resulting from such exceptional situations, administrators are faced with a number of extra tasks which do not strictly speaking come within the scope of their jobs but which in practice are an integral part of their work. An example of such tasks is participation in party meetings and the dissemination of party guidelines. A ruling party has always an advantage in terms of utilising administrative channels to make its policies known. In an era of multi-party politics, administrators are well aware of the separation of administrative and political tasks. However, if the personal opinions of an ordinary official deviate from the views of the ruling party and his or her superior is giving open support to this party, it is difficult to go against the expectations of the superior and avoid participation in work motivated by party guidelines.

The exceptional tasks are a drain on the working time of administrators and reduce their apparent efficiency. To a casual observer, the administration simply appears to lack routine. One may ask, however, whether the narrow economic indicator of efficiency is an adequate measure of the functioning of administration. One might think that administration also has less overt and more abstract functions such as the maintenance of law and order, continuity and security. An administration is

the façade of a political community, and the administrators symbolise through their example the road towards the ordered world of modernity..

Work commitment versus local attachment

The British colonial administration established a tradition of circulating leading officials from one district to another. This served both a training function and the enhancement of the official's career. If a person did well, he could be transferred to a richer area or to a higher post. The posting of an official to the southern province was hardly a sign of success. On the contrary, the southern province soon acquired the reputation of a punishment area. This does not mean that all officials working in the area had been incompetent or lacking in development initiative. One can still say, however, that at the personal level of an official looking for advancement in his career and living conditions, the region had a negative reputation in administrative circles (Liebenow 1971). This reputation has been maintained even since the end of the colonial era.

According to post-colonial policy, job commitment is negatively correlated with local attachment: the commitment decreases when a longer period of time is spent in one location; the official becomes involved with local politics and the local economy and after a while can no longer make balanced technical judgements. For this reason the placement policy has favoured the continuous reshuffling of administration through the circulation of officials from one district to another. Administrators are perceived as nomads and they are expected to move to a new location every two or three years.

In southern regions, one can note considerable differences between officials in terms of how they manage to settle down and establish local attachments. Generally speaking, most officials who have financial means try to establish a farm or a business venture in the town where they work. These interests are likely to reduce work commitment in that they are pursued partly during working hours. They are, however, a necessity if an official is to establish social networks, to feel at home, and thus to take an interest in local affairs. Such an interest may also increase an official's commitment to serving the local population. Thus the relationship between local attachments and work commitment is ambivalent: involvement in local affairs may increase or decrease commitment towards work.

One indicator of local attachment is naturally the official's self-image and positioning vis-a-vis external visitors. Since most of the officials come from other regions and a posting to the southern regions is seldom perceived as a particular achievement, one interesting feature of conversations is the extent to which immigrant officials attach themselves to the locality. There are a number of officials, especially Wachagga people from northern Tanzania, who continue to emphasise their place of

origin and who always mention their own difficulties in really understanding the local culture.²⁴ The distinction between the "Northerners" and "Southerners" is reproduced through jokes which perpetuate the stereotypes of people from these regions.

As far as the length of stay in the area is concerned, there is a large difference between the top officials, who are regularly circulated from one district to another, and the lower-level officials, who are posted to new areas only seldom or are 'forgotten' altogether. Although circulation is claimed by foreign aid workers to be a hindrance to a sustained commitment to work, this view is not shared by many officials. They emphasise the positive value of getting to know new environments and enjoying upward career prospects. If one compares the circulated officials and those who stay put, it is difficult to see any direct relationship between work commitment and the length of tenure in one post. Some top officials may exhibit a high level of commitment even though their stay is likely to be short. And some officials who have stayed for a long time in one place have developed a mass of social commitments and business contacts which divert their energies away from their official duties. But others use their long experience and the knowledge of local affairs to draw attention to special resources and problems which a less acclimatised official would find it difficult to detect.

Amongst the administrators, there tends to be a group of "local" administrators. These are people who originate from somewhere within the regions of Mtwara or Lindi. Even if they do not serve in their home district, they still serve in the vicinity, and they are familiar with the local culture and politics. They also speak one or two local languages fluently—a considerable advantage in village level encounters. The local administrators have a strong sense of togetherness and well established links with each other. For this reason, officials originating from, say, Mbeya or Kagera, feel like outsiders. The polarised division between the "local" and "external" administrators is very clear. It seems that local administrators avoid being circulated to distant districts, whereas most of the other administrators are still looking for ways of getting a transfer.

The officials originating from other regions claimed that the local councillors were more positively disposed towards administrators originating from within the region. The ethnic factor was said to dominate the views of district councillors. In the planned administrative reform, the councillors are to be given extended rights to hire and fire key administrators. This may lead to an escalation of ethnic divisions.

24) *The Wachagga are actually well-established in the area through an ethnic association which covers both administrators and businessmen in Mtwara. This association may be a factor behind their strong sense of cultural identity*

Summary: motivation and efficiency in local administration

I have discussed above five issues central to the functioning of local administration. I have argued that these issues are dimensions of an interwoven set of problems and that a proper picture is to be achieved only by studying the issues together. Local administration has definite problems, but there is no shortcut to solving these. We can take our analysis forward only when we put ourselves in the shoes of the administrators and adopt an empathetic attitude towards their real working conditions.

Ordinary administrators at the local level are frustrated by their work, and they have reasons which are hard to refute. Given the low salaries, minimal operational resources and authoritative but secretive leaders, they have rather limited opportunities to demonstrate their competence and to really serve the people. They tend to have a lax attitude to their own work and to adopt a defensive posture and hide behind the mask of authoritarianism when confronted with the demands of the public.

The efficiency of the local administration remains below its capacity because of the internal problems of motivation. One can argue that if motivation could be enhanced, some of the technical problems (which for a Westerner may appear formidable) could be tackled using local networks and practices. This is the message that Judith Tendler (1997) has so powerfully proclaimed.

5.3 ENCOUNTERS WITH AID WORKERS

In this section, I bring the development project workers into the administrative encounters. As I see it, the setting has some elements of a fixed play: whatever aid workers do, they are treated as representatives of a particular class and as people working under particular conditions. The structural features of the aid relationship permeate far beyond a single project. The plans of a project and the intentions of a project worker are interpreted against the background of experience accumulated during previous encounters. These encounters have taught local administrators a number of lessons.

An aid worker can struggle against these prejudices. Idealistic individuals often bash their heads the hardest against the brick wall, while cynical, work-oriented, non-sense personalities may produce surprisingly positive methods of cooperation in practical work situations (Alho 1980). The room for manoeuvre is naturally there, and both an aid worker and a local administrator have some opportunities to overcome the structural constraints. In this section, I concentrate on man-made conventions as institutionalised constraints on aid interfaces. I look at the same list of five factors—though now in a slightly different order—which were:

1. Management culture
2. Operational resources of administrators
3. Corruption
4. Additional tasks
5. Work commitment versus local attachment

Managing change

Development projects require a system of administration which covers financial, manpower and operational control. It is an eternal problem as to how a project can be formulated in such a way that the inputs complement rather than replace existing administrative competence.

An aid project's organisation is normally based on a very small amount of manpower. Thus the people involved need to do a variety of tasks which go beyond their normal expertise. This has the effect of making the organisational structure less hierarchical, or at least leads to the creation of unofficial structures alongside the official one.

In an aid project's organisation, the following key characteristics are worth pointing out:

- a semi-independent organisational structure—there are a large variety of interest groups making claims on the project
- temporal discontinuities, i.e. operations moving slowly, followed by abrupt hectic periods.

The problem that exists between aid workers and local administrators might also be visualised as a conflict between 'development project' and 'routine work'. The notion of aid work is all too often seen as opposite to the notion of routine work. Aid projects are expected to lead to the abandonment of current conventions and to show a way towards new practices. For this reason, the needs of routine administration are accorded hardly any recognition. The administrative machinery is perceived to be simply 'there', waiting to be used instrumentally for new tasks. The administrators are all too easily perceived as instruments for aims which are conceived elsewhere. Development aid workers have, without recognising the fact, been involved in this instrumentalisation of administration. They have frustrated the administrators by imposing their well-intentioned but short-term projects—projects that start a count-down immediately after they have settled in. This view tends to suck strength from local administration.

The aid project workers defend themselves by blaming the higher-level bureaucrats in aid administration. The aid administrators evaluate success on the basis of measurable achievements. Any project needs to have clear, separable and measurable

impacts that can be shown to visiting evaluation teams. The requirements of efficiency are contradictory, so the administrators say, to the slow process of building up diffuse partnership networks.

At the heart of this debate is the question of how an aid project can avoid establishing a double administration. The donor organisations working in southern regions have chosen different routes in this respect. Unicef has been the most systematic in working through local administration. It relies solely upon the use of local experts. It has had operational plans which are very clear, yet allow adaptation by local administrators in their work on preventive health care. Unicef has been able to boast of impressive results in reducing child mortality, but the problem of managing funds has negatively affected the whole programme. Finnida, with its extensive RIPS programme, has been innovative in experimenting with administrative arrangements. Unfortunately, the innovative approach has meant many changes in operational strategies. The local administrators have not always been able to follow and understand the way in which programme resources are allocated to various sub-projects. The Japanese JICA, which is involved in road construction, is an example of an organisation which works strictly on its own. Integration into the local administration is fairly minimal. Presumably the technical nature of road construction permits this arrangement to function.

Decisions concerning the administrative structure made during the planning phase have long-term effects on the way in which cooperation takes place during project implementation. The official project plans, with diagrams of administrative structure, also show the lines of communication and authority. Given the importance of well-defined administrative structure, it is disturbing to see how often the project plans include an inadequately clarified division of tasks, unspecified lateral links and dotted lines indicating alternative lines of authority.

The actual management of an aid project then requires that the project workers make an interpretation of the project plans. Unclear plans result in permissive, open and lax interpretations which are sooner or later bound to lead to disputes over the lines of authority. When these disputes emerge, the financial control (usually in the hands of the donor organisation) is juxtaposed with political control (residing in the relevant local line administration). The management wars take on a curious character when both parties appeal to their own superiors. The aid project workers use financial arguments to justify their position, while the local administrators use political arguments to justify theirs. Paradoxically, both parties are dependent upon each other for the legitimisation of their own existence. Thus letting the management struggle spread into very high-level public arenas is a sign of failure. It is characteristic of management wars that they are waged behind closed doors and settled by means of agreements which are written down—if at all—in a truncated form.

Saasa and Carlsson (see Chapter 2) have shown that when management conflicts

are avoided by mutual withdrawal, the long-term consequences can be disastrous. An example from the south-eastern regions is the case of a major water project (see Chapter 4). The project was managed by means of a "silent" division of tasks: the foreigners did their work and avoided meddling in local affairs. The water project was conceived and implemented as an engineering venture on the turn-key principle. This approach proved inadequate, because it meant that the "ownership" of constructed water facilities was handed over without proper preparations. In the case of hand-pump wells distributed to villages, ownership by a village was not properly institutionalised. Instead the pumps were perceived as the property of the donor agency (Porvali et al. 1995).

At the level of personal, face-to-face contacts, the nature of development-related encounters between local administrators and aid workers tends to be determined by local conventions. Encounters in the office are plagued by a ballast of attitudes and experiences which is very difficult to overcome, even for an experienced and reflective aid worker. The ballast of preconceived expectations is so great that a personal effort to demonstrate a different style seems an uphill fight. If one does not play the game, one may be regarded as a fool and will then need to make still greater efforts to convince one's counterparts.

The issue of maintaining hierarchy versus looking for efficiency crops up repeatedly in aid encounters. The aid workers need to draw upon the support of local administration in order to get their work done. They can either persuade the top local leaders of the necessity of providing adequate staff for project-related tasks or they can use their own financial muscle to recruit the staff directly. In both cases, some problems of authority and chain of command are likely to remain.

The aid workers have a special position on the margins of office politics. Usually they take the easy road and avoid getting involved in any dispute that takes place within the local administration. There are, however, situations in which the aid worker is forced to take sides because there is no neutral ground. When person in a superior position makes accusations concerning the management of a project at a lower level and when aid resources are involved, the aid workers need to defend their work. Accusations can become an art involving complicated tactics. For example, two officials can make accusations against each other during private encounters with the same aid worker, even though, behind the scenes, the two officials are cooperating and are good friends—and each is fully aware of the accusations that the other is making. Such behaviour is regarded simply as an acceptable tactic aimed at winning the trust of the aid worker. The aid worker is given a feeling of becoming an 'insider'. Complicity in this 'insider' game insider may tempt an aid worker to bypass formal procedures.

On the whole, the aid workers have a good capability to present modern formal administrative conventions to the local administration. Aid workers can enhance

the administrative capacities of the local administration through training and the provision of office equipment, and by setting an example. But one still needs to be cautious in parading aid workers as pioneers of formal bureaucratic practices. Aid workers also develop practices such as communicating through informal organisational structures, separating oral and written rules and adopting a 'permissive' attitude towards adherence to budgets. The administration of an aid project deviates in many ways from the models of formal bureaucracy—it is a very intricate complex of transient and culturally loaded human encounters.

The struggle over resources

The problem of double administration is derived from the double level of access to money: high and low. The foreign experts enjoy high salaries, good housing and reliable transport. The local administrators have to content themselves with low salaries, poor housing and unreliable transport. The difference is acknowledged by both parties. It is known to cause friction, but there seem to be a limited number of practical ways of getting around this problem. While salary differences may be unjustified in terms of efficiency and productivity, they can be justified when living costs in the home countries are taken into consideration. Aid workers expect to be able to maintain their standard of living during the work period and in the long term. To put it simply, one would be unable to recruit competent foreign aid workers if salaries were much lower. This contradiction is one of the key problems of aid projects and also one that seems impossible to solve in a satisfactory way.

The aid workers prefer to sweep the irritating money issue under the carpet. The salary of a local official is perceived as a practical issue which relates to needs outside the office (in the category of statements such as "the children are sick at home" or "kerosene is expensive to buy nowadays"). There is a belief that officials complain about money because matters elsewhere (i.e. outside the working place) are not properly organised. These problems may originally be a result of the local administrators' low wages, but one can equally well reject this argument and blame general conditions ('poorly run health care' or 'dishonest fuel dealers').

Whatever the cause, money problems impinge on daily activities from all sides. Moreover, they do not stay at the level of everyday squabbles and complaints. Money issues can influence the organisation of project—its capacity (or incapacity) to create external links, the manner in which practical work is organised, the forms of activities. Money matters are far from being the innocent/irritating source of temporary pain. They are a central issue which shapes the contents and impact of aid interfaces.

This claim is best validated by means of an example. Here I take up the discussion on daily allowances and their distorting effects on work. The donor agencies have much greater resources for the payment of daily allowances than does local gov-

ernment. Thus they are able to employ administrators temporarily for their project work. Requests for administrative support follow the work-plans of the donor agencies and tend to be not very well communicated to the officials. This means that the local administrators are in a stand-by position, waiting for donor assignments. Since donors tend to establish personal relationships with a few selected officials (usually people who speak good English), the situation creates envy among the less successful administrators.

The importance of per diems has attained mystical levels in Tanzania. To give an anecdote—when a theatre group in Dar es Salaam presented the old story of Aladdin, the spirit of lamp, able to make dreams come true, was in a position to deliver countless per diems. Indeed, the main part of the salary of middle and high-ranking administrators is derived from various kinds of allowances. The government of Tanzania has laid down high allowance rates for travel, seminar participation, moving to a new location and the like. It is often incapable of paying the stipulated allowances, and thus the officials have a legitimate reason for not performing their tasks. The same laxity does not, however, apply to the donor agencies, which are expected to pay the allowances in full.

The leading administrators wield indirect authority over the allowances. They can try to influence which of the administrators are selected to accompany the donor agency and enjoy the allowances. The leading administrators may also push for the kinds of activities (e.g. travel, training) which require the provision of allowances by a donor agency. Perusing project proposals emanating from local administration, one is struck by the high cost of resources reserved for allowances. Indeed, some project proposals are actually constructed around the need to generate allowance income. When one analyses the developmental impact of the 'per diem projects', one can readily note that most of the resources are used for administration. The strategic choices of a project (extensive preparation, motivational training, adaptation by locality) are all geared towards the kinds of practices that require intensive participation by administrators.

Paradoxically, the most highly valued participatory approaches tend to be administration-intensive—and thus very expensive. They tend to involve a need on the part of the local administration for vehicles and field-days in order to organise seminars for lower-level administrators and the public. It is only after a sustained effort of at least one or two years that the participatory approach can develop from an administrative-intensive mode of operation to a citizen-intensive mode.

The example of allowances shows how administrative rules establish the terms of an aid interface. The aid interface grows out of a mundane material basis which has a permanence and continuity going beyond the scope of one project.

Fighting or feeding corruption?

Aid workers are aware of the spread of corruption within local administration. They have limited means for revealing the known cases, but they can play their own part in the fight against corruption. When substantial 'requests for help' arrive from high-ranking politicians or administrators, aid workers are placed in an awkward position. They know that what is at stake is the legitimacy of their own work, or even the future of the project. Refusal to help may lead to accusations (letters to higher authorities, unfounded rumours etc.) which are completely unrelated to the request for help. The aid worker cannot always rely upon the simple solution of a diplomatic withdrawal from the awkward situation. The aid worker must then decide: where is my limit?

It is much easier for aid workers when they are dealing with less influential personalities. The aid worker may then adopt a critical stance with regard to the practices of fellow workers and employees. The main problem here is the difficulty of finding adequate proof of the misuse of resources: tracing receipts, identifying purchased items and validating the transactions, accepting the amount of fuel required for a certain trip, and so on. The aid worker needs also to assess the financial implications of this 'law and order' work and to consider, given the low salaries of the local administrators, whether the case is still worth pursuing. For this reason, aid workers resort to the drastic solution of firing only when they identify serious cases of corruption—such as systematic swindling involving spare parts, the employment of ghost workers or the fabrication of an entire seminar.

For their part, the local administrators may also point to irregularities in resource flows controlled by the aid workers, maintaining that they have opportunities to use vehicles for private purposes and project staff for running personal errands, to take holidays while officially travelling in connection with their duties, and to employ relatives and acquaintances. The thin moral line dividing 'normal' conduct and corruption actually reveals similarities on both sides of fence. Both local administrators and aid workers note that official rules.

Core tasks and additional tasks

The development aid projects create additional tasks for the local administration. This is an obvious fact, but it deserves to be underlined: involvement in project work means disruption for a local administrator. Whatever activities had been planned may need to be postponed because the aid project, with its large resources and tight timetables, makes demands upon the administration. The individual administrators who are drawn into the project work may be content with the interruption—it means a change and a better salary. But there are others, not least the clients of the administration, who may feel themselves neglected.

Aid workers should set an example by concentrating their efforts on core tasks. However, we can ask them the same question that we asked the local administrators: what are your core tasks, and is it enough to stick only to them to ensure successful work? At the first glance it would appear that the aid workers should have much less difficulty in answering the question. After all, they have a written job description, and their work is regularly reported on and evaluated. Their work is meant to serve definite objectives mentioned in the project document. In practice, the drawing of a line between necessary and less necessary tasks is not always easy. In addition, an aid worker is expected to acclimatise to the local culture and to express loyalty towards local social institutions and make a contribution to their development. An aid worker may also be drawn into the magic circle when national dignitaries are visiting the area or when a catastrophe demands that extraordinary measures be taken. These kinds of occasions reveal concretely whether the local administrators regard an aid project as having assimilated to the local setting or whether it is viewed as a separate enclave.

In addition to the above extra duties, aid workers need to spend a substantial part of their working time on public relations work aimed at their home countries. This work only advances the project objectives indirectly, yet its importance is hard to exaggerate. The results of on-going development projects are difficult to assess in an objective fashion. Thus subjective images travelling from the site to the home country, whether carried by reporters or relatives, professional colleagues or researchers, are valuable in promoting a positive attitude towards a project. When such visitors drop in occasionally, they provide a valuable forum for discussing the work—a refreshing outsider's view. When they arrive in a continuous stream, they become a burden which distracts attention from the core tasks.

Tourists and true development workers

Aid projects have some impact on the circulation of local officials. The projects tend to provide special salaries/incentives for the key counterparts, thus providing them with an opportunity to stay in one location and—more importantly—to concentrate on their field of expertise. In this way aid projects can slow down the circulation of officials. But they may also have the opposite effect. It is very common for aid projects to send local staff for training elsewhere. This training is expected to increase commitment to the task, but often it functions as a springboard towards a better job in another organisation. The rate of people returning to the peripheral regions is low.

What kind of example do the aid workers provide in this respect? The circulation of workers from one site to another also takes place among aid workers. The job contracts are normally for a maximum of two years. After this period, the workers may extend their contract or move to another location. In fields where technical expertise

is in high demand, it is common for a person to be employed only for a shorter period of time and then transferred to new duties by the company, which has used his or her name as an indication of its expertise in competitive bidding for a new project. Thus the work period may be limited to a spell of one year.

In the 1990s, the pattern of creating technical assistance contracts which include several visits of a few months during the two-year period has become popular. This partly reflects the increase in short-term job contracts in Europe and partly an ideological striving towards defining foreign experts as 'support staff' which is not—and should not be—responsible for routine administration. It is increasingly felt that the long-term employment of foreign experts results in the establishment of conventions which, gradually and without much intention on the part of anybody, lead to the carving out of a separate enclave for a parallel administration.

Short-term contracts are especially common for special auxiliary tasks associated with computer work, book-keeping and auditing, technical training and the like. These tasks need to be accomplished quickly and efficiently. The experts are not expected to have any understanding of the local circumstances. They are expected to walk off the plane and start work immediately.

Local administrators clearly divide foreign experts into two classes: the tourists and the 'true' development workers. The former are there for a short while only, and their work is not of much concern. They are remembered, if at all, from their amusing behaviour or odd characters. The true development workers, who stay for years, are a totally different case. They must be taken into consideration, placed in administrative hierarchies and assessed on their personal merits. The true development workers acquire a reputation, whether they want it or not.

5.4 ASSIMILATION OR PARALLEL ADMINISTRATION?

Development aid workers are usually highly motivated in their work. Whatever they say about the difficulties, their working conditions are still good in that the degree of work independence tends to be high, the tasks are interesting and the pay is better than that in the home country. Development aid workers usually enjoy decent housing and transport facilities within easy reach.

Asking whether the development aid encounter increases the motivation and efficiency of the local administrators is a different question. Here the result is two-pronged: the few administrators directly linked to serving the projects are able to obtain interesting tasks, accumulate new experiences and receive decent salaries. On the other hand, those administrators who are left outside the sphere of the project are likely to feel deeper frustration, because the reference point for relative success and relative failure has been placed beyond the horizon. However hard they might try, they would not be able to make a difference, given the operational resources that

they command. On the whole, development encounters have the effect of frustrating the local administration.

Is there a way for development projects to solve this problem? Can they work in a manner that establishes so broad an interface that there are no corners left for frustration and exclusion? Or is it possible for foreign project personnel to withdraw so completely behind the scenes that their special input—and the consequent debate on distribution of its fruits—can be avoided? I next discuss the matter not as an observer but as a development practitioner looking for novel solutions, and I make suggestions aimed at overcoming the structural problems of project administration.

We have identified a number of problems that encounters in the office are likely to create. These are associated with status hierarchies, operational resources, corruption, additional work tasks and local attachment. Aid projects are likely to make each of these aspects even more problematic and complicated. Whatever an aid project tries to be, it is still an elephant walking to a compound. It cannot possibly notice all the small things that it has trampled on. One might also use another metaphor—that of a benevolent mother. Whenever she gives something to a one child, there are five others who feel that they have not received similar attention. The giver is a source of emerging envy, and envy is a terrible force in a poor society.

Many of the problems mentioned are aggravated when a project is constructed so as to function, in the name of efficiency, by means of a parallel administration. The most simple solution thus appears to be assimilation. This means that the foreign aid workers are given limited roles strictly within the existing administration. They are expected to support the existing administration with their special competence. The financial resources also need to be allocated through the line organisation, and the foreign aid workers must not have any special control over these resources.

This model has been accepted, at least in principle, for the broad sectoral programmes that have been emerging from the mid 1990s onwards. The model enjoys less support among local level projects. The main alleged reason is the fear of corruption. In a situation in which the local authorities have not been able to audit their books and allegations of corruption are floating around, the golden thread running between the aid workers and financial control remains in place. And as long as the thread is there, the basic component of parallel administration is in place.

The road towards sustainable project administration thus involves launching a frontal attack on the problems existing on the management side. The questions to be tackled are really the same as those that we have already discussed. A proper project plan must address the issues of transparent management, proper salaries, the treatment of corruption allegations, the prioritisation of work tasks and appropriate ways of relating to the local environment.

The administration should not be expected to be an instrument—simply there, waiting to be mobilised for short-term project tasks. Rather, the capacity-building of

organisations should be taken more seriously. In common parlance, capacity-building is equated with training. Within the administration, however, most of the administrators work at far below their existing capacities. They are hindered in utilising their potential by structural features associated with pay, organisation and the like. The best that a development project can do in this kind of situation is to pay systematic attention to 'encounters in the office' and to draw serious conclusions from such observations.

The voice of the seasoned expert says: "What about the rules? Project managers cannot make their own rules concerning daily allowances, organisational diagrams and so forth. Surely they have to follow the local conventions." My answer to such an attitude is moderate: the minimum requirement is to make these issues into openly admitted problems which can be addressed at a local level and by higher-level authorities. The structural problems are man-made. Some of them (e.g. salary differences between foreign and local workers) are very hard to avoid, but some are simply a result of administrative conventions or, worse still, of a hidden competition between the donor organisations. Many of these problems can be addressed and settled without the necessity for a local revolution.

Chapter 6

ENCOUNTERS IN THE VILLAGE

6.1 THE VILLAGE AS A SITE FOR AID ENCOUNTERS

Rural development projects stand or fall on the basis of the interfaces that they are able to create. In the modern world, these are increasingly mediated through the mass-media and commodity markets. However, concrete face-to-face encounters have an importance of their own. They have the potential to create a sense of concreteness, personal commitment and shared understanding. Encounters between villagers and outside development personnel should be oriented towards these aspects.

In reality, such encounters are plagued by odd conventions and taboos. These emanate partly from administrative rules and partly from the need to maintain status hierarchies. Whatever the reason, the conventions of outside development personnel—administrators and aid workers—visiting rural villages leave much room for improvement.

In this chapter, I study a situation in which development actors intervene in a rural setting and aim to make a change. I configure the setting as a triangle consisting of villagers, local administrators and the aid workers. The relationship between the villagers and the state administrators forms the established setting, and the aid workers constitute third party which needs to take sides.

Two issues continuously crop up in development encounters at the village level. Firstly, what do the villagers really want; and secondly, how it is possible to identify the neediest people? In the language of project management, we need to ask what the priorities of the villagers are and how we can reach the target groups. Both questions are loaded with a heavy set of connected questions: what is the level of unity in the village; how much do the needs and lifestyles of different classes of people vary; to what extent are the various social categories represented by organised pressure groups; what sorts of power relations exist between the organised pressure groups; how socially distinctive are the marginalised groups; is it more realistic to reach the marginalised groups through the general improvement of the whole community or through simple welfare-oriented policies directed at the most needy people?

All these questions have the same bias: they present rural citizens as a problematic group. At the aid interface, however, one can equally well point the finger at the messengers of development. The problems of development are then seen to consist in the huge cultural difference between the villagers and the administrators. We can now ask: how do the administrators relate to the villagers; how well do they under-

stand the social dynamics of villages; what concrete help can the administrators and aid workers offer to the villagers?

There are many theoretical approaches to the interface between villager and development agent. In addition to the direct analysis of encounters, I have suggested three broad academic approaches to this issue: discourse analysis, political power analysis, and institutional analysis (cf. Chapter 2). I shall now briefly introduce these once more.

The academic discussion on village encounters includes a burgeoning literature concerning cases in which the intentions and motivations of various actors do not match (cf. van Ufford 1993; Porter et al. 1991). The *discourse-oriented* semiotic and linguistic anthropologists have analysed the discursive domains of administrators and aid workers on the one hand and that of villagers on the other. Theoretical discourse analysis has gone still further by pointing out that when people do not understand each other, neither party really acknowledges the depth of the misunderstanding. A curious aspect worth further investigation is the human capacity to build self-explanatory paradigms which can—for a long time and against apparent evidence to the contrary—remain in force. Once a paradigm (or approach, or scheme of perception) has been established, it is difficult to overturn it. When two distinctive and pervasive paradigms meet, the conversation can continue fluently, as both parties stick to their own interpretation of the interests and motives of the other and believe that the other side shares this interpretation. John Gumperz, the pioneer in the study of cultural misunderstanding, has given us a graphic description of this phenomenon (see e.g. Gumperz 1983; Maltz and Borker 1983; Lassila 1971).

The notion of pervasive misunderstanding suggests that the problem in village encounters does not just consist of identifying facts but, to a greater degree, of interpreting the evidence. James Ferguson (1994) has neatly demonstrated the capacity of administrators and aid workers to select an entry point which efficiently limits the scope of analysis and thus steers the results in a predetermined direction. We thus need to ask about the unasked questions in addition to the facts. In addition to the problems identified, we need to scrutinise the process which leads to the omission of unidentified problems.

Another school of thought maintains that misunderstanding is not really the key issue. Rather, a harsh *conflict of interests* moulds development encounters into their final shape. Encounters between administrators and villagers may turn out to be difficult because these groups have antagonistic interests—and both sides are well aware of this. The villagers know that the administrators are collecting taxes largely for their own benefit. The administrators know that they are dependent upon the surplus production of the villagers and that they need to make villagers more productive. Both groups are to some extent dependent upon the other, but their coexistence is far from being a happy marriage. A similar type of dependency, although much more indirect, exists between aid workers and villagers. I call this analytical perspec-

tive the political power perspective.

The third school of thought emphasises the *institutionalised conventions* of aid interfaces. Administrators and aid workers always do the same things when they visit rural villages. They arrive in cars, approach the village leaders, have some meetings and then disappear, only to reappear again after a long period of time. The conventions of these visits take precedence over the contents of the visits—and the villagers feel frustrated.

In my analysis, I place emphasis upon the third, institutional approach because it has received less attention than the other two. But one cannot arrive at a balanced judgement without merging elements of the three different analytical approaches.

The structure of this chapter revolves around the theme of encounters between the villagers and the messengers of development. The conventions and practices that are taken for granted and which constitute the structural features of the relationship are the focus of discussion. These structural features are so pervasive that for a villager there is a high degree of similarity between, say, visits by an agricultural officer and those made by a community participation officer. I discuss special features such as the depth of administrative penetration in rural areas, the behaviour of government officials during village visits and the emergence of brokers between the villagers and officials. I then add the development aid workers to the pot and stir the stew again. I analyse the advantages and disadvantages that result from development aid work at village level. In the final discussion I ask whether the administrators and aid workers really possess enough resources and information to undertake serious village level interventions. Can they—and should they—really understand what is taking place in village level politics? Or should they rather acknowledge the limits of their own operational capacities and stick to the few tasks that they are able to conduct properly? Or are they in fact fully aware of the conflict of interests? When conducting their ritualistic meetings, are they thus simply defending their own interests by reproducing their symbolic power?

The discussion is based on the situation during the 1990s. I present some case-studies in order to illustrate the complex of problems and to provide a stepping stone for further questions. The case-studies are drawn mainly from the village where I have conducted field-studies since 1994. For more background on the social, economic and political structure of the village, see Seppälä (1995, 1996a, 1998d and 1998e).

6.2 VILLAGERS' ENCOUNTERS WITH THE LOCAL ADMINISTRATION

The depth of administrative penetration²⁵

The relationship between villagers and local administration should constitute the backbone of the society, linking the citizens in a shared task: dealing with matters that affect all. But the relationship between administrators and villagers is often a relationship between culturally distinctive groups: educated and uneducated, urban and rural, rich and poor people. Not surprisingly, it is plagued by suspicion. The villagers are sceptical about the commitment of both the village leaders and the higher officials with regard to their needs.

As mentioned earlier (Chapters 3 and 4), the Government of Tanzania has established an administrative structure which, though it has changed many times, has managed to establish a fairly stable organisational structure at the lowest administrative levels. This structure is based on villages, wards (covering some 3–5 villages), divisions (with 3–5 wards), districts (with 10–15 wards) and regions (with 3–5 districts). This hierarchy conceals an interesting complexity: the division and region exist only as parts of central government administration. Separate from central government is the administration of local governments. Each local government has the district as its apex level, while the village is the lowest unit of governance and the ward an auxiliary/administrative unit.

The village leadership consists of an unpaid village chief, a village secretary who is nominated by the government and paid a nominal salary and elected village councillors. These village leaders are in a very awkward position. They are expected to represent the interests of the whole village, but they are provided with minimal legal backing and hardly any financial support. This has led to a situation where the respected traditional leaders tend to take part in village administration, while the younger, wealthy personalities steer clear of such positions.

The next level, that of ward administrators, includes people with some training in their respective fields (i.e. general administration, agriculture, education, health and community development); but again, the financial rewards are very scanty. These administrators have a low profile, and for many villagers their work is unknown. Although a ward official is expected to travel extensively in all villages under his control, older and more settled officials make fewer and fewer trips away from their home villages. In theory, the ward officials could be a vital link between local needs and the sector-wide expertise. In practice, the scarcity of resources prevents them from fulfilling such a bridging function.

25) Cf. Coleman (1977) for a theoretically and conceptually inspiring analysis of 'political penetration' in rural Tanzania.

The higher-level officials comprise district and regional officials. They have a comparatively wide work experience and good educational qualifications. They do not, however, utilise their expertise properly. The district and regional officials identify themselves more with tasks involving planning and decision-making and less with those of implementation. When it comes to sustained implementation efforts, these officials lack a supplementary tier of technical support staff.

The result of such a hierarchical administrative system is obvious, then: the higher level of planning and decision-making is relatively well staffed, but it proves difficult to follow up decisions with implementation. Communications difficulties lie at the heart of the problem. The administration lacks the vehicles to visit villages, and the village leaders lack the means of transport to visit district headquarters. Ward level officials and politicians have some interest in visiting district headquarters more regularly, but they face the dilemma of appearing simultaneously as the legitimate representatives of the villagers and the transmitters of authoritative message from the district leaders. Thus the ward level officials do not organise major meetings on their own initiative. Rather, they are auxiliary officials who help when asked to do so.

The culture of village visits

District and regional officials make an appearance in the villages to promote new projects or monitor existing ones. These visits tend to exhibit a few repetitive characteristics which make them easy to handle but also rather superfluous. Before a visit, an official sends a letter (through official or unofficial channels) to the village leaders, mentioning the date and purpose of the visit. The village leaders then decide how important the visit is. If its importance is high, some steps are taken to inform the villagers about a public meeting and the necessity of a decent turnout. But if the issue is less important or if the purpose of the visit is to deal with something related to specific resources, the village leaders inform only a handful of key individuals, who then officially receive the delegation. Whatever the level of publicity concerning the forthcoming meeting, the visiting delegation is first received by the village leadership and other key personalities. Within this close circle, the intentions and aspirations of both parties are discussed and a feeling of sharing is sought. At the same time the village leaders establish 'ownership' of the visitors. If the visitors are later presented at a public meeting, the village leaders can now confidently introduce them and thus display their own role as important mediators.

District and regional officials have some difficulty in establishing a rapport with villagers during official encounters, characterised as they are by a degree of formality and a top-down way of talking. The top-down approach is evident in the following statement made by a government official: "Whenever I go to the village I try to educate people. At least, they should stop using these small hoes and start to use the

proper ones." Small hoes have become a potent symbol of the backwardness of the Mtwara and Lindi regions, and this example has been mentioned by several officials. The authoritarian style of 'educating people' is reminiscent of the ideological language of government prevalent during the Ujamaa period and even before it. An aid worker comments that administrators use this style to hide the insecurity that they feel when they are placed in surroundings that do not tally with their professional expertise or because "they have nothing to offer". According to another aid worker, district officials do not want to appear in villages at all, because they want to avoid the embarrassment of coming with empty hands.

The village visits are invariably conducted on a tight schedule. When the official meeting is over, the visiting administrators are usually in a hurry to make a similar visit to another village or to return to a town for the night. It is very rare for district and regional administrators to stay overnight in a village. They are normally travelling without any personal effects other than basic hygiene items. They are not equipped to bring the housing and food available in any village up to their requirements. With some equipment such as lamps, cooking gear and portable beds, officials could make conditions quite tolerable for themselves. However, the cultural need to maintain social distance obviously prevents them from taking such an initiative.

A concrete problem of the culture of village visits is the fact that all the meetings are very short and formal.²⁶ After the initial speeches and formal introductions there is only limited time for discussion of the business on the agenda. Any initiative that would require days of extensive training followed by hands-on experimentation using 'the lessons learned' is out of question. The short time available for visits makes them into ritualistic happenings, and their results remain on the level of hopeful statements.

What is the message that is transmitted during these visits? Naturally, the amount of information that officials can deliver depends on their communication skills and on their willingness to use these for the benefit of the villagers. Similarly, the villagers can adapt to the situation and address the visiting official in a manner that draws his or her attention. But the actual level of communication is constrained by the expectations that the parties have concerning each other. The villagers are interested in hearing about the kinds of services and resources that will be made available to them. They are less interested in hearing about new tasks which will impose a burden upon their working time. For their part, the officials are expecting to hear words of appreciation. They are less interested in listening to the sort of eloquent but circumlocutory talk which villagers use to express their frustration concerning earlier encounters or complications associated with the current one. People are more likely to hear what

26) *Comparative case-studies on the authoritarian discourse show a variety of verbal means that the leaders can deploy to emphasise ideology, activate social hierarchies and direct discussion during development encounters. These include simple means such as using the first person plural form, defining the audience as homogeneous (thus excluding the clearly perceived divisions)—and also more subtle tools such as the use of emotional appeals containing a reference to 'traditional' forms of authority. (Parkin 1975; Blommaert 1990.)*

they are willing to hear.

A critical view of the village visits holds that there are still more substantive problems which cannot be explained by either the lack of resources or by the hierarchical culture in the administration. The cultural distance between the administrators' way of working and the villagers' way of solving their practical problems is an even more important factor. This is well captured in the following statement of an aid worker:

Last year I did a brief survey on all of the government officers, asking them what service they, among other things, what service they've provided to communities. First I asked who they thought their clients were and then what services do you think you provide to your clients. The overwhelming message which came back from this mini-survey was that the majority of officers feel completely helpless. Why I say that is because they don't seem to understand themselves what they can provide. As a local administrator, I've been thinking about this whole problem in terms of agency, I've just been analysing what agency different people from different departments actually have. By agency I mean what are they really able and capable of doing. And you find that the majority of government officers, given their training and expertise that they have behind them, they feel helpless.

The idea of being a facilitator is difficult. In a particular sector like forestry, fishery and agriculture, the officers who are going there really have very little to offer. In fact anybody, it doesn't matter that these are Tanzanian officers, the experts who go there have extremely little to offer as well. Expatriate or African, they have very little to offer in many of these communities in my view. As a local administrator the most difficult thing to convince people to do is to ask them to forget about their disciplines, to tell them to stop thinking about your post as a forestry officer and to start thinking of yourself of somebody who can assist people to put together some ideas which might and ought to be backed by whatever external resources are available.

The issue of village visits boils down to the basic question of what the officials have to offer. Delivered as it is during a short visit, the compartmentalised knowledge of extension officers or the advice on developmental attitudes given by community development officers is too distant from the daily situation of villagers to arouse real interest. As an observer says, "it is rather frightening thing that you see the villagers do not want to particularly buy of the things that we have, whether it is knowledge or more tangible items". The idea of administrators bringing modernity in the boot of a car has been tried out but does not really work.

It should now be clear that I have some doubts about the *Pajero culture*, the culture of officials visiting villages by car for a short spell. I ask where the continuity and the developmental sustainability of such measures will come from. As noted in Chapter 6,

the 'per diem' culture is among the major explanatory factors for the creation of the Pajero culture—the culture of big cars and excessively busy administrators.

Village unity and village brokers

So far I have described villagers as if a village constituted a united entity, represented by village leaders. The experience of any administrator visiting rural villages would nullify such a naïve notion. Villages tend to have a diffuse political structure and chronic problems with internal information flows. The idea of running 'common affairs' from a 'common platform' is clearly a misnomer. It is only after the initial decisions have been made and the direction of resource flows determined that the village leaders wish to involve the whole active population. At this stage, the villagers are 'mobilised' to serve the common cause. However, it is very common for villagers to use this opportunity to express their concern at their not having been involved at an earlier stage, an omission which means that the plan of operation has not been prepared properly. If this dissenting view manages to arouse interest and becomes institutionalised, the village leaders' nice plan is shaken.

Luckily, modern development-oriented administrators are increasingly often expected to start with the notion of a disunited village. Their task is to identify a more specific target group within the village. This is the group of marginalised persons, as defined by the agenda of the project. This group is likely to lack a mechanism of political representation and to be composed of people without any previous common commitment. For this reason, the administrators need to find ways of identifying these persons, and then ways of communicating with them, getting them involved in development work and creating a minimal organisational structure to facilitate any future cooperation.

In such a situation, the village leaders are likely to choose one of two options. Either they can oppose (or dilute) the targeting agenda on the grounds of its divisive effects, or they can play the game but offer themselves as the proper administrative channel for reaching the target group. In both cases, the chances are that the stipulated target group will reap only a small part of the fruits of the project.

When trying to overcome the problem of targeting, visiting administrators are really hampered by their own way of operation. The practice of making short visits in the village is not conducive to the establishment of functioning organisational structures for, say, youths or landless people. These groups need more than a slight push in order to become visible actors in their own right.

Despite all this, the diffuse village structure includes established brokerage channels which provide an alternative to the official administrative hierarchy. Rural villages have individuals who, because of their previous jobs in urban centres and at various places of work, enjoy links with religious leaders, political leaders and large-

scale business operators. These local middlemen are commonly part of the village establishment, but in certain situations they can provide an alternative channel of communication which is valuable for reaching the stipulated target group. The brokers can establish alliances between groups of villagers and external administrators. They can provide information, administrative backing and practical support in order to connect the target group with these administrators.

The use of middlemen is common simply because the marginalised groups are disorganised, lack a 'voice' and are therefore willing to accept unofficial spokesmen. Poor villagers find it much easier to deal with a known middleman than with a less trusted village leader or an unknown official. It is usual, for example, for women's groups to seek a male spokesperson to represent them on public occasions.

Similarly, we find that some bridging work is done by administrative officials who have some previous links with the village. Administrative officials with special links can use their intimate knowledge of a local setting to inform the relevant villagers about the planned activity, thus preparing the ground for a smooth start to the project. Such officials can also take sides, thus steering the targeting process in a direction that they perceive as useful. Given that the interval between transfers is relatively long amongst lower-level officials, such officials are likely to have established a personal rapport with several villages during their period of work in a district. This is a resource that can be used—for the benefit of targeted people or of the officials themselves.

Encounters in Majamaki

Next I present a case-study on development encounters in one village, here called Majamaki. Majamaki is a relatively large village located in the Lindi region. It has a long history reaching back to the 19th century. The social structure of the village has changed for many reasons, but as far as the recent past is concerned, special mention should be made of two upheavals: the villagisation of the early 1970s, which involved the amalgamation of four or five scattered villages into one orderly site, and the flood disaster of 1991, which destroyed the village site and forced the population to move one kilometre west to an area of slightly higher altitude. These and other changes have created a social structure which could be described as multi-layered. It is composed of people representing various ethnic groups with matrilineal and patrilineal descent systems, Moslems and Christian, supporters of the ruling party and some adherents of the opposition parties, and rich traders and farmers but also very poor ones. The key individuals in the village leadership are people who already had a high standing at the previous village site (and whose power stems from their claiming descent from the first immigrants to the area, from their having established solid land ownership during that period and from their luck in not losing tree crops dur-

ing the villagisation of the 1970s and consequently having strong clan/ethnic support). These are likely to be elderly Moslem men living near the marketplace or the road. The people living in the peripheral areas of the village are likely to be worse off on all these counts (i.e. they have less land, have moved to area more recently and represent small clans/marginal ethnic groups). The major division within the elite is that between the old Islamic and rather traditionally oriented village gerontocracy on the one hand and the younger male traders on the other. The division between the older and younger generations is also evident in the population as a whole. The young people are less keen to make their living scratching at the soil with a hoe, preferring to look for all kinds of non-agricultural sources of income. The older leading personalities (who may have rebelled in the same way during their own youth) can only complain loudly about the behaviour of the young. The older leaders still have the political village institutions (village council, cooperative and Mosque) under their control, and they run village politics on highly personalised/parochial lines, eclectically relying upon their ethnic/clan, religious and age-based credentials.²⁷

In terms of social services, Majamaki is actually among the better endowed villages in the region. After the flood, the government provided help in building the village office, the school and the co-operative store. The village also accommodates a health assistant's clinic, though this lacks decent premises. The village is also the centre for a ward and is thus home to three ward officials.

Recently the district administration decided that the village of Majamaki should be granted the status of a town because of its size, estimated at 5,000 persons. The relevant ordinance states that all lots in townships must be registered and that the owners must pay a levy. Once the villagers realised that the new status would mean new taxes, they started to object to the change. "Look at this village. Here we are cultivating cassava everywhere and they call this a town. Besides, we do not have any services", a villager complained to me. Hearing similar complaints, the district council promised to upgrade the services. Through a district councillor, the villagers initiated a project to build a health clinic.

Health clinic

A health clinic was an obvious choice for the villagers. The existing clinic was located in a corner of the cooperative store. The room was extremely hot, did not have (a generator and) a refrigerator in which to store medicines and was uncomfortable in every way. At a meeting, the villagers accepted a plan to collaborate with the district council in building a new health clinic and promised to contribute shs. 500 each. After the money had been collected, the construction work started, with the district

27) For an elaborate analysis of similar historical layers of social structure and their influence upon the shaping of village politics in Masasi district, see *Wembah-Rashid* (1983: 71–176).

council providing some materials and a contractor to organise the work, while the villagers did the manual labour. However, after the site for the foundations had been prepared, the contractor disappeared, claiming that he had not been paid. The work came to a halt. Soon afterwards, the district council came to collect the cement, saying that it was needed more urgently elsewhere. The villagers were disappointed and started to make accusations. A villager exclaimed that "we are tired of our (village) leaders because they are offering just lies." Another stated that they were not getting any information about what was wrong: "Usually the leaders do not tell us anything. If you go to the office to ask, they argue that I just want to cause confusion and that I should quit instead of making questions." Yet another claimed: "Our leaders are lazy. They do not bother to go to the district and ask for our clinic. They travel only for their own benefit because they travel just to meeting where they are given daily allowances."

The village leaders had different interpretations. One leader said that they had done their best: "We have tried to contact the district but we have not received any proper answer. We might as well die here." Another went on to say that the answers of administrators would be unreliable: "If you meet someone, and he promises to settle the problem, you may soon receive a letter from another administrator who gives a different order."

Following the case to the district level, I found out that the contractor had stopped working because, although he had a formal contract, the payments were delayed. After he had left the site, the district authorities had tried to locate the local contractor but had failed to find him. This incident is far from peculiar because practically all businessmen interviewed mentioned that the district council was unreliable in its payments. The businessmen were rather reluctant to participate in further tendering because they were unsure that they would be paid for work performed.

Water project

A water project was initiated at the same time as the clinic project. The problem of water was severe, and the villagers agreed at a meeting to contribute shs. 100 each. The technical options were assessed by water experts, and a plan for a small piped water scheme was drawn up. A water committee was formed to collect the contributions. It was agreed that construction work would start once the initial collection was completed.

The collection of payments never started. A member of the water committee complained that the village leaders had not provided any receipt books. The village leaders maintained that the project had been planned and would go ahead, though slowly. Apparently, the clinic saga had made the village leaders cautious, and they did not want to start a collection which might be unsuccessful and thus undermine their authority.

Maize mill

The village council is running one income-generating project, namely a maize mill. This project has managed to arouse a fair amount of debate in the village. The project is showing a profit, but the amount of this profit and the use to which it is being put have remained a mystery to the villagers. Some years earlier the previous village chairman was asked to answer the same questions. He was an evasive person who avoided calling general meetings and debating any issue in the open. When he was finally called to account, it emerged that the evidence of income had been destroyed. Since some shs. 600,000 was estimated to be missing, trust in the chairman was withdrawn, and he had to quit. Later on, a case concerning the matter was filed in the magistrate's court.

When asked about the present income of maize mill, the current village chairman started by claiming that the income was just sufficient to cover the operating costs. He then complained about the taxes imposed on the mill. The annual licence fee is shs. 15,000 and the income tax 5,000. Every month, stamp duty to the amount of shs. 1,500 also has to be paid. Thus the district council is squeezing the profit out of the project. Again, the various parties blame each other, and there is an atmosphere of scepticism.

Poll tax income for a village

The biggest secret in the village administration is the tax income to be returned to the village. Male villagers are currently required to pay an annual poll tax of shs. 2,000, and according to the relevant regulation and the words of the district council chairman, one fifth of this income is to be returned to the villages for their projects. Even the educated villagers do not know of this regulation, and they certainly do not have any idea of the existence of the money. In this large village, the tax income would amount to shs. 400,000. In many districts, the regulation is a dead letter, as the district councils fail to return any money. Apparently the scarcity of resources at district level prevents the council from adhering to the regulation.

When questioned on the matter, the village chairman complained that the money coming from the district was of so small an amount that it covered only a minimal allowance for the village administrator. He also complained about the demands made by the district. For example, the village government has to contribute to the district-wide (ruling party) projects of Uhuru Torch, undertaken annually to symbolise the spirit of nation building.

Developing village level organisational structures

Organisational development based on traditional institutions is commonly presented as a wonder recipe for development. In Majamaki, traditional institutions with appropriate mobilising power are hard to discern. Each ethnic group has some leaders of its own; however, they have hardly any function outside the ritual context. While the 'traditional leaders' have been mobilised by the local MP in the neighbouring Masasi district, the leaders in this area have not been given a similar boost. For this reason, traditional organisational structures are not visible.

At the same time one should bear in mind that the official village leaders tend to have credentials emanating from outside the political sphere. These leaders tend to be men (and occasionally women) who enjoy a high status in the Islamic community, or who have gained themselves a name through long-standing success in the resolution of disputes, or who have established a reputation within their ethnic community. Although they are political nominees, their adherence to party ideology plays a secondary role in their political work. Rather, they are mainly influenced by parochial loyalties.

The history of Majamaki includes an era when local organisational development was given a fair chance. This was the case during the 1970s, when the village ran a number of village projects and organised villagers around them. The party had also its organisations for women and the young people, and these organised their own activities. The negative side of these developments was the fact that other groups were excluded from the organisational field. The political culture of this era was oriented towards the supremacy of official organisations, and all other organisational ventures were seen as 'subversive'. This attitude started to change in the 1980s, but there are still some traces of the old ideology at the village level. People who are not interested in official village organisations are unwilling to set up their own organisations, or to formalise their daily networks to any great extent. The only 'independent' organisational ventures are the new women's groups, which are formed and registered for the sole purpose of making them eligible for a district-wide loan scheme. Even these women's groups are dissolving, because the opportunity to get loans, though publicised extensively in the early 1990s, never became a reality for any known women's group.

A village is, almost by definition, a unit for the levelling of accusations and the spreading of rumours. In a village, a lack of development activities is compounded by the plethora of interpretations of the misuse or non-use of existing resources. Very often, the parties accused are those within view, and the more distant forces are omitted from the analysis. Above, we have followed a trail of accusations leading from an ordinary villager to village leaders and upwards to the district councils. At the next level, we could possibly discover further accusations, aimed at the central government and the donor agencies.

A voice from the other side of fence comes from a government official who puts the blame upon the villagers: "I said to my fellows that what we lack here is commitment. In Kilimanjaro (i.e. the official's own home area) it is the parents who contribute to the construction of schools because they are committed."

Discussion: continuity and sustainability in village encounters

The above description gives a rather negative view of administration in rural Tanzania. The system has only a limited capacity to actually promote developmental interventions. However, the administration is successful in maintaining political stability and a sense of administrative continuity. These functions are crucial, and this is acknowledged by villagers, who repeatedly compare the situation in their own country with that indicated by the disturbing stories coming from neighbouring countries such as Rwanda, Mozambique and Kenya. At the same time, the rural villagers are unhappy at the deterioration of social services and the general lack of governmental development measures.

In defence of the government, one can say that it has consciously (although under considerable donor pressure) chosen a new, market-oriented strategy in which part of development effort is deliberately left to the people themselves. Using the market and the mass-media, they are expected to launch their own development initiatives and to harness them for their own benefit. However, rural people have not changed their view concerning the functions of the government. They still expect it to take the major initiatives. This view is not surprising, given the way in which officials behave during their visits to rural villages. The local administrators are the face of the government that the villagers encounter. It is perhaps not a far-fetched generalisation to say that the local administrators prefer to maintain the image of an almighty state with the capacity to intervene in all walks of life. The local administrators have not really taken to the role of 'supporting' actors, i.e. that of helping the villagers to help themselves.

I have tried to show that an ideologically crucial element of administrative practice is the tradition of village visits conducted by carloads of officials on a tight schedule. These visits are less practical than they might be, because they create a shallow institutionalisation of the development initiatives. Such visits can lead to positive results only if a few 'brokers' manage to link the external development initiative with the expectations of the targeted group. However, even these positive cases may be lacking in sustainability.

The popular solution to the problem is a reliance upon the traditional organisations. This solution is suitable in some parts of Tanzania. But in the village studied, organisational development drawing its strength from the traditional organisations inevitably gets bogged down.

The only real solution to the problems associated with administrative encounters with villagers seems to be to strengthen the legitimacy of the official village and ward level organisations. These organisational levels require a push in order to develop routines and structures with a capacity for sustainable communication. The local leaders need tools for continuous communication both within the village and with outside agents. The communication needs to be so extensive that the leader's use of information as if it were private property on the one hand and the culture of rumours amongst those lacking any information on the other can be avoided.

6.3 VILLAGERS' ENCOUNTERS WITH AID WORKERS

The culture of village visits: towards participatory approaches

Donor agencies tend to be fairly invisible in the villages. In the world of oral culture and parochial interests, the donor agencies—with their tendency towards written documentation, wide geographical operations and a technical approach to (political) decision-making—very seldom are perceived in village politics as a force to be taken seriously.

When aid workers come to a village, they tend to have a narrow contact surface. In addition, the physical distance separating the aid workers from the villages has meant that encounters are few and sporadic. It is still most common for an aid worker to appear in the village office for a few hours and to meet only a few selected persons.

The aid workers share the Pajero culture of hasty village visits in the company of local administrators. It may actually be difficult for a villager to discern any difference between a visit related to an aid project and a normal administrative visit. In numerical terms, the number of aid-related visits is higher than that of ordinary administrative visits, because the donor organisations have more resources at their disposal to pay for vehicles and daily allowances.

What is interesting about the aid projects is their attempts to break away from top-down approaches. Several donor organisations in the study area have made attempts to use participatory approaches in village encounters. Unicef has launched its own system for monitoring progress in a participatory manner, Finnida has conducted radical and extensive training on participatory methods for administrators, and large international NGOs such as Oxfam, Concern and the Red Cross use participatory methods to identify their target groups and establish rapport at the village level. Next I describe the approach of a typical participatory village project.

Working with participatory methods

It is normal for a participation-oriented village encounter to start with a PRA (participatory rural appraisal) exercise, which lasts for two to five days. During this period, different techniques are utilised by external experts to collect information on the social structure of the village. A common feature of these techniques is transparency: the results are clearly visible and they can be presented in a simple, understandable form during a public gathering in the village. The aim of these gatherings is to stimulate debate on the need for a village-based development project. If it is found that there is adequate interest, a system of continued encounters is planned, and the foundation for a project is laid.²⁸ At this stage, development projects tend to revert to the old routine of distant control. It depends on the donor organisation's degree of self-discipline whether it is able to keep up the initial interest and maintain a close link with a village or whether the village becomes an object of conventional village visits (i.e. hasty, unexpected visit after long spells of non-communication).

Participatory approaches can rock the conventions of village visits in very basic ways. As an experienced aid worker says:

It's all about how you develop the forum of communication in a village. If you set the forum up in a very traditional form of way, having the villagers sitting on the ground and the visitors sitting in the chairs with the chairman and the secretary of the village, then you will get that type of very limited rhetoric which always starts up with: "Thank you very much for coming to this village. We are very happy that you have come to our village and chosen our village", on the side of the villagers. And on the side of the visitors that usually starts: "You are very lucky, we've been directed to your village by the district commissioner. Your village is privileged to have us visitors here." All of that type of rhetoric will be encouraged if you set it up in a formal way. But you can set the communication process up in an entirely different way, by working with groups in the village. For example, recently I've been working on land tenure and we've been working in three basic groups: old men, young men and women. The three groups have done different work and then presented their work back to each other. By doing that you break all of these traditional norms—or these visitor-villager norms—that have been built up over the post-villagisation period. You move into a completely different type of dialogue. A dialogue where the outsider is a listener and the insiders are talking to each other.

All this requires simply coming into a village with a different attitude. Of course you have to explain at the beginning very clearly why you're there and what you're there

28) I avoid using the conventional terms "planning" and "implementation" when discussing participatory projects. These projects consciously try to break away from the formal model of a project cycle towards a more processual approach. This break is, of course, difficult to make, and some donors succeed in it better than others.

for. But after the initial—and what is generally quite a formal—presentation of ideas, [what you have to do is] splitting everybody up, going into the actual field, having a look at land settlement disputes or having a look at agriculture or actual special cashew trees. That breaks all of this routine and by breaking the routine you bring yourself into entirely different type of discussion. You can do it in a quite short time, you don't have to spend months with those people. In a week you can do extremely lot of work. Starting with this very short formal presentation, breaking up into groups and then different groups forming their own, or doing their own work and forming their own presentation. You're very much just an assistant in that sense.

Linguistic anthropologists have analysed these kinds of contact situations, and their results points in an interesting direction. The anthropologists emphasise the importance of non-verbal communication in the creation of power relationships. Thus ways of greeting, the seating arrangements, the ordering of presentations and similar factors are often used, consciously or not, to reproduce a definite social hierarchy. Such non-verbal communication can have the even more specific effect of assigning a contact situation to the category of a certain kind of meeting—in this case to the category of 'formal meetings held to deliver a development message'. The type of a meeting, then, has an impact on what people feel that they can talk about and what they regard as inappropriate. Thus the non-verbal communication has a direct impact on the verbal communication. (Bloch 1975; Grillo 1989) Similarly, when the rules of non-verbal communication are broken (e.g. when people visit fields instead of sitting in front of the party office), the rules for appropriate verbal communication are reshaped.

The advantage of the participatory approach is that villagers must also move away from their conventional attitudes towards a development encounter. This is expressed well by an aid worker:

I feel that the usual way that donors or donor-funded teams or even government teams going to villages illicit strategic discourse by the villagers. The villagers strategise and try to push the outsiders into doing things. They use this "should be, ought to be" type of language. If you go and start communicative processes where outsiders are not expected to bring things, people will talk about how things are rather than how things ought to be. Villagers talking about how things are reveal aspects of their lives which they would never reveal through the ought-discourse. What it leads to is a soft analysis rather than to trying to push the outsiders into delivering something which they haven't delivered.

One should ask two questions about the participatory approach to development. Firstly, is it really able to break the ice and create trust among the sceptical villagers?

This question can be answered by observing projects at the village level. Secondly, does the effort pay off? This question can be divided into three further questions: Is it a cost-efficient way of using resources or is it too administration-intensive? Are local administrators able to follow this path, given their resource constraints? And does the participatory approach create sustainable results which justify the initial administrative investment?

Overcoming the scepticism of the villagers

PRA exercises are a convenient way of breaking the conventions of village visits. The exercises are effective simply because they break the routines of the official meeting. Instead, the administrators and foreigners are seen to intermingle with villagers, asking questions of some interest and making mistakes which diminish the aura of etiquette. These are all positive elements helping to create a proper start for project planning. But the question remains as to whether at the next stage, despite its intentions to the contrary, PRA still falls into the trap of the 'quick and dirty' work pattern (to use Robert Chambers' phrase for conventional village visits) and—in order to get things going—ends up reproducing the existing power hierarchy in the village.

An aid expert tells of the problem of maintaining the interest of villagers and of the advantage of using media to overcome the problem:

The first time you come to village and villagers, nearly all villagers will give you the benefit of the doubt. In other words, they'll give you some space, some time, without demanding any immediate result, without demanding something concrete from you. But if you then go back and you haven't developed that material, joined that village's material with other villages' material and perhaps, in the case of media particularly, have not edited it in some part, even if it is a rough sample of dialogue that is going on, discussion that is going on in other villages as well as their village—if you don't do that then you get some very dramatic drop in interest. If you do do that, and you come back with edited material and people hear themselves speaking, see people from other villages talking about similar issues, you build a very strong report with all of the villagers who were involved, particularly those villagers who had contributed. In number of these types of media processes, we've built up an enormous amount of trust with some of those more vocal people.

Different projects have had widely varying success in maintaining the interest of villagers in participatory approaches. These approaches tend to be more effective when they have a clear target group which has its own resources for maintaining its internal organisation. Some of the production-oriented youth groups with regular core members and a permanent production site have demonstrated a capacity to maintain

cooperation with the donor organisation. Some village level projects with a clear target for upgrading the basic social services have received the support of an adequate number of villagers. These examples show that the demand for and supply of aid can be made to match at the village level.

One simple factor in the degree of success is physical distance. It is obvious that the donor organisations have limited opportunities to send a worker to visit each village site weekly or even monthly. Villages within a reasonable distance of the donor headquarters are likely to receive visits more often. The villagers can also—in person or through a broker—visit the donor officials and report on local problems. They can maintain effective communication—a prerequisite for proper cooperation.

Not all participatory projects are successful. Generally, the failures tend to be projects which lack a clear objective and those which are located in distant areas. They fail because the initial encounter is followed by erratic visits and unclear objectives presented by a collection of different aid workers.

Participation: getting involved in village politics

The donor organisations are interested in getting involved in organisational development at the village level, yet they shy away from intra-village conflicts. This paradoxical situation is a concrete result of the participatory approaches, which though they are 'political' in their attempts to influence the distribution of power and control over resources, lack the 'political' element in the sense of relating to struggle and conflict. In other words, 'participation' could be translated as providing power to marginalised people without taking any power from the current power holders. This formula may work in some situations, but in the resource-poor environment of south-eastern Tanzania, power-games are often perceived as zero-sum games: if you get more I will lose.

In every participatory process, aid workers have to decide what is the limit to their political involvement. A typical example is the selection of the village representatives for a project planning exercise. Besides the village leaders, the district councillor also influences the selection process. The question is then whether the aid worker accepts the nominated representatives. An aid worker explains his view:

I could see there is a kind of power structure which is playing a role within this selection of volunteers and facilitators within the community. Out of the 21 at least ten, almost half—that is my anticipation—are likely to be bought by some of the structures. I am not very much worried about the mistakes they make, even if they make mistakes. It is internal, it is a home affair, it is their own village.

A coordinator of an international NGO working on a grassroots project expresses the need to get the targeting right, but also the equally important need to avoid any

expressions deviating from the formal criteria of targeting. As it is, targeting is a tool for making allocative decisions without appearing to show a personal bias in favour of any individual or geographical unit.

Whether the selection of the most vulnerable groups is political depends on how one describes 'political'. The radical element is there but I would say maybe it is more of a social grouping because the category of vulnerability is more of a social label than a political label. There would be some kind of advocacy involved if you are trying to empower more vulnerable people—that is a political element which cannot be avoided. But I do not think it should be the top priority. NGOs and politics is quite dangerous.

The south-eastern regions exhibit a few exceptional cases of participatory development where the donor organisation, after having stirred the pot and created some political activism, has continued its involvement in a responsible manner. The case of the marine environment/dynamite fishing intervention (see Section 4.3) is one example. The question remains as to whether donor involvement in village politics is helpful for marginalised people in the long run. Do the workers of a donor agency really understand the roots of the political divisions in a village? If they acquire a fair understanding, can they find efficient ways of siding with the marginalised people? Have they the means to shoulder responsibility for the consequences that possible political confrontation may spawn over a longer period of time?

In some cases, the usage of the term 'participation' in the general apolitical sense rather than with reference to a party, ethnic, location or class basis is a deliberate choice on the part of aid workers. They want to restrict their political involvement because they are familiar with the limitations of their own understanding and the limitations of the intervention tools that they command. It is a rational choice for an aid worker to speak of 'participation' instead of 'oppression' in more specific terms.

The efficiency of participation

It is easy to criticise participatory approaches as less cost-efficient than others. When solutions are tailor-made for each village and lengthy consultations are held at village level, the costs for a minor project can be astonishingly high. For example, an administrative investment in a project aimed at enhancing the productive capacities of youths in an NGO project can amount to twenty times more than the resulting business profit. When such levels of inefficiency are reached, the normative and moral basis for fostering participation is rendered invalid. Inefficient participation is also unsustainable participation.

Cost-benefit analyses are a sharp tool for distinguishing between the kinds of activities that the government/donors are efficient at delivering and those where they

are less efficient. Generally, the government/donors are efficient at providing the kinds of services in which a standard solution can be replicated by means of routine administration. The government/donors are less efficient at dealing with private production because of the highly segmented and location-specific markets.

A coordinator of an international NGO underlined the long-term positive impact of participatory processes:

I would argue that efficiency should not be measured in time required for planning and mobilisation. You have to accept that this kind of approach would take longer, but it does not mean it is inefficient. Because if you are talking about clear targeting through better and more participatory research, so you will be getting clearer targeting, clearer administrative problems and a clearer idea of how these problems can be addressed. I think you are looking at better efficiency certainly in the long term, because you will be having a more effective project.

In general, the proponents of the participatory approach maintain that the cost-benefit analysis does not tell the whole truth because it does not deal with the aspects of 'human capital' and 'social capital'. The term human capital refers to the practical skills that are generated in the process and which have a long-term positive impact. Social capital is an overall term for organisational capacity within a civil society. This is again a direct benefit, yet it is difficult to assess in monetary terms.²⁹ The adherents of the participatory approach maintain that the major hindrance to development is really the 'passivating' social setting. Therefore any solutions that make it easier for the villagers to organise themselves, to find ways of expressing their needs and to seek locally adapted opportunities have major multiplier effects.

The problem with participatory approaches is that they straddle a double agenda. On the one hand, they try to work in the field of conventional development work, constructing wells and training nurses. On the other hand, they try to mobilise people politically. The double agenda has evolved from an advanced analysis of development problems and it is an expression of a holistic approach to the identification of sustainable solutions. The double character of the participation agenda is well captured by an aid worker:

29) The term 'social capital' has recently been used extensively as a factor causally explaining rural development. According to a recent World Bank study, in Tanzania social capital at the community level impacted on poverty by making government services more effective, facilitating the spread of information on agriculture, enabling groups to pool their resources and manage property as a cooperative, and giving access to credit to people who have been traditionally locked out of formal financial institutions (Narayan 1997). However, the study throws all kinds of organisational forms onto one heap and uses the spread of organisations as an explanatory variable. In this analysis (and in other similar analyses), one must question the direction of causality. Does 'social capital' generate wealth—or could the causality run the other way round?

What I think is happening is, ironically perhaps, the splitting of participatory development into participation as ends and participation as means. We see certain projects where participation is being used as means. It is really just a concept that many hands make the work light. Though that is interesting and although it is effective, it is not a solution. It is just participation as means. As far as participation as ends goes, that is incredibly difficult to demonstrate to people and is an ideology. I think that is possibly why so much of our activities have been channelled into workshops, exchange visits, discussions, films and communication. The participation as ends is not something that you could demonstrate in a three or five year period. It is something that needs to happen on a much bigger scale—both geographic and time.

The problematic side of the double agenda is that in the case of any given project the various stakeholders may emphasise different aspects of the project. It may happen that the donor organisation places emphasis on political mobilisation, the mediating administrators are interested only on the technical side of development, and the villagers are divided in terms of whether they see power or tools as their major problem. The result is a mountain of misunderstanding—and the extent of misunderstanding may go unnoticed by all the parties concerned.

The two perspectives described, reflecting as they do economic and political emphases, cannot be measured with one yardstick, and for this reason the debate can easily go stale. A possible step forward consists of taking the political aims seriously but using the *cost efficiency of political mobilisation* as an indicator of success when comparing different interventions.

In such an analysis, political mobilisation is given priority *as an end*, but the means employed to achieve political mobilisation are compared using economic indicators. If we have, say, a million dollars for political mobilisation, should the money be used—*because of the greater efficiency*—for activities taking place alongside concrete development initiatives (i.e. projects) or to directly support political actors?

Sensitivity to local social forms

The ultimate idea behind community participation is the identification of local social forms superseding the superfluous and universal concept of a community. It is expected that the social categories identified emanate from cultural forms indigenous to the area. But how do we face the problem of defining "indigenous" cultural forms? In the crudest culturally oriented thinking, the indigenous cultural forms are measured by the rule of exoticism: only social forms which cannot be discerned in Western societies count. Thus circumcision groups and ritual dancing groups are given considerable attention, Islamic mosques are more interesting than the familiar Christian congregations, and so on. This is, of course, a mirror image of the Western eth-

nocentric approach. The idea emanates from an ahistorical conception of the purity of local social forms. Any historical Western influence (e.g. through colonial cooperatives or through trade unions) is perceived as detrimental to the "pure" social organisation.

In south-eastern Tanzania, the aid organisations have done some digging into 'indigenous' social forms. For example, the Cashew Management Programme has tried to identify the local social forms, particularly labour-sharing groups (Sikana 1998). The vitality of such groups differs according to area; in general, the non-monetarised labour-sharing groups are weakening, and in some areas they have died out altogether (Wembah-Rashid 1975 and 1983; Seppälä 1998e). The practical usefulness of such groups is due to the fact that they can be used as a basis of labour for agricultural projects and for the construction of community service facilities. Since labour-sharing arrangements have in the past been based either on a neighbourhood or a kin-group, the labour-sharing groups need to be modified if the model is to be used for tasks covering a whole village. Given the monetarisation of labour, the utilisation of traditional labour-sharing institutions would amount to the 'reinvention' of the tradition.

In comparison, community based labour recruitment has more recent roots—in the village-cum-party projects which had their heyday in the 1970s. The villagers are used to all kinds of compulsory and semi-compulsory communal projects such as *bega-kwa-bega* farming and the clearing of paths. The successfulness of a task has depended on its perceived utility and the fairness with which it has been managed. Villagers complain loudly about those people who have not participated in work. They are, however, still willing to participate in well managed high priority tasks. The interest shown in the construction of a health centre in Majamaki is an example of the continued existence of this tradition.

In the field of savings and credit, the aid organisations have made a number of attempts to identify indigenous institutions. At least RIPS, Unicef and Gatsby Trust Fund have conducted studies on the existence of traditional merry-go-round type savings groups—so-called *upato groups*. The results show that traditional saving groups are rather rare; they require a secure source of income throughout the year, and women, who are normally the people involved in these groups, tend to have seasonal non-agricultural income. In the areas affected by the floods of 1990, the savings groups were also swept away. In urban centres a couple of slightly more formalised savings and credit societies have managed to survive. These traditional systems function on a small scale and rely upon social mutuality, a fact which makes them difficult for donor agencies to approach without tampering with the social process. The donor agencies have been more successful in reviving loan systems based upon exchanges in kind. RIPS has successfully used a system in which a person receives a goat and promises to give the first two kids to other villagers, who then

enter into similar loan obligations. The scheme's repayment rate has proved to be high, as the villagers perceive the system as fair and firmly rooted in the local tradition of mutual obligations (Adkins 1998).

The donor agencies have undertaken experiments in creating new organisational savings systems for entrepreneurial activities, though with limited success. In addition to the organisations named above, the Small Industries Development Organisation and the Women's Appropriate Technology Fund have also provided loans. The primary target groups have been women's and young people's productive groups. The ability of these groups to handle finances and make investments has proved to be deficient. It seems that the use of the finances differs substantially from the individual and minor investments made by women through traditional systems. Therefore, the repayment rates of the donor funded loan schemes are tending to fall. Interestingly, many organised women's and the youth groups have a background in the CCM party organisations for women and youths. Earlier the party organisations were the only bodies allowed to establish such groups; and while financial support for the grassroots party organisations has dwindled during the 1990s, the cultural heritage of the CCM is still evident in the form of social continuity.

Indigenous cultural groups have also been identified, but their mobilisation for community participation has been very limited. The ritual groups, dancing groups and circumcision groups tend to comprise persons who are living at a physical distance from one another and who are connected only by these special bonds. Although such a bond may have once been rooted in kinship, the lax way of identifying and choosing important kinship links means that the bond is also likely to be weak and contestable. In other words, these institutions do not incorporate 'prescribed' offices with great hierarchical power over members. Perhaps the only social kin-based bond with more depth to it is the *Mwenye* institution among the Yao and Makua—at least in today's Masasi district (Wembah-Rashid 1975:48). The authority of the *Mwenye* as an ethnic/clan leader within a restricted territory has managed to survive throughout the decades of administrative upheavals, and allegiance towards the *Mwenye* seems to be reviving in the current multi-party setting. In general, however, mobilisation of community participation based on ethnic and clan alliances is fraught with disputes and accusations, and the donor agencies have tried to stay at a safe distance from these types of social mobilisation. The donor agencies have almost invariably worked through a current official institution of village administration, though they have attempted to use wealth-ranking exercises and problem-tree analyses to confine actual activities to a more specific target group.

This presentation of indigenous social forms produces a surprising result. It seems as if the indigenous institutions which have their roots in the social entities created during the party-cum-village mobilisation campaign of the *Ujamaa* period still have the most viable social foundations. The social forms which have their roots in the

pre-colonial and early colonial periods are either too weak or geographically too diffuse to provide a social basis for mobilisation campaigns. The donors seem to have realised this fact and thus they are able to cooperate with relevant social groups.

6.4 DISCUSSION: EFFICIENCY VERSUS SUSTAINABILITY

The sustainability of the operations of rural development projects is often questioned. The capacity of projects to establish services for the rural population—scattered over different areas and lacking efficient means of communication—has often been limited. In this chapter I have highlighted certain factors which have made project work difficult in south-eastern Tanzania. The main problem has been the limited operational resources of the administrators in relation to the large geographical area. However, this problem is greatly amplified by a set of institutional practices relating to the way in which existing resources should be used. The rules and practices concerning salaries, allowances and transport for officials have tended to direct the provision of services towards a modus operandi in which a few officials visit a village for a short period of time. These visits are negatively affected by social distance and limited time, and consequently they tend to have a rather ritualistic character.

The culture of hurried village visits has repercussions for the impact of projects. When the messengers of development conduct only a superficial discussion in a village, they tend to support the existing village elite. The analysis of the social dynamics within the village is incomplete, and thus the targeted inputs are not likely to reach the marginalised social groups. These problems are connected with the institutionalised practices by which working relations are established and social hierarchies reproduced during the encounters.

Is it true that the villages are amorphous places, or sites for struggles, where there are no sets of shared needs which might be translated into ‘projects’, ready and waiting to be taken up? To a large extent this is true. But the villagers are also conversant with the culture of projects (choosing committees and so on)—as much as they are used to Coca-Cola. What they want is a fair deal.

It is also naive to imagine that changes leading towards equality and general economic advancement are values that enjoy unqualified support. The status quo is in the interest of some people. If changes are objected to, it may well be that this is so because powerful individuals find their own position threatened. There are rational motives for conservative behaviour.

The sustainability the village encounters has been a major issue for some donor organisations working in the Mtwara and Lindi regions. The international NGOs in particular have tried to establish themselves so close to the villagers that the link between aid workers and villagers will remain alive. The cultural objective is to establish a bond which resembles the sort of links prevalent in an oral culture—links based

on repetitive communication, negotiation over minor issues and the acknowledgement of the various local interest groups. Such discursive formations are difficult to build, cumbersome to maintain in operation and hard to control, but they are likely to increase the level of understanding and thus the sustainability of the intervention.

I have noted that the donor agencies have employed a variety of participatory approaches. They have also been active in propagating methods to local administrators. Now, after some years of concerted effort, it is possible to identify many cases where local administrators have adopted participatory methods.

An interesting finding of the analysis is that it is important for the donor agencies to work through 'indigenous' organisations but that the most functional and firmly rooted indigenous institutions are those which were created during the *Ujamaa* period. This period saw a major push with regard to institutional innovations, education campaigns and organisational learning. Even if many institutions failed to 'deliver the goods', the organisational culture has survived to the present day. This organisational competence (which may well be lost within a generation unless CBOs manage to emerge in large numbers) is the key resource for the community participation activities of the 1990s.

The handbooks on participatory project planning provide examples of the attainment of ever more detailed information on village settings. In this discussion, I have asked three (complementary but logically distinct) questions concerning the limits to increasing our knowledge through participatory methods.

The first question concerns the economics of knowledge. What is the trade-off between increased knowledge of parochial politics and efficient project management? Generating knowledge tends to be a labour-intensive task, and it has calculable 'shadow costs'. When knowledge is generated in a participatory manner, with a number of actors being sensitised, motivated and kept involved in the process, the knowledge generated tends to have a high price. Given the material poverty of the targeted people, one is justified in questioning the poverty reduction effects of the increased knowledge generation.

Secondly, if an understanding of local politics is valued *per se*, one can still ask what level of conscious non-intrusion is needed in order to avoid the excessive politicisation of the project environment. Should administrators or aid workers avoid utilising their knowledge of the local political situation and 'showing their own cards'? Cautious administrators and aid workers may rely on a technical manner of reporting simply because they are too well informed about the possible negative impacts of the controversial issues for the project advancement. It is quite possible to keep a project going by officially keeping a low profile while addressing the thorny issues—if at all—behind closed doors.³⁰

30) This observation can be raised to a level of wider academic discussion. It can be argued that any critical study of rural development projects which bases its argumentation solely on the analysis of published reports seriously undermines the self-understanding and intellectual capacities of the administrators and aid workers studied.

Thirdly, when extensive project interventions are conducted, there are good chances that the aid projects will create new village level organisational structures. When the intervention is conducted in a participatory manner, the ideological agenda of the facilitator may result in its generating organisational structures which represent social groups with no previous common representation. In other words, it may *construct* social entities for its own purpose. When this is taking place—shaking up the political status quo in the process—facilitators need to ask what is the limit to the moral right of outsiders to change the political constellation in a community?

These three questions cry out for answers, and the answers are not easy ones.

Chapter 7

NEGOTIATING PROJECT INTERFACES: REFLECTIONS ON THE CASE-STUDIES

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I summarise the findings on project level aid interfaces and make further analytical comments. In the previous chapters, I analysed a shift in the way of running aid projects in south-eastern Tanzania. I introduced the theme of horizontal links at the local level and argued that a project can be firmly rooted and sustainable only when it is capable of creating a wealth of horizontal links. These links must be varied in order to allow some room for manoeuvre. In other words, a project needs a set of possible partners so that it can reorient its activities in a realistic direction that attracts local support. Instead of having a predefined set of official 'counterparts', a project requires a set of partners who share similar basic principles.

This approach is very different from that of the conventional structure of aid analyses emphasising vertical links. In conventional analysis, e.g. logical framework analysis, a project is expected to achieve theoretically defined developmental objectives which are first analysed within the national context and are only residually connected to local political aspirations. The deductive logic of the logical framework is very helpful in ensuring the prioritisation and consistency of various development projects. However, it is based on the premise that development projects derive adequate justification from their conformity with national priorities. If we make the bold proposal that the mobilisation of local resources is a paramount factor for development processes, the horizontal links become highly important. In order to succeed, projects need to be embedded in their concrete operational environment.

In this chapter, I look at project level aid interfaces, combining the theoretical and empirical comments of the previous chapters. In the second section of the chapter, I summarise the findings on the aid interfaces as they emerge in 'offices', in 'villages' and in the 'political arena'. In all these instances I continue to use a decentred analysis and to ask what development aid has had to offer to an already existent and highly institutionalised setting. The third section goes more deeply into the political analysis of aid. I ask what is taking place when 'negotiation' is given a central role. How does the change in political culture actually take place? Are the aid projects having a strong or a weak impact upon the local political culture? My basic contention is that most of the effects of aid projects are due to institutionalised practices and are largely 'unintended' impacts. For this reason, a single project does not, and

cannot, change much—it is constrained by the mass of fixed expectations on the part of all the other local actors. The aid projects share a definite culture, with its own inertia, and thus the local projects can change aid interfaces only if—as a group and with the support of the policy level actors—they address their own culture: working methods, social configurations and political involvement. In the final section, I turn to the key question: is the project type of aid worth preserving? More specifically I ask: from the perspective of enhancing democratic and sustainable development, is the project type of aid worth preserving?

7.2 EXPERIENCES WITH THE VIABILITY OF LOCAL NEGOTIATIONS

South-eastern Tanzania is conventionally presented as a peripheral area where indigenous development efforts are very few and where governmental and donor initiatives leave behind very limited traces. The history of past external initiatives is a long one, but the learning process taking place from one intervention to another seems to be problematic. The analysis of projects conducted from the 1960s to the 1980s reveals a chain of projects in which each new project has dropped in from outside, worked for a while on its predetermined objectives and left at a time when the results have started to appear. Taking the perspective of a historian, one might say that the development efforts of the past have repeated the same mistakes: construction around a specific centre-oriented organisation, the use of most of the resources for the planning and administration of projects, the possession of limited means for effective communication downwards, and a lack of ways of involving the inhabitants in a meaningful way.

I have argued that some recent projects have produced a marked difference in this previously existing pattern. They have been able to widen their social contact surface and experiment with strategic choices: bringing new actors to the fore and providing new roles for old actors. The experiments are commonly carried out under the banner of 'participatory development'. This term, too worn and empty in some circles to arouse any interest, seems to have really found a place in project practices in south-eastern Tanzania. It is also important to note that participatory development has not been given a simple and single interpretation; experimentation with participatory approaches is widely practised. How can the firmly institutionalised *status quo* be shaken by such experiments? Is it possible that 'vested interests' can be overcome by using participatory approaches? What has emerged from these experiments?

In the section on *encounters in the offices*, we noted that institutional inertia is difficult to eliminate. The administrative culture is based on a rather authoritarian and hierarchical command structure which is not supportive to independent initiatives coming from lower-level administrators. Official organisation is weakened by widespread corruption (diverting financial resources from core tasks) and additional tasks

(diverting working time from core tasks). But the central problem is the inadequate resources at the disposal of officials. The officials suffer from very low salaries, limited access to transport and very scarce technical tools with which to work. For these reasons, officials spend most of their time either working on secondary tasks in the office or engaging in private income-generating activities.

I have presented aid projects as a kind of additional resource in this situation, yet a historical analysis shows that the continuous existence of aid projects has shaped the basic features of the intra-governmental administrative practices. In other words, the government has organised its administration relying upon the premise that a constant flow of aid projects will continue. The government has been able to pay below-subsistence salaries and set high levels for allowances because it has known that the donor agencies will thereby be tied into the payment of recurrent costs. The donor agencies must rely upon people from the government and are capable of paying for the high allowances. Although this 'silent contract' functions well on the surface, it is hardly a deal capable of generating sustainable development. Rather, it has reinforced predatory practices: the administrators are oriented towards a per-diem culture of seminars, travel and yet more seminars. The developmental impact of this pattern is, to put it mildly, dubious.

The past experience of administration was based on a compartmentalised structure in which donors were allocated a fixed position and a limited number of administrative counterparts. The recent experiments with participatory development have expanded the contact surfaces of aid projects considerably. Such projects may now use their resources to cooperate with politicians, civic organisations and businessmen. In the new situation, the counterpart organisation has limited means of controlling the whole spectrum of encounters. Rather, it must adopt complex strategies, e.g. establishing ad-hoc coalitions for project management. It is possible that administrators also undertook such initiatives during the previous decades, but then they were conducted under the counter, whereas nowadays such coalitions are sought actively and openly.

When it comes to *encounters in the villages*, the historical way of organising field operations is slowly changing. One can easily identify a previous tendency to organise such operations in a top-down manner. The higher-level administrators were clearly given the job of acting as policy makers, while the administrators at the operational level were perceived as messengers of development—and the message was expected to be delivered without too much interpretation. The villagers saw this pattern as a top-down approach.

The practical problems of centralised government have already been outlined repeatedly: the lack of transport and other operational materials made the developmental input of town-based officials hollow and ritualistic. Since the administrative resources were limited (and since the political strength of the middle-class adminis-

trators is obvious), the lowest levels of administration were left with absolutely no resources. The ward and village level administrators invested their time in common causes, with hardly any real support from the government. The villagers were able to choose some village level officials, but if the latter did not deliver (or if they embezzled the existing resources), the villagers could only fire their leaders and try new ones. Villagers were able to provide only very limited material and political incentives to encourage active and forward-looking individuals to shoulder the responsibility for village affairs.

In south-eastern Tanzania, the majority of donor organisations started to rely upon participatory planning and implementation approaches during the 1990s. The participatory projects cite a wide village level contact surface as their *raison d'être*. In terms of analysing intra-village social processes, such projects have made substantial progress. They have identified the special needs of marginalised social groups such as youths and people with insecure land rights. The main problem is still how to move on from this identification work to sustainable project implementation. Regardless of their intentions to the contrary, the participatory projects tend to share the Pajero culture of village visits. The aid people visit a village for a day or two and then expect the villagers to digest the experiences of encounter. Although the intentions of participatory projects are radical, their operational practices at the village level still exhibit many features of the old patterns.

Participatory projects place great demands upon the villagers because, instead of just providing labour input, they are also expected to reflect upon their own social structure and to create new social institutions. These requirements are actually very demanding. Because of the complex inter-linkages of village politics, the requirements have wide potential repercussions for totally unrelated activities and practices. For example, the simple idea of enhancing preventive health services may be seen as a threat among religious leaders with curative-cum-spiritual roles. For these kinds of reasons, the participatory projects tend to produce shallow results in terms of organisational development.

The most obvious results of the participatory projects are a kind of shaking up of the *status quo* and the instigation of open political discourse. The impacts of the political discourse may, however, be unexpected and beyond the control of the project. The project officers nevertheless perceive a new political discourse as a definite indicator of success.

Political encounters constitute the third field for analysing local encounters. The history of the era of independence exhibits contradictory tendencies. The increasing centralisation of (i.e. financial control of) administration from the 1960s to the 1980s meant that, at the same time as the political competence of citizens (enhanced through vigorous mobilisation campaign) was increased, the actual opportunities for political decision-making were curtailed. Instead, political decision-making became

the province of a party-cum-administrative oligarchy. Since resources were allocated from the centre, each segment of the local oligarchy had direct control over its own enclave, and from the local perspective, the result was patchy and unbalanced.

The recent shifts in the political field have been significant. A separation of party from administration has been accomplished, and genuine multi-party politics have been allowed to develop. Multi-party politics is slowly expanding from the centre to peripheral areas and is changing from populist politics to serious challenges to the dominant party. The separation of party from administration has made it easier (in terms of legitimisation) for other actors to approach politicians or administrators. Thus the separation of roles has been instrumental in the enhancement of the local coalition politics.

The donor agencies have played an instrumental role in this shift. Although they have limited their official involvement in local politics (relying upon the non-party political banner of 'participation'), they have still fed the political initiatives of administrators with resources. Given the dominant role of the ruling party, the CCM, in local politics, aid interventions have inevitably tended to provide support for this party. In general, however, the support has been directed towards the renewal of the political culture as a whole.

7.3 LION, RABBIT OR ELEPHANT? AID PROJECTS IN LOCAL POLITICAL NEGOTIATIONS

Interpreting the impact of aid projects on local politics

An old fable told in dozens of versions relates how the animals of the savannah decide to compete, and how each animal, relying on its own strengths, takes part in the competition. The fable commonly includes the Lion, the Rabbit and the Elephant. The Lion is a strong and determined animal which wants to rule the world. The Rabbit is presented as a weak but clever animal which is able to manipulate the other animals and reach its own goals. The Elephant is also a strong animal but, because of its large size, unable to properly perceive its surroundings. In the competition, it is the Rabbit which wins out over the other animals. What kind of animal is the aid project when it enters the local scene?

The political impact of aid projects can be analysed by means of a number of competing frameworks. Interestingly, the results of the analysis depend crucially on the degree to which we take the intentions of the aid projects at their face value. If we use a framework which is aid-centred and accepts the aid discourse, it is likely that we will see aid as having a strong influence in the direction of democratisation and good governance; an aid project is likely to look like the Lion. If, on the other hand, we concentrate on the empirical analysis of the political negotiations taking place in connection with the project, the results are likely to look substantially differ-

ent. It is more likely that we will discern fewer of the predetermined impacts and more of the local struggles. In this perspective, our aid project looks like the Rabbit, which needs to negotiate its way. Thirdly, we can focus the analysis on the common conventions of the aid culture and identify the taken-for-granted premises within it. If we use this framework, it is likely that aid will look like the clumsy Elephant, which, regardless of its intentions, tramples the grass around it.

In the following discussion I present three frameworks which one by one shift the emphasis gradually from an aid-centred discourse towards the decentred historical analysis of social relationships. At the same time, the emphasis is shifted from conscious political efforts towards the unintended and less consciously created impacts. The frameworks are:

- the enhancement of democracy as an explicit project aim
- the political struggle over aid
- the institutional impact of project aid.

I should note that a generalising judgement, based on theoretical perspectives, on the political impact of aid projects does not do justice to the variation between projects. The following characterisations should rather be seen as tentative ideas in the search for a comprehensive perspective for evaluating local aid politics. It is easy to see that the three perspective complement each other and that all of them have their merits and weaknesses.

The Lion: enhancing democracy as an explicit project aim

The first and most straightforward analytical framework is the developmentalist view of democratisation. According to this view, the intention of aid projects to enhance democracy and good governance is taken as an unquestioned starting point. A project is to be measured in terms of how it succeeds in these aims during its formulation and implementation. Like the Lion, an aid project seems to know exactly what it wants and feels confident of its right to present its views. In this approach, the political impact of aid is analysed against a formal index of the political representativeness of the parties concerned. Project negotiations are carried out well when the process resembles the ideals of the Western democratic traditions. The observed development is compared to how a thing 'ought to' be. This interpretation of aid politics is rather narrow and mechanistic.

When discussing the conscious impact of aid on democratisation, we first need to analyse whether the projects aim explicitly and solely at the strengthening of democratic institutions and good governance or whether these aims are supplementary. The possible project approaches to democratisation are the following:

- direct support for parties and the associated political machines
- direct support for the democratisation of local administration
- direct support for the local (traditional and modern) organisational forms
- support for rural development through democratic governance.

In order to make the basic distinction clear, I divide project approaches into politico-administrative and developmental approaches according to their impacts. The first three categories in the list are project approaches which aim at politico-administrative impacts, while the fourth category reflects the project approach in which the politico-administrative impact is a supplementary aim. On the basis of the case-studies, it is clear that practically all the projects fall into the fourth category in south-eastern Tanzania. The aid projects have had a very limited capacity to work through the local democratically elected bodies or—when they have noticed deficiencies in the operation of such bodies—even to support the democratisation agenda. There is no donor organisation which is experimenting with the ‘democracy route’: systematically organising planning and implementation through the elected district and village councils. Only the REDET project can be singled out as a project aimed at strengthening the local political machinery. Some donors (Unicef, RIPS) have allocated some funds through the district councils, but these attempts are still experimental. Instead, the donor agencies have almost unanimously taken the ‘community participation route’. In other words, they have increasingly tried to include several actors, in the name of the participatory approach, in project planning and implementation.

However, the aid discourse tends to salvage the democratisation agenda by maintaining that democratic governance is built into the rural development projects. The explicit emphasis on participatory planning during the planning phase and on community participation during the implementation phase are paraded as the proofs of the positive effect. Thus the Lion is able to define its own political aims and decides on the ways of attaining these aims. The case-studies presented above show that at the level of explicit policies the aid projects do currently take community participation seriously. If one uses the yardsticks of the aid discourse, the rural development projects have managed to make a significant contribution to democracy and good governance.

The Rabbit: getting involved in tricky political struggles over aid

The widely used framework of project aid politics claims that the local political arena is based on patron–client relationships. When a project enters an area, it lands in a setting of competitive patronage networks. In order to survive and succeed, a project must establish liaisons with key actors in some of the most powerful local patronage

networks. Like our Rabbit, the aid project needs to feel its way around the difficult problems. If the aid project is clever enough, it manages to form necessary coalitions and attain its own goals. However, the process whereby these goals may possibly be attained is affected by a number of hurdles and complications.

The aid projects are perceived as dependent partners in the sense that they depend upon the support of the patronage networks. Because of the complexity of these networks, the projects tend to avoid stepping on anyone's toes and end up being passive partners as far as the shaping of patron-client relationships is concerned.

In this interpretation, the project has its own motives (such as survival and growth), which conflict with the task of enhancing local democracy. Aid projects are temporary entities, and their very survival is always at risk. The early discontinuation of a project is seen as a failure. For such mundane reasons, the aid projects tend to support the prevailing administrative and political conventions—for the status quo. The strength of a project in terms of bargaining power varies from case to case. Large aid projects are able to buy loyalty and trade in support. Instead of being passive partners, the aid organisations can be said to make holy and unholy deals for the sake of their own objectives.

The second framework of the patron-client network seems, at a first glance, a convenient option for analysing project aid politics, because by using this framework one can readily address the centralised and personalised character of administrative power which conditions the operations of the aid agencies in a specific location. Some larger projects have clearly developed a close working relationship with local leaders, and these relationships are accompanied by mutual benefits. A detailed analysis of such patron-client relationships is difficult, however, because their functioning is based on non-documented encounters which are later on reported only in the form of hearsay and gossip. On the basis of gossip, one may judge that political and administrative leaders clearly create pressure towards forming patron-client relationships and that the project leaders need to act in a tactical fashion when accepting or turning down various claims. The aid project workers can also actively seek the protection of local leaders. During the early stages of the project, when an institutional setting is being formulated, the project staff and local administrators can make deals on project activities. At the later stages, when the project's administrative structure is fixed and the resources are tied, unofficial deals start to emerge.

Some indication of the strength of patron-client networks could be provided by analysing the unexpected diversion of project funding away from the items mentioned in the project document. However, one should note that the existence of a patron-client network does not necessarily mean the use of funds for corrupt activities. Even developmental and constructive working relationships may take a form of patron-client relationship.

The idea of 'trading' in partnership is based on an idea of mutual benefits similar

to that of patron-client relationships, but with the difference that now a donor agency is perceived as a strong partner. A donor agency may exercise an influence upon other actors if it is in a position to choose its own partners. In other words, an aid project with an open mandate (i.e. project objectives) has the power to create its own working environment, whereas an aid project with a predetermined and strictly controlled project document must work in a given social environment. The aid projects operating in south-eastern Tanzania vary a great deal in this respect. At least during their first years of operation, the new international NGOs, Concern and Action Aid, have had considerable freedom to look for partners. The Finnish funded RIPS, although supervised by representatives of Finnish and Tanzanian governments (the latter having close links to regional administration) has managed to develop an extensive group of working partners. Most agencies in more technical sectors (e.g. JICA in road construction) have opted for partnerships with the relevant established sectoral institutions.

I have noted earlier several times that all aid projects engage in trading in partnership in the sense that they provide financial incentives. These incentives are salary top-ups and are normally provided in the form of allowances or transport and occasionally in the form of housing.

Although their financial muscle may explain how successful various projects have been in terms of negotiating over their aid interfaces, one should not belittle the courage of aid workers in experimenting with new partnership arrangements and participatory methods in the 1990s. Although the recent experimentation has been receiving support from aid administrators in higher quarters, many local political actors have been sceptical about it. For them, the experimentation has been a nuisance and even a threat. Thus the aid workers have had an uphill battle to make their ideas palatable.

The Elephant: the weight of institutionalised roles and conventions

The third framework for interpreting the political impact of aid projects is based on the historical analysis of aid as a set of institutionalised but changing practices. When aid projects are analysed as a totality at a given time and place, we come close to the conventional ideals of history and the social sciences. This kind of analysis shows that aid projects are the children of particular epochs. The aid workers to a large extent take their work practices for granted. After all, there are fixed work descriptions, rules for making payments and rules for reporting. These rules together constitute a role for an aid worker and the official relationships with the other parties. The aid project resembles our Elephant, which is used to following its normal route; without noticing, it steps on the minor actors.

The institutional approach is geared towards a structural analysis of the prevailing

situation. It is more suitable for analysing a political situation than a process of change. Because of the perspective chosen, the analysis is likely to establish that aid projects have had a very limited impact on political power. If anything, the analysis is likely to show how the aid projects have helped the existing local power holders—through financial support and simply by being there—to maintain their position.

The clumsiness of aid projects is a matter which is worth analysing in some detail. The roots of this clumsiness seem to lie in the administration of aid; while aiming to enhance the quality of aid, it creates rules and regulations which tie the hands of aid workers. The rules and regulations often concern operational practices (recruitment and payment rules, matters to be reported on, budgeting categories) and thus look like neutral administrative rules. They can, however, create considerable obstacles when transferred to a rural area of a distant country. The technical rules and regulations may seem to be instruments of power which the powerful cherish as if the possession of them were their birthright. In other words, it is easy for aid workers to take the rules of the aid game for granted. This is one of the sources of the clumsiness of aid projects. The history of aid projects in south-eastern Tanzania is littered with inflexible project formats which are implemented because the aid workers must adhere to the project ‘objective’ as described in the initial planning document.

The other side of the coin is the fact that the local actors have learned to expect aid projects to be governed by a set of rules which—although showing some variation due to the number of aid organisations backing them, still keep within the same parameters. The expectations of the local actors are so deeply rooted that it is very difficult for an innovative project to win their confidence. The conservative attitude of the local actors then diminishes the political impact of a radical project. The case-studies include a few examples where the project staff have tried to change the role of the local administrators working with the projects from that of a ‘ruling power’ to that of a ‘facilitating provider of services’. These radical attempts have had great difficulties in achieving results. This shows that one project is unlikely to be able to challenge the institutionalised rules governing aid practices. However, a group of projects that consciously address such institutionalised practices may have a political impact.

The question of the impact of aid projects on local politics thus concerns the *local coordination* of aid initiatives. The politically progressive donor agencies would have strong political muscle in local political arenas if they could agree upon common positions in the fields of aid practices and policies.³¹ If donor agencies are able to find complementary roles and to share some basic principles and even some resources, they are likely to have a strong and constructive position vis-à-vis local actors. In such a case, orchestrated action may prove to be an efficient tool for dealing with the secretive enclave politics. However, the experience gained in south-eastern Tanzania

31) *The lack of formal coordination amongst the donor agencies can naturally also be perceived as a positive factor, because organised coordination might easily result in a set of externally (i.e. undemocratically) imposed conditionalities.*

shows that the donor agencies are more willing to coordinate than to be coordinated. Although most of the aid project persons working in the region know each other, have close social contacts and discuss work-related issues in local restaurants, formal cooperation at the level of institutions is resisted. The aid agencies do, however, borrow ideas and analytical approaches from each other. The concrete result of this informal cooperation is the development of a culture of experimentation with participatory approaches. In this situation, the administrators and other actors involved exhibit a considerable amount of tolerance. They accept a set of donor ideas which have a vaguely similar orientation but which lack a common structure.

In south-eastern Tanzania, the health sector is an interesting exception in the sense that it has managed to run locally coordinated activities and include donors under its umbrella. With German financial assistance, the district health officers of the Mtwara region have produced high-quality health sector plans which are able to list all the existing sectoral local and aid funding and then to argue rationally for a definite line of resource utilisation.

The animal character of a project

I have used the animal metaphor to demonstrate that by choosing a perspective we are able to show strikingly different aspects of the political impact of aid projects. The animal metaphor simplifies things and thus makes the differences more pronounced.

What kind of animal is an aid project? How does it behave in the landscape of local politics in south-eastern Tanzania? The question still lingers and calls for an answer. Rather than providing a single straightforward answer, I first take one step backwards—as we academics are so used to doing—and ask, *which local actor* should be brought forward to give the verdict? The answer is then as follows: for the majority of the rural population, an aid project is either the Elephant or the Lion. Aid projects are mostly doing their own business, and they have their own motivations and reasoning to justify their operations. Local people may perceive an aid project as a clumsy or a determined actor, but in any case it is beyond their control. However, some elements of the rural populations may also perceive projects as less impenetrable—even if the motivations for shared interests differ. For the local elite (including the administrative counterparts), the aid projects may also appear as Rabbits which, when challenged, may prove capable of modifying their operations and even making interesting propositions.

If we made a detailed comparison between projects sharing a location, the metaphor of a competition between the animals could be taken further. The historical evidence shows that aid projects can learn from each other. Therefore it would be as useful, now and then, to compare projects sharing a location as it is to organise

competitions between the animals. In the fable, it is always the Rabbit who wins the competition. Although one might feel sympathy towards a certain animal, one should still notice the merits of the other animals. Although all projects have their strengths and weaknesses, they are still capable of improving, when placed into a competition, their behaviour in the savannah.

7.4 THE POLITICAL SUSTAINABILITY OF PROJECT-TYPE AID

In Chapters 3–6, I analysed project level aid interfaces in south-eastern Tanzania. The argument was that the project format has experienced a reform, expanding the local aid interfaces and thus increasing the political sustainability of projects. When a project is firmly rooted in the local setting, it is more likely to produce results involving positive long-term impacts. The intended impacts may also attain a relatively greater degree of importance, and some of the negative unintended impacts may be avoided. Now we can try to assess the argument. Has the reform described actually taken place? Should we continue planning more projects in the belief that the new projects are socially sensitive and are enhancing democracy? Alternatively, should we continue the reform of the project format and make yet more radical alterations? Or should the project type of aid be stopped completely because, even when politics is given attention, the projects fail to address such politics properly?

These questions are not of merely theoretical value. Aid administrators around the globe are looking for viable alternatives to project-type aid. In the next chapter we discuss sectoral programmes, which, although they have many project-like features, also deviate from projects in many respects. Conventional projects are also being challenged by the civic and non-governmental organisations, by the emphasis being placed upon cultural and trading issues in international relations and by the whole globalisation agenda. Thus the ‘project people’ have a case to answer. In what follows, I try to give a partial answer to the question posed in the previous paragraph. My answer is confined to the political sustainability of project-type aid. In addition one needs to consider separately the economic efficiency of project-type aid vis-à-vis other approaches. However, that issue is beyond the scope of this study.³²

On the basis of the case-study, I argue that the project format has already at this time experienced considerable changes but that much remains to be done. While the elements required for sustainable projects are already at place, adherence to their use

32) If project-type aid is to be properly analysed, the analysis of social interfaces is necessary but not sufficient. In addition, the impact of project-type aid on the transformation of economic structures should be scrutinised. Is project-type aid economically efficient enough to be continued? Do the projects manage to increase (location-) specific production capacities better than other forms of aid? Or are the administrative (technical assistance) costs too high, thus making the project format economically non-viable? Are sectoral programmes or macro-economic adjustment programmes more efficient tools because they minimise the costs of constructing and maintaining aid interfaces? These questions can only be answered using different kinds of materials and methods.

at project sites could be far more systematic.

While I maintain that much remains to be done, I also argue that paying single-minded attention to political aspects should not lead to more and more sophisticated tools for negotiating on project interfaces. The negotiation process can be a very complex, labour-consuming business which, if it is conducted without attention to economic fundamentals, may have effects which are contrary to the original agenda. Thus community participation, the involvement of civic organisations and democratic mobilisation need to be adjusted to the economic importance of the project.

Can we say that project-type aid should be continued? This study aims to be thought-provoking and challenging. Instead of providing a single answer, I raise a number of questions which help to carry further the analysis of the political and social feasibility of the project aid format.

Firstly, can we say that the project format is a single approach, shared by all agencies and projects? I have noted many differences between projects in terms of political intervention strategies, administrative arrangements and the targeting of outreach operations. These variations show that charismatic project leaders are able to shape the projects, thus stretching the operational limits of the project format. It is also true that even when the different agencies arrive with a standard project package, the local actors can, through their own cultural orientation, shape the projects. Although the project format has achieved a high degree of standardisation, becoming effectively a major tool of westernisation, the concrete contact situation is still a meeting ground for (at least) two cultures.

Secondly, what is the importance of the length of intervention as far as its political sustainability is concerned? Given the complexity of many development matters, it often takes two years simply to identify the problems, and another two years to win the confidence and get properly established. At this stage, when the project is reaching a productive phase, it is often given a first warning about the termination of activities, and the financial resources start to decline. Could one increase the political sustainability of projects simply by means of increasing the length of intervention? Or is it true that lengthy interventions tend to create their own patron-client relationships and dependencies which, although functional on a temporary basis, are deficient in terms of sustainability in the post-intervention period?

Thirdly, what is the trade-off between local level aid coordination and the imposition of local level conditionalities? When aid projects identify a political problem, such as the lack of representation of women in politics, they are likely to be able to exert an influence *only* when they are united. This calls for location-specific coordination of aid projects. This kind of coordination tends to be lacking, because aid projects perceive it as unethical: all coordination should be handled by the recipient. This stance is politically correct but it fails to ask: is the official representative of the recipients a truly democratic representative?

Fourthly, given that local administrators have fixed ideas on the project format, should more emphasis be placed upon a radical reformulation of the format? The Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD is a major think-tank behind a number of standards related to development practices. Its main concern has also been administrative control over aid projects. All its guidelines related to project planning, implementation and monitoring are guided by the perspective of a central organisation which needs to set the major aims and—suspiciously—monitor adherence to its rules and objectives. If we would give local political sustainability greater importance than the control and surveillance function of headquarters organisations, we should make major alterations to the official project format. Instead of working through a control-oriented logical framework, could we work through supportive contracts between local stakeholders?

These four questions need to be answered when discussing the merits of the project format compared with other aid instruments.

PART III

**CHANGING
AID POLICIES AND PRACTICES**

One of the difficulties inherent in any assessment of aid is that the past—even where there is adequate information about it—is an imperfect guide to the future.

Robert Cassen

Chapter 8

THE IMPACT OF SECTORAL PROGRAMMES ON LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

8.1 NATIONAL PROGRAMMES AND LOCAL ISSUES

The final section of this book introduces the discussion concerning the level of national aid policies and practices. At the national level we encounter the same themes as those that we identified at the local level. In Tanzania, the contemporary aid discourse revolves around such questions as (i) how negotiations on the allocation of aid resources are conducted, (ii) who ‘calls the shots’ and how others influence the process, (iii) how the sense of ownership affects the results, and (iv) how the cultural conventions of aid interfaces influence the results. The discussion is conducted within a set of arenas in which both aid practitioners and academics participate—often with surprisingly similar arguments and issues of concern. Since this discussion is extremely wide and controversial, I have decided to focus upon a small section of it. More precisely, I concentrate upon the sectoral programme aid format. I focus upon the political sensitivity of sectoral programmes towards local (district or village wide) needs in Tanzania. In order to measure the sensitivity of sectoral programmes, I ask three questions:

- How do the sectoral programmes address local (district-wide or village) development needs?
- Are the sectoral programmes capable of incorporating local non-state actors in their partnership arrangements?
- Are the sectoral programmes capable of learning from the experiences gained in location-specific bilateral projects?

The reason for asking these questions is straightforward: the major change in aid is the recent shift towards using sectoral programmes as an instrument. The change is interesting in the sense that it addresses the *practices* of aid (i.e. the form of aid interfaces) to a greater extent than the *policies* of aid (i.e. the content of aid interfaces). The reason to focus upon the practices of aid is the concern about a recipient's lack of ownership of the aid. The donor agencies have noticed that they need to work as a united front in order to avoid competition, which in the past has too often led to the conducting of unsustainable ad hoc experiments at a local level. Instead, the donors

are seeking to establish a common partnership with the recipient. Sectoral aid is supposed to overcome some of the basic problems of project aid; great hopes are being placed in a greater degree of coordination between various donors and in coordination between donors and the recipient country, thus avoiding 'double administration'. The agenda for sectoral programme aid is ambitious. So far the thinking has been well grounded and rational. However, we need to ask the next question: who is the recipient?

Sectoral aid packages are effectively negotiated at a national level. The recipient in this case is very clearly the Government of Tanzania. Although negotiations on sectoral packages are conducted in the relevant ministries, the government is expected to have the final word, ideally backed up by debate in the Parliament. Such decision-making at the national level can easily lead to standard solutions, to be applied throughout the country. One has to ask whether sectoral programmes have the scope to adapt to the local circumstances. Is it possible to include local actors in the planning and implementation of sectoral programmes? Is it possible to create sectoral programmes which are capable of learning from local needs and of adapting themselves accordingly? Or does administrative inertia cause sectoral programmes to develop into state-controlled centralised programmes? This is my first question.

Let me give some hints concerning my preliminary conclusions. I find the programme aid concept a very fruitful one, but I see its tendency towards centralised decision-making and management as a potential drawback. Sectoral programmes do not serve their purpose if they provide a definite 'blueprint' to be applied at every part of a country. Tanzania is a vast country comprising an enormous variety of agro-ecological areas, a fact which is also reflected in great differences in average living standards. As far as socio-cultural criteria are concerned, the variation within the country is equally noticeable. Given these variations, programmes need to adjust their modes of operation. They must utilise the location-specific social and economic resources. Programme implementation should support the enhancement of the local political discussion. The question is how such flexibility can be built into sectoral programmes. How can local partners be involved in sectoral programmes without administrative confusion, excessive political disputes and an increase in regional inequality?

This issue is difficult in the sense that there can scarcely be a single correct answer. Sectoral programmes need to establish some definite guidelines and define a few technical criteria in order to launch the national planning process. The main question is whether the central government (together with the donors) is able and willing, after making such decisions, to allocate some of the financial resources and decision-making powers to location-specific actors. The sub-questions are:

- How are location-specific actors supposed to participate in decision-making?
- How are significant financial resources to be allocated to location-specific actors?
- What kinds of conditions concerning allocative decisions are to be assigned to the location-specific actors?

The second question concerns the ‘who’ aspect of sensitivity to local politics. Which are the location-specific actors that are allowed to take part in the process? Does this group of actors include non-state actors? Since sectoral programmes are planned by the central ministries and approved by the national parliament, there are good grounds for expecting them to include a strong statist bias.

The inclusion of non-state actors is constantly being demanded by the donor agencies, and the sectoral programmes can hardly ignore this pressure. However, the ideas of the donor agencies tend to be fuzzy (i.e. apolitical, inclusive) in that they do not indicate a formal and clear mandate for non-state actors. These include a variety of actors, such as political parties, large-scale entrepreneurs, large trade unions, media enterprises, national NGOs, location-specific NGOs and community-based organisations. These non-state actors can assume a variety of roles vis-à-vis a sectoral programme. They can act as consultants or subcontractors, as political critics or the representatives of clients. The interests of the non-state actors are a matter of political debate, and any lumping together of non-state actors (under headings such as ‘governance’) is likely to conceal rather than make visible the nature of each interest group.

The third related issue is the role of bilateral projects after the launching of a sectoral programme. In Tanzania, the donor agencies have still a number of conventional aid projects in progress, even in the same sectors as the sectoral programmes. One question concerns the future role of such projects. Do the bilateral projects supplement the large sectoral programmes, or is an acute conflict between the two types of interventions emerging?³³ The opponents of project aid argue that such aid is simply made redundant by the launching of the more efficient programme aid. The protagonists of project aid argue that it is still a more established and better tested way of delivering aid. As a sort of consolidated and consolatory argument, the advocates of project aid hold that the continuation of conventional location-specific projects is a practical tool for *experimental work* which tests critical social interfaces and has the potential to feed information back to the programme level to enhance the ‘empowerment’ dimension in sectoral programme aid. In other words, projects can generate ideas as to how coalitions for development may be created and activated. However, some of the lessons of project aid may well be applicable only to a specific location

33) *The debate between project and programme aid relates partly to rather mundane issues of the financial control over the disbursements, the percentage of the return of the investments to the donor country and the capacity to include technical assistance staff into aid. I shall not concentrate into these arguments here.*

with its historically moulded circumstances. The approach tried out may be suitable for one location because of its exceptional ecological conditions or its exceptional cultural features. Thus the bilateral donor agencies should not always try to sell their own ideas as if they could be applied nationally through a sectoral programme.

The main part of this chapter presents a few sectoral programmes and related bilateral projects. After this, there is a discussion concerning three themes: first, how the distribution of power to local actors is effected in sectoral programmes; second, the kind of role given to new actors (mainly private-sector and civic organisations) in sectoral programmes; and third, how the learning process taking place between sectoral programmes and bilateral projects is organised.

Before we can dig deeper into the question of programme aid, it is necessary to peruse the discussions on the national development objectives and the experiences concerning aid during the past two decades in Tanzania. Throughout this discussion, the emphasis is placed upon the local-national theme.

8.2 'NATIONAL' AND 'LOCAL' IN TANZANIAN ECONOMIC POLICY

Since Tanzania gained independence, its political system has experienced two highly divergent phases. From the 1960s to the very early 1980s, the political system could be described in terms of increased centralisation organised through statist control.³⁴ Centralised control was maintained for a number of reasons. Firstly, the government aimed at achieving equality between the various geographical areas. Equalising policies included *universal* (i.e. nationally uniform) policies such as pan-territorial price policies, universal primary education and free access to basic medical care throughout the country. The nationalisation of existing industry was also motivated by considerations of equality. Secondly, the government observed that due to the lack of an African bourgeoisie state intervention was necessary for any new larger investments. The creation of new parastatals was intended to contribute towards achieving this goal. Thirdly, the government wanted to keep divisive power struggles in check, and it systematically limited the development of alternative localised or ethnic power bases. The abolition of the local government system in 1972 was partly motivated by this concern. (Mutahaba 1989)

Although the political motivations were often justified, the totality of the political system did not function effectively. Tanzania is a relatively sparsely populated and poor country, and the centralised system proved to be far too inefficient and expensive a solution. In the early 1980s the country was falling into a deepening economic crisis, and the donors, under the leadership of the World Bank, were actively pressuring the

³⁴ Gibbon (*n.d.*) has argued that already during the 1950s, TANU was already actively manoeuvring the 'parochial' social and political forces into a marginal and isolated position

government to change its economic policies. As the demands intensified, the government started to implement 'home-baked' reform agendas and soon afterwards began to carry out the 'Washington-baked' liberalisation of the economy. Although the transition period was characterised by some hesitation, the orientation of policy soon took on a solid pro-liberalisation stance. (Kiondo 1991; Hydén and Karlström 1993)

The liberalisation of food marketing was implemented during the second half of the 1980s, thus removing any regional subsidies for pan-territorial pricing (Seppälä 1998a). In the 1990s we have witnessed the liberalisation of the marketing of cash crops, gradually and crop by crop. The government has also liberalised foreign trade, relaxed foreign exchange controls and embarked on the privatisation of parastatals, though with varying success. The policy turn has generated economic growth but also increasing levels of poverty (World Bank 1993; 1996). Access to social services has deteriorated, and the population is burdened with official and unofficial direct payments in order to fund the existing services (TADREG 1997).

The geographical distribution of misery has changed with the liberalisation of the economy. It seems clear that the high-potential agricultural areas, especially those located near major towns, have benefited from liberalisation. The concentration of privately funded secondary schools in such areas is a clear indicator of this. Another observation is that such differentiation is tending to increase within economic regions. Some of the prosperous agricultural areas exhibit an alarming semi-proletarianisation of practically landless rural labourers. High levels of malnutrition can be identified alongside prosperity. (Loiske 1995; Hoebink and Voipio 1998)

The liberalisation of the economy and the privatisation of public enterprises are two simple ways of decentralising power and spreading it over a wide range of actors. Since the Tanzanian population consists overwhelmingly of rural smallholders and since the non-agricultural private sector is dominated by informal sector operators, the economy is very decentralised. However, this has not led to a corresponding weakening of the State, because the state structures have been maintained with the help of external funding. To put it crudely, the government budget is mainly funded by external donors. The ODA/GDP ratio was 57.3 per cent in 1992. Some 87 per cent of the budget for 1994/5 was based on external assistance.³⁵ (Bagachwa 1997:173; see also Gibbon and Raikes 1996:243)

As far as the democratic control of state operations is concerned, the situation is rather ticklish. The government is highly indebted, and debt repayment puts the government in the shackles of donor dependency. When donors, reluctantly or otherwise, make demands concerning governmental policies, the control function is

35) Tanzania is often presented as a classic example of donor dependency. Debt servicing eats up some 40 percent of government expenditure, leaving very limited resources for any independent economic policies. Taxation amounts to some 15 percent of GDP. In order to increase its operational capacity, the Government should increase the level of taxation. However, the current level is already fairly high if one takes into consideration the extent to which citizens have to pay additional fees on top of taxes when using social services.

taken away from the citizens.

What has been the impact of economic liberalisation on the national versus location-sensitive political orientation? The answer falls within the realm of politics. Politically speaking, liberalisation means first and foremost the erosion of the material basis for leader-follower patronage ties. The earlier neo-patrimonial leadership was able to make use of the integrating system of exchange, thus enhancing the legitimacy of centralist control, even when a part of exchange was directed to rent-seeking activities. (Havnevik and Hårsmar 1999:80–83) In comparison, a liberalised economy provides very limited means for the national leadership to achieve similar legitimacy. In this situation, it is very useful for the leadership to instigate inclusive forms of politics through systems of decentralisation. The decentralisation of political power is naturally accompanied by a decentralisation of responsibilities. Thus there is a real incentive for strengthening localised political forums.

8.3 CHANGES IN AID MECHANISMS: TOWARDS SECTORAL PROGRAMMES

Aid policies and instruments in Tanzania

Broadly speaking, analyses of aid to Tanzania reveal a continuity in the high level of aid allocations but changes in the instruments for delivering such aid. During the 1960s and 1970s, the donors were mainly using the project aid formula. The volume of aid increased as new donor agencies entered into the donor community. During the first half of the 1980s, a heated discussion on ways of directing aid resources and on their political impacts developed. The volume of aid dropped temporarily, and there was a rather mixed use of aid instruments. Alongside project aid, initiatives in the direction of broad programme aid (aimed at changing the fundamentals of the economy) were appearing. During the second half of the 1980s, programme aid—including commodity import support (CIS), open general licence (OGL) and debt relief—were favoured. Finally, in the 1990s the emphasis has been placed on schemes which are intermediate in terms of the specificity of aid, and thus sectoral development programmes have gained in importance. (Bagachwa 1997; Falck 1997)

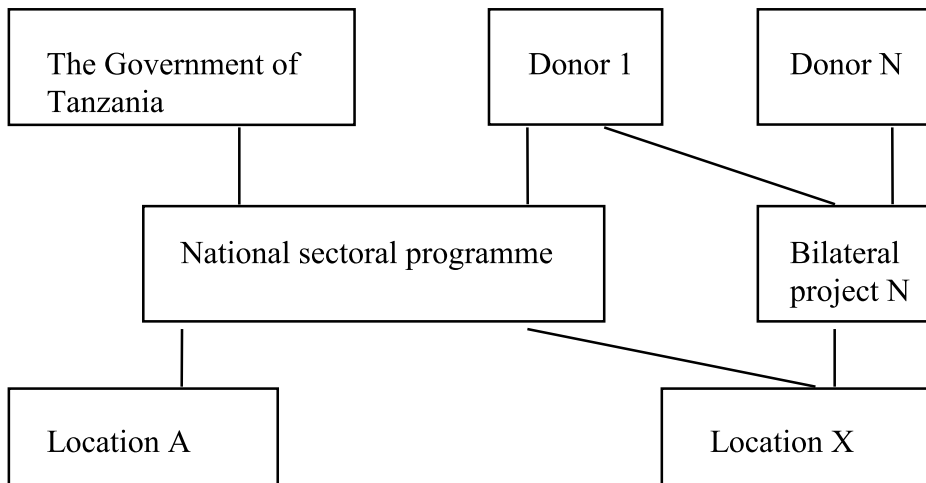
During the 1980s, certain differences between the donor agencies started to appear. The dividing line was the view on externally imposed conditionalities. The approaches of Nordic donors widely regarded as less conditional, more consultative and more adaptive than the approach used by certain other large donors such as ODA and the World Bank (Mushi 1995; Porvali 1995; Bagachwa 1997; Rugumamu 1997; Wangwe 1998; Seppälä and Voipio 1998). Mushi (1995:239) uses the term ‘implicit conditionality’ to refer to the influence that the Nordic donors developed by actively supporting democracy-enhancing institutions. Thus the Nordic donors were able to exert an influence on policy without making direct threats or imposing

explicit conditionalities.

In 1996 the Nordic donors agreed with the Government of Tanzania on a common position in which emphasis was placed upon partnership arrangements. The Nordic donors also agreed to move from providing budget support to sector investment programmes. (URT and Nordic donors 1996). Since then, the Nordic donors have been active in sectoral programmes at least in the fields of education, health, roads, taxation, public sector and local government. The shift in funding both from budget support and project support towards sectoral programmes has been clearly put into action.

The sectoral programme approach is still tentative, because the most of the programmes have not reached the implementation stage. Several donors (e.g. SIDA, Danish Ministry for Foreign Affairs) have worked out their guidelines for supporting sectoral programmes, while analytical papers dealing with initial experiences have been commissioned from experts (OPM 1997, Cassels 1997, Gould et al. 1998). A hint of the administrative complexity of the sectoral programmes is given in Figure 8.1.

Figure 8.1 The administrative setting of a sectoral programme



In Tanzania, the situation in the second half of the 1990s has been plagued by an extensive debate on the practical arrangements of sectoral programmes. It has been argued that there are serious administrative constraints on putting the programmes into operation. Cooperation between the donors, although much emphasised by all of them, seems difficult to put in place. Part of the problem is due to the fact that

negotiations on sectoral programme are conducted in the recipient countries, but the local representatives of the donor agencies (working in embassies) seldom have administrative powers to make binding commitments on behalf of their organisations. Instead, decisions are forwarded to headquarters, thus causing delays and unexpected twists in the decision-making processes.

Cooperation between the donors is also hindered by haggling over (i) how to insert one's own policy inputs into the final document, and (ii) how to guarantee returns to one's own country through the use of one's own nationals as experts. These fields of competition are likely to remain—even within the sectoral programme framework. As a development administrator argues:

Even within the sector programmes there is competition between donors on what part of the programme each donor will contribute to. I think you can never get rid of this donor competition. But I think it is also changing in form because the projects are changing in form themselves. Maybe it is not that simple in that you would have a company, say, from Finland, willing to start something here within our project. That is not a starting point any more, as it used to be, that we have these pressure groups. I think we are looking at more long-term effects now. Of course, it is also in my interest that the Finnish companies would get their share in the European Union projects in implementation. It might be naive to say that we should not be involved in sectors, and in sectoral programmes, where we do not have some special competence. It is also useful keeping that in mind when we select a sector. And I think it is a healthy phenomenon that we have some natural, person to person contacts, interests behind the whole development cooperation. Otherwise it would not be a viable concept in the long run. As long as those interests of, say, the individual companies are not overriding.

The most interesting feature of sectoral programmes is their ambiguous relation to the major ideological debates of the 1980s. Whereas the structural adjustment programmes of that decade openly argued in favour of the liberalisation of the economy and, in the name of consistency, extended the same ideological stance to cover each and every issue, the sectoral programmes of the 1990s avoid making blatant ideological statements. Instead, more mundane and concrete solutions are offered. Although steps are being taken towards the inclusion of private sector, the civic organisations and the citizens in programme implementation, the need for a well-resourced State is also acknowledged. The various Tanzanian agencies are expected to take part as partners. An interesting question is how the partnerships are actually organised and what is the quality of partnership arrangements.

Case-studies on sectoral programmes

My concern is whether the sectoral programmes are able to adjust to the varying needs within the recipient country. Are the sectoral programmes able to deal with different social, economic and ecological microenvironments? Are they able to combine the national agenda with decentralised decision-making processes? Are the sectoral programmes willing to share operational tasks with the private sector and civic organisations? Do the sectoral programmes expand or contract 'local political space'? All in all, does the programme aid concept allow for flexibility?

I shall discuss initial experiences in this area, using material from sectoral programmes in the fields of local government, education and road construction. These sectors have been chosen because Finland has advanced commitments in these two fields in south-eastern Tanzania. Thus the sectoral case-studies link up directly with the previous discussion on the Mtwara and Lindi regions.

Local Government Reform Programme

The questions concerning sectoral programmes and decentralised power are very relevant for the Local Government Reform Programme. The LGRP is a sectoral programme explicitly aimed at transferring some major functions of central administration to the district level. The programme forms an environment for other sectoral programmes in that their administrative models must conform with the rules laid down by the LGRP.

The LGRP could be called a conventional decentralisation programme. Its aims are well within the bounds of initiatives that we have witnessed recently in Uganda, Mozambique, Ghana and Cameroon, to name a few examples.³⁶

The effects of decentralisation programmes naturally depend on the basic idea but also on how well they are implemented. A group of international experts has recently discussed the merits and demerits of the on-going decentralisation programmes. The experts argue that:

If targeted poverty reduction is the only objective of decentralisation then perhaps one should not decentralise given the poor record in this area. However, decentralisation

36) *The decentralisation wave has swept over Africa, but the motivations behind it and the actual outcomes of the initiatives are still to be identified. Some commentators call decentralisation a move towards democratisation. In many countries, decentralisation has been connected with the populist policies associated with a revival in the status of traditional chiefs (Bako-Afisari 1998). For other commentators, it is a tool for the development of more efficient administration—efficient in terms of identifying local needs and resources. Yet others suspect that since colonial decentralised power was exercised in the form of 'decentralised despotism' (Mamdani 1996)—which allowed a few local rulers to control decision-making and which increased localised confrontations, thus diverting attention from more important national debates—the current enthusiasm for decentralised development can be explained by similar 'divide and rule' interests of the central State or the capitalist world powers.*

can achieve many other worthwhile objectives such as increased participation, accountability, responsiveness, and can tailor government programmes to local needs. (FAO et al. 1997:7)

In Tanzania, the major task for decentralisation initiatives is how to increase the legitimacy of local administration.³⁷ In order to deal with the problems of legitimacy and efficiency, the Government of Tanzania has established the LGRP. This programme is still in its initial stage, and for the time being one can only assess the social process of planning it, the expressed intentions of the various parties and the deviations from the existing system of government that may result.

In June 1996, the Government published its 'Vision for Local Government'. In this paper the Government outlined some strategic choices for the planning work. A central element was the devolution of power to the local authorities³⁸ at district level at the expense of central government as represented by functional ministries and regional administration. The paper further stressed the subsidiarity principle, according to which the decision-making potential of lower-level territorial units should be exhausted before higher levels become involved. The local authorities should have a high degree of autonomy in terms of staff recruitment and financial management, and they should have adequate capacities for revenue collection within the parameters of the national economic policy objectives. The paper discussed the importance of accountability, good governance and efficiency in operations, but also gave due consideration to equity matters. (URT/CSRP 1996:28–32.)

After publishing its 'Vision', the Government, with strong support from at least eight donor agencies, initiated further planning of the LGRP. It recruited a team of administrators to form a Local Government Reform Team (LGRT) within the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). The team received support from internationally recruited consultancy companies, which made detailed plans on issues such as improving financial management in district councils, adjusting staff levels and enhancing professional standards in councils, and the management of the reform process. The team and consultants have managed to create a comprehensive plan for the reform. The

37) I have already outlined some aspects of the Tanzanian local government system in Chapters 4 and 5. Briefly, during the colonial era, local governance experienced many twists and turns and experiments (Liebenow 1971). In the 1960s, the independent government developed uniform councils which, however, soon became financially nonviable and politically incompatible with Ujamaa ideology and thus had to be replaced with party-controlled 'decentralised' administration in 1972. This system provided some coherence in the political field but proved to lack any sign of local accountability and economic incentives. The bureaucratic system was modified in 1984; certain elements of the bureaucratic-cum-party control system were retained, but the system was supplemented with an old-fashioned district council system. These district councils had rather limited autonomy because of the financial control of the central State. For this reason, the political legitimacy of the district councils and the trust placed in them by citizens was limited. (Mutahaba 1989, Semboja 1995, Nkwire 1996, Seppälä 1998g.)

38) The term "local authority" denotes rural district councils, urban municipalities and an urban city council (in Dar es Salaam). There are currently over one hundred local authorities in Tanzania.

donors are expected to bear the major part of the costs through a sectoral programme format. However, whether it has concerned a commitment to common funding arrangements or the practicalities of operational modalities, the coordination of the donors has been a very long and difficult process. Although donors seem to appreciate the suitability of the sectoral programme approach, they are still very cautious about putting money into a basket over which they do not have direct (i.e. individual) control. The situation in early 1999 was such that the planning tasks were largely finalised but the final decision on commitment was still to be made.

For our discussion, a particularly interesting idea in the LGRP is the tailoring of the reform to suit the needs and capacities of each local authority. The idea of flexibility is built into the programme approach. Within the predetermined parameters, and after extensive training and sensitising, each local authority is expected to carry out an internal restructuring. In simple terms this means that a local authority is expected to design its personnel structure and operations to fit in with local requirements. It should employ persons in those fields where it has needs. Instead of having a uniform system (i.e. each authority having, for example, a bee-keeping officer), the authority is expected to employ, say, many veterinary officers, if the majority of its population consists of pastoralists. This model differs totally from the current system, in which the central government is in practice responsible for the organisational chart, the recruitment of staff and the payment of employees in local authorities.

Another, related change is the reform of the wider organisational structure of the local authorities. Several local authorities have subsidiary bodies (i.e. District Development Funds and semi-private companies) engaged in productive activities and the provision of services. The local authorities are expected to remove unnecessary activities/bodies from their portfolio and to concentrate on issues that they can best deal with given their limited resources.

Both changes are designed in such a way that significant decisions can be made at a local level. Thus the LGRP incorporates sensitivity towards the local political situation in its agenda. It remains to be seen how much financial independence—and what total financial resources—the central government finally hands over to the local authorities. If the resources over which a local authority exercises control are inadequate, the scope for adapting its operations to local needs will be diminished.

Our second question—on the inclusion of non-state local actors in political processes—is more tricky one. The LGRP has a very strong bias towards the State in that local decision-making and programme implementation are supposed to take place through a core group consisting of persons belonging to the political and administrative elite. If an external view needs to be sought, the LGRT turns to the Association of the Local Authorities of Tanzania (ALAT). This organisation has very limited resources and it only manages to consult the District Executive Directors and council chairmen annually. If this organisation is given, say, the task to reflect upon

legislative changes, the "civil society" contact is managed in a minimalist manner.

An investment in broad local debates is almost completely lacking in the programme. The reform may thus appear to be taking place within the framework of the current establishment. If this is the case, the legitimacy of the LGRP may prove to be less firm than expected.

How do the bilateral projects support the sectoral programme for local governance, the LGRP? Do they provide guidance by reporting on viable and non-viable ways of supporting local authorities? Do the lessons learned from bilateral projects help the overall programme or do these projects induce donor competition within the programme? The Netherlands and Ireland have been active in supporting bilateral projects at district level. They have also been directly concerned with the administrative capacities of local authorities and have funded initiatives related to personnel management, the operative resources of administration, and financial management. At the same time, they have been active members in the formulation of the LGRP. This has meant a constant flow of ideas (particularly on training and on management issues) from district experiences to the sectoral programme.³⁹ In south-eastern Tanzania, two bilateral projects have started to orient themselves towards the LGRP. The Finnish RIPS programme has adopted the LGRP as its own 'environment' through the planning of a new phase in 1999; operational activities (related to conventional rural development) are all geared towards supporting the LGRP. Similarly, the British Urban Partnership Project is constructing its own justification and rationale around the LGRP. These examples show that valuable experience from bilateral projects can be channelled to benefit sectoral programmes.

The Norwegian way of addressing this issue is different. NORAD has maintained a consistent interest in local government matters since the early 1990s. In 1995, it evaluated its regional integrated rural projects and pointed to the problem of double administration (Naustdalslid 1995). Since then, it has concentrated its efforts on supporting sectoral programmes and has also concentrated its own personnel/expertise on this level. Thus the coexistence sectoral programmes and project aid is eliminated.

Germany has continued with an integrated rural project, formally organised at the regional level but increasingly decentralised to districts and villages at the operational level. Germany has, however, declined to support the LGRP.

39) One channel for passing on this experience has been the Task Force of the donor agencies which have experience in the area of district-based initiatives. This Task Force has brought ideas 'from the field' into the meetings in Dar es Salaam.

Education sector programme

The education sector programme is an excellent example of sectoral programmes. The donor agencies have found education a suitable field in which to apply the sectoral programme concept because the government has a fairly clear and undisputed mandate to organise basic education throughout the country. In Tanzania, various donors have been active in the education sector, and this has led to a somewhat incoherent outcome. In the early 1990s, the World Bank entered the field and started to conduct major base-line studies, which culminated in a comprehensive Social Sector Review. At the same time, some other donors and the government were joining hands in the preparation of an education sector policy paper, Education and Training Policy, and a more focused Master Plan for Primary Education. All these documents involved a large number of administrators and external consultants in an intensive discussion in which specific aspects of education sector policy were hotly debated. Many donors expressed great concern over the high-handed manner in which the World Bank was imposing neo-liberal policy guidelines. However, in order to speed up the planning of the sectoral projects, bilateral donors also engaged technical assistance staff and consultants, thus undermining the line organisation within the Ministry of Education. (Buchert 1997; see also Omari 1995.)

Has the education sector programme been able to include sensitivity to local needs within its format? There has been wide agreement among the planners that the district, village and school levels must be given a role in the actual running of primary education. But agreement on how this should be done has proved very difficult to achieve. The World Bank exhibited a high level of commitment towards decentralisation in this field. It took the position that district education officers should have considerable powers in organising primary education, while principals and school committees should also have a role to play under a 'Whole School' approach aimed at integrating the school into its environment. Some other donors also favoured the decentralised structure but advocated more powers for the district councils. The Ministry of Education initially questioned the efficiency of the proposed decentralised education administration but later started to support the initiative. However, the ministry still favours the establishment of 'education boards', chaired by the district education officer and including several experienced educationalists, in order to curb the power of district councillors over educational matters.

During the planning process, one of the major topics of discussion has been the role of non-state agencies, parents and civic organisations in the provision of primary education. The basic World Bank position was that the trend should be towards the private provision of social services. Several donors acknowledged that parents must take part in running schools so that they would appreciate the service and would be able to demand better quality. However, these donors had reservations as to whether poor households could afford to pay the fees and how the rates should be structured.

Regarding the complementary roles of the sectoral programme and bilateral projects, the situation has been rather complex. It has proved to be very difficult for donors to allocate programme funding through a basket-funding arrangement. Instead, they have nurtured their own bilateral projects or created earmarking arrangements within the sectoral programme. Government officials have adopted a permissive attitude and have accommodated various initiatives and funding arrangements. The funding initiatives are pooled within a common framework, as the government (heavily supported by donors) has produced a comprehensive plan⁴⁰ for the programme. Perhaps the education sector's good capacity to absorb aid (because of the appalling state of school buildings, the lack of educational materials etc.) has helped to foster this permissive attitude.

Finnish involvement in the education sector has been fairly modest. In recent years, however, the Finnish RIPS programme operating in the south-eastern regions has been involved in primary and post-primary education, upgrading local teacher training curricula in certain subjects and carrying out some vocational training. In conducting these activities, RIPS has worked in liaison with the World Bank, thus strengthening the piloting activities of the Bank. The RIPS activities deviate from the World Bank approach in that contact at the village-school level is more intensive and consultations are conducted in such a way that a project is adapted to the local needs and resources. In cost-sharing schemes, the Finnish model has included labour contributions, whereas the World Bank has accepted only cash contributions. Broadly speaking, however, the Finnish approach conforms with the radical approach of the World Bank. The debate between the RIPS, the World Bank pilots and the programme planners shows how pressure can be brought to bear on a sectoral programme to identify ways of adapting to local circumstances (cf. Swantz 1997).

Within the education sector programme, Finland has supported planning activities and prepared its own plans for more specific involvement. Finland has shown an interest in supporting district-based activities in the field of primary education. Since its experience comes mainly from the south-eastern regions, Finland is considering ways to support the programme in that part of the country. In this way, the Finnish project is coordinated with the national programme but the independence for financial control is still preserved. This is one way for a donor agency to earmark specific programme components or items as its responsibility.

Integrated road project

Travelling around in Tanzania is a time-consuming affair because of the relatively poor condition of trunk roads and rural roads. The density of the road network is also relatively modest; this is due partly to low population densities but also partly to

40) *Education Sector Development Programme: Medium Term Strategic and Programme Framework 1998–2003*

the difficult physical conditions for road construction and maintenance (Platteau 1996). The latter aspect became very clear in 1998 when torrential rains and floods swept away many bridges and parts of the road network.

The donors have been involved in a major sectoral road project since 1990. Thus the first moves towards concerted efforts started well before the boom in sectoral programmes. The launching of this first concerted initiative reflected the need for considerable financial muscle for the huge task of upgrading the road networks. The Integrated Roads Project (IRP) was planned as a ten-year intervention including donor investments, sectoral policy reforms and institutional reorganisation. The physical targets of the project were ambitious. During the first phase, the project was funded by sixteen donors, while the second phase received funding from twelve donors. The estimated cost was over 1.5 billion dollars.

During the second half of the 1990s, the IRP became a problem, as the various donors had their own interests and also expressed mistrust in the government's commitment to reforming institutional practices (OPM 1997). However, the catastrophe situation of 1998 helped to pull donor support into the sector again.

As far as sensitivity towards local needs is concerned, the IRP has slowly improved its approach. The project is putting the major emphasis on trunk roads which are, by definition, national roads and the responsibility of the relevant ministry. The IRP also covers district roads, and here the recent decentralisation is affecting the roads administration. The ministry (including the regional roads officer's team) is under pressure to decentralise its operations; because of the scarcity of human resources, it has been unable and unwilling to supply well-trained personnel to local authorities.

The integrated road programme has involved non-state actors in that it has meant a considerable contracting of operations to the private sector. This has meant a change in the institutional setting, because the Ministry of Works has become a controlling rather than an implementing body. Although the agenda of privatised operations may prove to be efficient, the scale of tasks tends to be such that only international companies are capable of doing the actual work. Since the bilateral donors have earlier financed major road works and used their consultancy companies to run the projects, the new emphasis upon reliance on private enterprises means an ideological shift on paper rather than a substantial change at the operational level.

The Finnish government has participated in the road sector by maintaining roads in the Mtwara and Lindi regions. In the mid 1990s Finland decided to terminate its support for a capital-intensive government road maintenance project and planned a new approach. The road rehabilitation and maintenance project operating under this new approach was launched in 1998. The approach is based on 'appropriate technology' and labour-intensive road maintenance methods. This project is expected to rely upon private sector actors. Serious training efforts are planned in order to turn local skilled workers into entrepreneurs who can compete efficiently in the case of small-

scale road maintenance works. The planned project also aims to gain experience from a 'village-level visit and transport' sub-project. The point of departure is the villagers' existing travel needs and the transport problems associated with short trips.

The Finnish involvement falls within the broad framework of the IRP. The rationale for the project and some of the approaches (e.g. piloting with village level travel and transport activities) originally come from the IRP framework. When planning its bilateral project, Finland also asked the Government of Tanzania to carry out the major planning activities. However, the government used an external (British) consultant company for the planning. The structure of the actual project design resembles that of a conventional bilateral project. Thus "giving the stick to the recipient" or "putting the Government in the driver's seat"—to use two expressions found in Tanzanian aid parlance—did not lead to any real changes in political orientation. As a result, integration into the sectoral programme framework provides external parameters for the work without necessarily altering the central features of the project-type approach.

8.4 DISCUSSION: FLEXIBILITY AND SENSITIVITY IN SECTORAL PROGRAMMES

The inclusion of decentralised planning and implementation

Can—and should—sectoral programmes address local needs? I have emphasised the need for national programmes to adjust to varying realities. In a vast country like Tanzania, which exhibits enormous variation in terms of agro-ecological environments, socio-cultural traditions and levels of economic development, this requirement seems very justified. But while the need for flexibility and nuanced variations is easy to argue for, it is difficult to implement. In the previous discussion I have noted that the sectoral programmes, launched at the instigation of donors, have tried to leave some room for flexibility.

The national programmes have openly addressed the variation in needs and resources at a local level. The local government programme has explicitly made increased sensitivity to local needs one of its major objectives. The education sector programme has managed, though only as the result of a heated and lengthy debate, to find a balance between the decentralisation of power and the attempt to achieve professional standards. The integrated road project is slowly but surely following these examples and making room for decentralised decision-making with regard to some of its activities. The overall verdict is that the need to decentralise power in order to increase local sensitivity is well recognised.

A critical commentator might call the demands for flexibility a romantic orientation, arising from the ideological premises of the 'small is beautiful' type of argument. Such a critic would argue that flexibility has been the order of the day during

the era of project aid and that the result has been inefficiency and a lack of uniform standards. This criticism is worth taking seriously. When flexibility is advocated, one should also count the costs of flexibility. Excessively detailed planning, advocated in the name of exact targeting, may result in too much planning work at the expense of implementation.⁴¹

Paradoxically, flexibility can also be defended on financial grounds. When aid projects and programmes are being planned nowadays, it is expected that at least a part of implementation costs will be covered by the inhabitants through 'cost-sharing' schemes. The standard approaches to cost-sharing have proved unpopular. The participation of the inhabitants can scarcely be guaranteed without locally negotiated specifications and adjustments in the design of the intervention.

Another view of flexibility holds that the liberalisation of economy is already creating much variation between different regions. For this reason, the central government should use its allocative powers in such a way as to favour the less well-endowed regions of the country. The rich areas should be given fewer central government resources, but they should also be given greater responsibility for organising their own developmental efforts. (Mutahaba 1989:94) This discussion on equity in terms of geographical distribution is largely regarded as a secondary-level issue in sectoral programmes. The programmes may have some tools for grading the areas. One possible reason for this state of affairs is that poverty exists even in the most wealthy areas. Poverty is more a class-based than a region-based phenomenon in Tanzania. However, the data-bases required for any serious grading and mechanisms for the monitoring of relative poverty levels are of notoriously poor quality.

We can conclude that the need for the decentralisation of some powers to the local level is well recognised. Yet the decentralisation agenda tends to be overshadowed by the bigger administrative problems at the centre. In particular, the complications involved in forming partnerships between donors and the government tend to dominate the planning processes. When the elephants are dancing, the grass is what suffers.

New actors: incorporating private sector and civic organisations in sectoral programmes

In the vocabulary of the European Union (EU), the term 'decentralised cooperation' means involving actors such as private sector entrepreneurs and civic organisations as legitimate participants in partnership arrangements. This means that the State's monopoly over international agreements is being questioned and that donor agencies are increasingly seeking direct contacts with the representatives of various interest groups (Bossuyt 1995). The same kind of argumentation can be discerned in the

41) In some cases, considerations of economic efficiency may tilt project planning towards targeting through excessive coverage (i.e. non-discriminatory approaches) in order to avoid the social costs of excessively narrow targeting (Cornia and Stewart 1995).

most recent donor policy papers, whether they are worded cautiously (DFID 1997) or more directly (Sveriges regering 1997).

Although the tendency towards seeking new partners is mentioned in sectoral programmes, they still have difficulties in putting this principle into practice. To put it crudely, the survival of the central government structures depends on sectoral programme aid allocations. Although the programmes try to include some private sector entrepreneurs and civic organisations as implementers or beneficiaries, these attempts still look rather marginal.

The sectoral programmes seem to operate according to a very deductive kind of logic. Policy level resolutions are made at a high level, and in the discussions the need for 'decentralised cooperation' is underlined. At the planning stage the new orientation is operationalised and the new actors are allocated an operational role (e.g. parents are expected to take part in managing schools and in paying for education). If the new actors are not organised into pressure groups, their involvement may easily turn out to be very marginal.

Our case-studies include a local government programme which has so far shown rather limited interest in including non-state actors in any meaningful way. Such actors are mentioned in the plans, but since no concrete mechanism for their inclusion is specified, it is hard to believe that local leaders would automatically welcome their participation in decision-making processes. The education sector programme is much more specific. It defines roles for parents and villagers in project implementation. The parents and villagers are expected to participate in funding—but also to take part in the administration of the schools. The third example, the integrated road project, includes non-state actors in a different way. The role defined for the private sector is that of becoming engaged in subcontracting work. There is very limited interest in the participation of non-state actors in the prioritisation of road works.

The case-studies show that the number of identified non-state actors is small. In the most interventionist programmes, if the required decentralised actors cannot be found, schemes for creating them are proposed. In this way, the sectoral programmes serve as midwives (or even fathers) for private companies and civic organisations.

The problem affecting the inclusion of non-state actors includes the simple equality question: what social groups do the decentralised partners actually represent? Although emphasis is placed upon diverting resources away from state control, limited analysis is made of the actual composition and functioning of *existing* enterprises and civic organisations. A closer look at the decentralised partners might show that the non-state partners often have close personal links to the state administration. Since public sector salaries are very low, many administrators earn additional income by working in private enterprises or civic organisations (Tripp 1997; Seppälä 1998f). For this reason, the actual results of 'decentralised cooperation' may be different from what has been expected.

The complementary relationship between sectoral programmes and bilateral projects

My third question concerns the relation between sectoral programmes and bilateral projects. As in the analysis of marriages, we need to make observations concerning not only both parties but also the special features of encounters.

The project type of aid has the potential advantage of understanding complex interdependencies at a specific location. However, the tight timetables imposed from above have led many project officers to work in a conservative manner. The projects have simply carved themselves out a convenient niche and tried to make their own specific contribution. The project approach has usually rested upon an acceptance of the existing administrative system with all its anomalies, the existing power hierarchies and rules of exclusion, and the conventional pattern for distributing the fruits of an activity.

In order to diminish these institutional constraints, 'modern' projects have started to address more directly these constraints themselves. In other words, the projects have addressed the sectoral or local administrative conventions, payment systems, the conventions of decision-making and the conventions governing the dissemination of information. In addressing these issues, the projects have changed *aid interfaces*. Since the projects are local actors and the rules for organising aid interfaces are largely determined at a national level, the aid projects with their local partners automatically address the national level dialogues concerning how aid interfaces are best managed. For the modern bilateral project, participation in the discourse concerning the formulation of a related sectoral programme is a natural and necessary step in its attempts to enhance its own sustainability.

What is the capacity of the sectoral programmes to incorporate the experiences of the bilateral projects? It can easily happen that the incorporation of experiences takes place along 'ethnic' lines; for example, the British bilateral projects have easy access to British consultants working for a sectoral programme. The ethnic factor still plays an important role in the donor community. This having been said, it does seem that the sectoral programmes have been willing to listen to ideas coming from the bilateral projects.

The case-studies show that the bilateral aid projects have found a role as a testing ground for the initiatives of the sectoral programmes. Projects, as interventions, face some of the key problems of transformative endeavours that the programmes are likely to face. The programmes can therefore utilise—to employ the naïve but indicative term current in aid circles—the 'lessons learned' from the project interventions.

Summary: the sensitivity of the sectoral programmes to local needs

The rationale for launching sectoral programmes derives from the need to diminish the administrative complexity arising from the alleged lack of sustainability characteristic of the *ad hoc* administrative arrangements of bilateral projects. It is assumed that the administrative problems will be overcome through the joint activities of a united donor front. Paradoxically, sectoral programmes are very complicated to administer. The planning phases have lasted for years, and considerable aid resources have been used up on negotiating processes. It thus seems to be the case that the donors' intention of forming a united front does not quite match their actual unity. The individual donor agencies still have many strong opinions and special interests to defend.

In this process, relations between the donor organisations and between a donor organisation and the government institutions have taken precedence over the more subtle problem of sensitivity to local affairs.

Nevertheless, the sectoral programmes studied have included in their operations some consideration for the location-specific situation. Although the sectoral programmes are primarily national programmes and as such are tools used by the central government to show its might, the Government has been able to include some sensitivity to local circumstances in the design of the programmes. What has obviously not been there is the inclusion of local level political debates in the planning of the sectoral programmes. Planning has been conducted exclusively in the central ministries.

The sectoral programmes have taken on a rather technocratic character. This is a core problem of such programmes. [If one had aspired to extensive built-in local sensitivity, a more inclusive model of negotiation would have been required, rather than one planned by a few administrators and consultants. This would have meant firstly an early start to parliamentary debates on the programmes and secondly more widespread discussions in civic forums and the mass media at both the national and local levels. Although the inclusion of new actors in planning might have complicated the process (and diluted fundamental changes), it would have had the advantage of increasing the responsiveness of planning towards specific local circumstances and—by democratising the planning process—of diminishing the importance of squabbles between the donor agencies.

How is it politically possible for donor agencies to increase the local sensitivity of the sectoral programmes? The alternative road that is often proposed involves tightening rule by *conditionalities*. In this context, conditionalities can be used synonymously with explicit and not negotiable conditions. Relying upon conditionalities means dictating a definite view of a donor agency. Using such conditionalities does not mean coercion if the recipient is in a position to avoid entering into the aid relationship under the stated conditions. I can see many benefits (such as straightforwardness and explicitness) in using conditionalities, but I also see serious problems.

Conditionalities are most suitable for setting the outer limits to the relationship between the donor agency and the recipient government. The conditionalities are less effective, and often even counterproductive, in the political context of reforming relationships within the recipient society. Thus the road towards transforming future aid projects and programme formats in the direction of better local partnerships cannot rely upon simple constraints but requires long and difficult negotiations.

The final question is whether the sectoral programme aid format has managed to solve the political problems of aid interfaces. Have the changes in the ways in which an aid interface is constructed provided an adequate basis for sustainable aid? My answer is that the sectoral programmes are not a panacea. They can have positive impacts in terms of making the donors less visible (to the citizens), increasing the sense of responsibility among the recipients and reducing the anomalies arising from the multiplicity of donor agencies. Yet one needs to be careful, or the sectoral programmes may end up increasing rather than decreasing statist and centralist power. Thus the question of the location-specific sensitivity of aid projects is of definite importance.

In the final analysis, I support the argument of the mainstream aid discourse in favour of a complementary relationship between project and programme types of aid. This argument might be interpreted simply as support for the status quo. However, my perspective is based on a radical questioning of the attitudes and conventions characteristic of both projects and programmes. Instead of stabilising aid practices along the lines of their current form, one still needs to effect radical changes in order to make aid relationships more equal and trusting.

Chapter 9

THE SENSITIVITY OF AID TOWARDS LOCAL POLITICS

9.1 DEMOCRATIC POLITICAL CULTURE AND AID

A debate on democracy has entered the heart of the aid discourse. Politics has always been a prominent factor, but especially during the Cold War political arguments favouring democracy were put on the back burner. A special feature of recent years has been the mushrooming of an outspoken debate on democracy and associated issues such as participation, the developmental State and the efficient State, good governance and corruption, continuing wars and emerging armed conflicts. Aid circles have embraced this debate and launched tools to deal with these issues. At least in Sub-Saharan Africa, the agenda of aid has been to foster a 'new political culture' covering all the elements supportive to democracy.

'Partnership' and 'ownership' have entered the political debate. Interestingly, the two terms shift attention away from the political situation within a developing country and towards cooperation between an aid agency and a developing country. When this shift is made, it is explicitly acknowledged that aid agencies have a direct influence on many political decisions and that their role should thus be subjected to a full analysis. Aid agencies, dictating as they do the parameters of national budgets and imposing political conditionalities of various kinds, have an impact on the extent to which the democratic institutions that develop are either rooted in the societal fabric or are feeble appendages of it. The increasing willingness to acknowledge the political role of aid agencies is a positive development.

However, 'partnership' and 'ownership' have in the past been discussed in a rather imprecise manner in the aid context. These terms are important, but the large number of interpretations of the terms has meant a decrease in their explanatory capacity. Thus we can say that the precision and loudness of political analysis is starting to fade just when the aid agencies' own role is coming under discussion. This is unfortunate.

The impacts of aid on democracy have been studied from many angles. Not surprisingly, the results show a degree of variation. The view propounded by Mkan-dawire (e.g. 1996) holds that the aid people work directly with central bureaucrats, a fact which makes them answerable to the donor community rather than to the national political community. The liberal commentators take an opposing view. They argue that the policy of political conditionalities has proved to be effective in terms of creating and sustaining democratic institutions and social practices. The

World Bank (1999) adopts a balancing stance and argues that aid 'works' when democratic practices are already in place. It seems that the political impact of aid can be two-pronged. The intended impacts tend to be pro-democracy in orientation, but the unintended impacts may be directly the opposite. In any case, 'partnership' and 'ownership' have taken their place at the core of the official statements of the aid agencies. However, it can be questioned whether the ideals of partnership have taken root in the implementation of development projects and programmes. Sørensen (1995) points out double standards on both sides.

One political idea which has received attention in aid circles during the 1990s is that of the decentralisation of power. It is argued that the national political scene often seems fuzzy and distant to ordinary people. In order to root democracy more firmly, smaller, sub-national units of political debate should be strengthened. I have situated my analysis within this framework. I have asked what are the impacts of aid on the local (sub-national) political scene.

Local politics is affected by a myriad 'special interests' and traditions in all countries. Thus the formalist model of democracy, with its neutral stance towards policy decisions and with its lack of respect for local traditions, is continually having a hard time. At a local level, democracy can easily be regarded as an alien and unsubstantive ideal having very little to do with the existing power structures. By contrast, the existing patron-client dependencies, informal economic networks and religious communities appear to have both substance and predictability. The local leaders, with vested interests favouring the status quo, have good grounds for defending their power based on 'special interests', however parochial and unjust they may appear to an outside observer—and they have a welcoming audience amongst their clients.

The civil movements, an important element of the democratic scene, base themselves conceptually on local level politics. Civic movements cannot emerge without having been established and rooted at a local level in the first place. Bayart (1986:111) outlines the standard view of civic movements in the following words: "Grassroots movements make their own way through the gaps in state violence, thereby establishing an *autonomous space of mass expression*, outside the state control. It is this which forces the political regimes today to seek new forms of legitimacy. And this is why political change in that part of the world is such an unpredictable process." According to Bayart, this is a standard political argument, and its validity should be tested case by case. There is no guarantee that the civic movements were established by forces favouring formal democracy or having definite anti-establishment agendas or that, if they had these properties, that they would be able to make any significant contribution to the political debate.

All this boils down to one thing. Local level politics is an arena that is difficult to democratise. When we set out to investigate the impact of aid on local politics, we should remember the difficult starting point. When democracy can appear to be an

alien invention, democracy fostered by visiting aid projects will almost certainly look like an import commodity. The conservative inertia of the local power holders is likely to find expression in resentment against intrusions into their own territory. In the negative case, the local elite is prepared to claw the flesh from aid-induced political initiatives, leaving the scattered bones for the people. In the positive case, the local elite notices the benefits of institutionalising democratic practices and tries to accommodate them within the existing power structure.

Does aid support the creation of a democratic political culture at the local level? In the following section, I bring an analysis of one case—aid to south-eastern Tanzania—onto the level of wider policy discourse. As we have seen, this case is not representative, nor is the evidence uncontroversial. Yet the case exposes the key dimensions of the debate and illuminates the problems that aid agencies face when entering the local scene.

9.2 AID IMPACTS ON A LOCAL SCENE

South-eastern Tanzania ranks as one of the poorest corners of the world if economic indicators are used. In terms of political and social stability, the area could be described as one of the quiet backwaters of a troubled world. The only open conflicts affecting it have been the Maji Maji uprising at the beginning of the century and the Mozambican war during the early 1970s. Both conflicts originated from elsewhere and affected the south-eastern regions only temporarily. Certainly the majority of the population has escaped from active involvement in military confrontations. If we try to find cracks in the political and social stability, we must turn our eyes towards the State itself as a source of instability. The regions have indeed witnessed a long chain of administrative experiments, which have also affected the rules of the political game, and these experiments have systematically been externally imposed rather than locally conceived, thus subjecting the population to repeated adaptation. The villagisation campaign of the early 1970s was the most influential of these experiments, because it meant forced resettlement for the majority of the rural inhabitants. I would nevertheless like to emphasise the extent of social stability. Even when at the mercy of administrative whims, the citizens have managed to maintain their social integrity and cultural values to a remarkable degree.

In the previous chapters, I have described south-eastern Tanzania as an area where parochial politics are deeply rooted. The local political identities are constructed around religious affiliations, ethnic/clan affiliations and allegiance to political parties. The main dividing lines still run between the local citizen and the immigrant administrators, or between local interests and national policy directives. Thus the local and the national are complementary but also competing frames of reference. Political language and political institutions are accordingly shaped by similar compe-

tion. Tanzania has been described as one of the most centralised countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (De Muro et al. 1999:8), and the history of the subjugation of the formal local political institutions has been long, thus directing local politics towards informal institutions and modes of expression.

In my analysis I have used *decentred* analysis. In other words, I have looked at aid projects from a perspective where local actors and on-going social processes are given a dominant position. This perspective gives due weight to the historical institution-alisation of local political forces, their embeddedness in economic interests and their vertical integration into national processes. The perspective views aid as one constituent in a historical process not determined by any conscious setting of objectives. The decentred analysis deviates sharply from the perspective of conventional aid evaluations, which are completely aid-centred and thus selective in their utilitarian way of including local processes in the analysis. Since aid evaluations are constructed in an internally coherent manner, it is not always easy to discern what issues they emphasise unduly and what issues they omit altogether.

The case-study on south-eastern Tanzania discusses both official and unofficial political institutions and conventions. The official political institutions have been within the reach of the aid projects, but a willingness on the part of the projects to surrender decision-making power to the local political institutions has been almost totally lacking. Instead, the projects have relied upon administrative channels, which are linked with the political debate only at the national level. During the 1990s, some change has started to take place in this respect. As far as unofficial politics are concerned, the aid projects have had a very limited (and often top-oriented) contact surface. Thus they have not been able to utilise the existing unofficial political channels, which, however feeble they may appear, always broaden the social base of political constituencies.

Within the administration, the aid projects have ostensibly had a positive impact in terms of enhancing a systematic planning culture. The aid projects have been less progressive in the fields of financial accountability and transparency, partly because they themselves are reluctant to show their financial records. In the field of personnel management, the aid projects have created double standards which continuously cause strife, diminish work commitment and directly or indirectly disrupt the normal career paths. The problems of administrative impact are very difficult to solve (cf. Havnevik 1992). Those at the personnel management level have contributed to the increasing interest in the sectoral programme type of aid.

The impact of aid projects has also been positive due to their recent attempts to work directly with people and groups outside the administrative circles. Using the inclusive banner of 'community participation', the aid organisations have been able to strengthen outreach functions and institutions, thus paving the way for political accountability. Community participation is commonly organised as a bilateral inter-

face where administrative/aid representatives meet community representatives. An interesting development is the recent shift from a 'targeting' to a 'stakeholder' approach; this means that an aid project can nowadays be a facilitator in strengthening the relationship between two or several non-state agencies, or between non-state agencies and state agencies. The increase in lateral political communication serves as a stimulus for the civil society, while the increase in vertical political communication serves the renewal of democratic political representation. In south-eastern Tanzania, the direct impact of the aid agencies on local political decision-making organs (i.e. district councils) may have still been minimal (for better or worse), but the impact on the overall institution building for democracy is already significant.

Let me now take one more step towards a theoretical level. Historically, the aid agencies have not been bastions of democracy in south-eastern Tanzania. They have been active in supporting a centrally controlled, technocratic, sectorally oriented developmentalist-state system. They have found the modernisation agenda appealing because of its cultural similarity to their own mission. The agenda for supporting democratic institutions has been less appealing, partly because of high-level international politics but also partly because of its 'erratic' and less controllable impact. We must remember that even when democracy is advocated in its Western form, the outcomes of the democratic processes—the substantive decisions—may deviate from the modernisation agenda. To give an example, a democratically elected council may decide to order all citizens, rural and urban alike, to engage in extensive traditional food production to cover their subsistence needs.

How can one explain the fact that the modernisation agenda has remained so powerful in aid circles, while democracy issues have received full attention only recently? One explanation is connected with project level aid practices. The aid projects are accountable to aid agencies; they need to perform according to criteria already laid down in the planning documents. Thus the technocratic orientation is smuggled in through the technical design of the project format with its input-output calculations, monitoring guidelines and mid-term evaluations. A sensible project worker tries to achieve tangible results resembling those outlined in the project plan. At the level of project praxis, the modernisation agenda and developmentalism have been the ultimate yardsticks.

In some cases modernisation/developmentalism may run counter to the formal interpretation of the democracy agenda. If an aid project succeeds in generating pro-poor development initiatives, it may have worked against the formal aim of democratic ideals: the fostering of self-determination based on local representative bodies. Democracy is a tricky thing. If people decide to use democratic institutions to strengthen the existing patronage hierarchies, they should, formally speaking, have every right to do so. The kind of democracy that can be achieved depends on the cultural parameters of the location; the outcomes of the political processes cannot be predetermined.

The opposition of democracy and developmentalism is, however, based on a rather formal, liberal conceptualisation of democracy. In their project approaches, the aid agencies tend to advocate an orientation towards ‘social democracy’, ‘participatory democracy’ or ‘consociational democracy’ rather than liberal democracy (for terms see Sklar 1986). In these alternative approaches, the political aim of formal democratic governance is subjected to a test in which the *inclusiveness of representation* is checked. Democratic institutions must be able to defend the basic rights of the poorest people as well as those of the social minorities. When aid agencies take these issues into consideration, they also question the formalist liberal-democracy agenda. Hence also their difficulty in providing an unambiguous explanation for the terms ‘partnership’ and ‘ownership’ in aid policies.

The question is the extent to which the aid agencies, as political actors, can compromise the formalist liberal-democracy agenda without dealing it a fatal blow. This study shows that the aid agencies have learned, especially during the 1990s, to take political issues seriously. Democracy is being given serious attention at the national level, and, interestingly, even the institutionally difficult political processes occurring at the sub-national level have received attention. It is equally clear that democracy is not a formal model which can simply be transferred to a new context and expected to function, like a maize mill, so as to automatically deliver the hoped-for outputs. The aid agencies (at the policy level) and aid projects (at the practical level) continually face a huge array of choices involving the necessity to compare development and democracy, efficiency and accountability. They must compare the incomparable.

Sensitivity to the local political situation: an over-stretched aim?

The final question is whether locational adaptability and sensitivity to local political situation constitute such an important goal that the aid agencies can seriously strive towards it. Is it a key aim or an additional decoration?

Aid policy papers tend to be very inclusive, including statements which bring all the positive values into the forefront of the discussion. The basic difficulty of aid is how to combine aims which have their own legitimacy yet seem extremely difficult to bring together. It is important to prioritise aims, to select aims that are within a reach and to work for concrete results. Otherwise, the gap between stated aims and actions starts to widen, and aid policies become alienated from reality.

Consistency between policies and action is vital for aid. A lack of consistency can always be explained by the time factor: the policies are looking towards the future, while the action still reflects decisions made a few years ago. This explanation holds only during periods of policy upheaval, however. In aid policies, turning the ship around tends to be a slow process, covering a time-span of several years (and governments). In a normal situation, a lack of consistency between policies and projects, or

between intentions and deeds, is a reflection of an internal conflict—whether political or operational in nature—within an aid agency. Such conflict is very harmful for partnership relationships, because it makes an aid agency to look like an unpredictable and unstable partner.

When the consistency of policies is formulated, it is natural that the politically widely accepted and technically clear policy aims are given priority. Sensitivity to the local situation is valued as a positive aim, but it hardly meets these two criteria. Sensitivity is usually spelled out using the terms of community participation and ‘decentralised cooperation’. These terms are motivated by the need for wide ‘ownership’ of the projects. All this field is subject to a large amount of partly overlapping aims and ideals, shepherded together by the aim of enhancing democracy through partnership arrangements.

According to recent forefront policy statements (DFID 1997; Riksdagen 1998), partnership is based primarily upon considerations of national policy. Partnership aims at consensus between the parties concerned and therefore tends to avoid difficult problems. The basic idea of partnership proclaims universal values, suitable for any situation. The adaptability of aid to local circumstances appears to be directly opposed to this aim. Is it possible to strive simultaneously towards national partnership and locational sensitivity?

The conflict of aims can be overcome by practical means. In sectoral programmes it is quite possible to build a hierarchy linking the two levels, so that the national level sets the basic principles while the sub-national level includes more scope for operational adaptation.⁴² This division of labour (as exemplified for the LGRP in Chapter 8) between the national and local levels seems to offer a solution to this problem. Nevertheless, the difficulty with sectoral programmes is the fact that the local partners are most likely the local representatives of the state machinery.

In bilateral projects, locational sensitivity is technically more easy to achieve. Even if the planning processes are controlled by the national entities, it is always possible for some of the decision-making to be left to the local level during implementation. In bilateral projects, the inclusion of local state and non-state actors is also less problematic.

The policy statements of development agencies are constructed in the form of a hierarchy, and within this hierarchy the universal grand aims take priority over local and less influential issues which, nevertheless, are controlled at the operational level.

42) In national programmes, locational sensitivity requires that the donor agency avoids extending its control to the local level. The adaptation of the partnership formula to include local sensitivity might automatically increase the number of local partner institutions from two to dozens. This is so because each locational representative should establish its own partnership with the donor agency. The opening of the political discussion to several stakeholders would severely complicate the negotiation process and even hamper the attainment of results. Furthermore, if locational partnerships are sought on a bilateral basis, the various representatives on the recipient side are likely to compete for resources. This model is beyond the capacity of any realistic aid agency. Thus the national partnership arrangement means to an aid agency that it avoids tampering with the local scenes. It is then the responsibility of the recipient (and the partnership concept) to guarantee local sensitivity.

Actually, aid policies leave a lot of issues to be decided upon as operational issues. While adaptability and local sensitivity have not found a place in central parts of the policy statements, the planning guidelines and operational manuals are keen to provide for adaptation.

'Flexibility' has recently made an appearance as a word to explain the strategic considerations of aid agencies. However, flexibility is primarily used to describe the capacity of an aid agency to decide upon its aid instruments and country/sector allocations case by case (DFID 1997:38; MfFA/DfDC 1996:2). The emphasis on flexibility enables the swift redirection of aid to new areas when complex emergencies crop up. This reflects the increased sensitivity of aid policies to international political instability. The donor agencies are well aware of the fragility of state authority all around the world—but especially in Sub-Saharan Africa. Liberia, Somalia and the former Zaire have shown that national integrity is not something that can be taken for granted. Rather, national unity and the existence of 'law and order' are values that require constant attention and considerable resources. Given this situation, the emphasis upon locational sensitivity might seem to be a way of generating disharmony and ethnic/regional pressure groups, and—in extreme cases—separatist movements and attempts at political secession.

This discussion shows that aid policies are rather general and that the operational level may therefore be left with considerable freedom to add more specific objectives. The consistency between major policy aims and actual deeds has been vigorously debated. The objective of locational sensitivity is left to the field of operations, and thus adherence to such sensitivity is not subjected to screening when high-level policy debates are conducted.

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What is really new in recent development cooperation policies? Do sector programmes provide a solution to problems of legitimacy and transparency? What are the benefits of conventional project-based cooperation? What are the lessons to be learned?

This study looks at concrete situations involving the negotiation of new forms of development cooperation in southern Tanzania. The scene is a complicated one, since the donor agencies are looking for new participatory methods, while the Government of Tanzania has simultaneously been engaging in extensive reforms in the fields of economic structures, administration and politics. In addition, new civil society agencies are emerging, claiming a voice in policy debates. In this situation, old conventions and role models are no longer valid.



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