INTERROGATING DECENTRALISATION IN AFRICA

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Transforming Development Knowledge

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Editors **Shandana Khan Mohmand and Miguel Loureiro**

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Note
* These authors are all instructors on the annual Advanced Training Course for Multi-Method and Policy-Oriented Research, offered by the Partnership for African Social and Governance Research.

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Foreword

In 1983, I wrote an article entitled 'Decentralization: The Latest Fashion in Development Administration?'. I argued that there was 'a growing interest in decentralisation among the governments of a number of Third World countries, especially – but not only – in Africa' and 'an even greater interest on the part of international development agencies, bilateral aid donors and academic circles' (Conyers 1983: 97).

That was more than 30 years ago, and at the time, I was a relatively young and idealistic student of development – and an ardent supporter of decentralisation. I believed that decentralisation was the answer to a wide range of local development problems. I am now considerably older and, I hope, wiser. I realise now that decentralisation is not a panacea. In fact, no development policy is; if there was any one magic solution, development practitioners would have been out of business long ago.

However, although I have modified my views, many of the basic points about decentralisation that I made in that article are as valid now as they were then. I would like to highlight five of these.

Firstly, decentralisation remains a popular development policy. I acknowledged in the article that 'this is not the first time that decentralisation has been advocated by those concerned with the theory and practice of development administration'. I also suggested that 'the relationship between centralisation and decentralisation is, to some extent, similar to the movement of a pendulum, in the sense that a strong movement in one direction may well result in an opposite move as a reaction' (*op. cit.*: 98). This remains true today.

Since 1983, there have been several more 'waves' of decentralisation, within individual countries and in international development policy. The most significant, perhaps, was the promotion of decentralisation by international agencies such as the World Bank as part of the neoliberal agenda of 'rolling back the state'. This 'wave', which emerged in the 1990s, broadened the scope of the decentralisation debate to include privatisation as well as decentralisation within the state. It also brought economists into a field that had previously been dominated by political scientists and public administration specialists.

Secondly, decentralisation is still advocated as a means of addressing a wide range of development issues. It is seen as a way of increasing participation and strengthening democracy, promoting national unity,

improving the coordination of development efforts at the local level, increasing efficiency and maximising the use of scarce resources, and (as indicated previously), reducing the role of the central state. In fact, it is this multiplicity of potential benefits that make it such an attractive policy – and thus one that will probably always be in fashion somewhere or other.

Thirdly, decentralisation can take many different forms and there is still a big debate about the 'best' form. In the 1983 article, I argued that the form of decentralisation then being promoted, especially in Africa, was significantly different to that advocated earlier. The main difference was that powers were being decentralised to bodies comprising a mixture of central and local government representatives, rather than to autonomous local governments. I suggested that this model was more appropriate to 'third world' conditions and thus might be more durable. But I was to be proved wrong. A decade or so later, this 'new' model was being widely criticised as merely another means of central government control and there was a reversion to more 'traditional' local governments, composed entirely of elected local representatives.

There are also ongoing debates about the extent and type of powers that should be decentralised (how does one maximise local autonomy while maintaining national standards of service provision and without threatening national unity?); the levels to which these powers should be transferred (one level or a hierarchy, homogeneous or functional regions, large regions that are economically viable or small ones that foster participation?); and the financing of local governments (government transfers or local taxing powers, conditional or unconditional grants, allocation on the basis of need or of development potential?).

Fourthly, although decentralisation policies are widely advocated, their outcomes are often disappointing. Despite my enthusiasm for decentralisation at the time, I was forced to admit in my 1983 article that 'there does seem to be an increasing feeling – both within the countries concerned and among international agencies, academics and other interested 'outsiders' – that many of the programmes are not living up to their expectations' (*op. cit.*: 106). And this is as true now as it was then.

The reasons for this, I now realise, are complex and probably to some extent inevitable. Some of them relate to the 'design' of the reforms, and in particular the failure to match objectives and form. I suggested earlier that one of the attractions of decentralisation is that it can achieve many different objectives. However, this also creates problems because there is no 'one-size-fits-all' type of decentralisation that will achieve all of these objectives. Specific objectives require specific forms of decentralisation. Thus, the 'new' model to which I referred in 1983 was relatively effective as a means of coordinating local development efforts but far less appropriate for promoting local democracy.

However, many of the reasons for the frequent failure to meet expectations are political in nature. The main obstacles to effective

decentralisation are probably the reluctance of national officials to relinquish control, especially over money, and the 'capture' of power by elites at the local level. Although 'technical' issues have to be taken into account, decentralisation is above all a political process.

The fifth point that I made in the 1983 article is the difficulty of substantiating any of the claims and counter-claims about decentralisation because of the lack of detailed studies of its impact. This remains a problem today. It is not easy to study the impact of any public sector reform and particularly one as complex as decentralisation: reforms are often not fully implemented; it takes time before their impact can be assessed; the impact varies from one part of a country to another and over time – due in part to variations in local conditions but also to the role of individual actors; and it is difficult to separate the impact of decentralisation from that of other policy changes.

It is for this reason that I welcome this *IDS Bulletin* and am honoured to write a foreword for it. The collection of articles presented here provides detailed evidence of the impact of decentralisation reforms at the local level in a number of African countries, each of which has adopted a different approach to decentralisation. This evidence will help us to understand the multitude of factors that affect the impact of such reforms. Moreover, because the studies have adopted a variety of methodologies, the collection will also be useful for those wanting to know how best to study this fascinating phenomenon in the future.

Diana Conyers
Programme Convenor of the IDS MA Governance and Development, retired

Reference

Conyers, Diana (1983) 'Decentralization: The Latest Fashion in Development Administration?', *Public Administration and Development* 3: 97–109

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Introduction: Interrogating Decentralisation in Africa

Shandana Khan Mohmand and Miguel Loureiro

Abstract Decentralisation is a major policy item across many emerging African democracies. However, repeated waves of local government reforms have had little impact on the region's continuing problems with governance, and the decentralisation agenda remains incomplete. Yet, within this larger story there are smaller stories, of how different regions and different actors experience differential outcomes in the decentralisation process. Such stories have not been told in enough detail in the overall narrative on Africa's decentralisation efforts. This *IDS Bulletin* is an attempt to get at these micro, comparative stories by accumulating evidence on how decentralisation works differently in a series of countries, and the factors that are responsible for differential outcomes. Together, the six articles of this issue interrogate the extent to which decentralisation has affected change at the local level and identify the factors that may allow decentralisation efforts to have greater impact through future reforms.

Keywords: decentralisation, Africa, Ibrahim Index of African Governance, comparative studies, mixed methods.

1 The state of governance in Africa

In many parts of the world, increasing dissatisfaction with conventional representative systems of democracy has led to the emergence of various strategies to 'deepen democracy' by improving the quantity and quality of participation, and to deliver services that better meet the expectations of citizens. Decentralisation reforms have been a central and popular strategy within these efforts. In theory, the decentralisation of government to a more local level, where state officials can engage with citizens more directly and regularly, is meant to create more participatory and deliberative spaces for decision-making, and lead to more effective and efficient service delivery and better policies. There is certainly literature that supports this perspective (Crook and Manor 1998; Heller 2001; Ribot 2002a; Wunsch and Oluwu 2003; Bardhan and Mookherjee 2006a, 2006b; Crawford and Hartmann 2008; Faguet 2012, 2014; Smoke 2015). At the same time, there is also empirical evidence, including from these same authors, that suggests that we may need to be more cautious about decentralisation and its impact. Quite

Figure 1 Ibrahim Index of African Governance 2016: ranking of the five country cases

Overall governance	Safety and rule of law	Participation and human rights	Sustainable economic opportunities	Human development
	Selected indicator: personal safety	Selected indicators: participation; rights	Selected indicator: public management	Selected indicators: health; education
1				
2				
3				
4		Ghana		
5				
6	Ghana			
7	Ghana			
8				
9				
10				
11			Kenya	Ghana
12	Kenya			Kenya
13				
14			Uganda	
15			Ghana	
16				
17		Kenya		
18				Uganda
19	Uganda	Uganda		
20				
21				
22	Uganda			
23			Ethiopia	Ethiopia
24				
25	Kenya			
26	Ethiopia	Nigeria		AFRICAN AVERAGE
27				
28	AFRICAN AVERAGE			
29				
30		AFRICAN AVERAGE	AFRICAN AVERAGE	
31	Ethiopia			
32				
33				
34			Nigeria	
35	AFRICAN AVERAGE			
36	Nigeria			
37				
38				Nigeria
39		Ethiopia		
40				
41				
42				
43				
44	Nigeria			
...				
54				

often, discussions of decentralisation provide useful 'ideal types' of government – that lie closer to people, have budgets that more closely match local needs, and reflect greater citizen voice in decision-making on service provision – but which are quite difficult to realise in practice. Most often we find that the decentralisation agenda in emerging democracies remains incomplete (Treisman 2007; Faguet 2012; Bratton 2012; Joshi and Schultze-Kraft 2014).

Decentralisation has been a major policy agenda item across many African countries over the last few decades (Conyers 2007), and efforts to strengthen local governments have been aimed at dealing with the region's continuing problems with governance. However, after repeated waves of decentralisation – including quite recent reforms to strengthen and rewire the system in Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda and Ethiopia, the five countries studied in detail in this *IDS Bulletin* – many of these problems remain. The Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG) 2016 provides a comparative sense of these issues (Mo Ibrahim Foundation 2016a).

The IIAG shows some improvement in overall governance performance across the continent (the latest edition of the IIAG provides not only the annual scores and ranks for the 54 countries of Africa, but also trends over a decade). Of the five countries studied in this issue, Ethiopia and Kenya have shown encouraging improvement – 7 and 5.1 per cent improvement, respectively, in the overall governance score assigned to them by the IIAG over a ten-year period from 2006 to 2015. Uganda and Nigeria have registered slight improvements with 3.4 per cent and 2.5 per cent respectively, and Ghana's score has decreased by 2.1 per cent over the last decade. In terms of the 2016 IIAG ranking, these countries cover a full spectrum of African cases. Ghana is part of the top ten African countries in terms of overall governance, ranked 7th despite its recent decreases. Kenya and Uganda lie above the African average, ranked 12th and 19th respectively, while Ethiopia and Nigeria lie below the average, at 31st and 36th of a total of 54 countries in the IIAG.

Figure 1 helps nuance these comparisons by providing a disaggregated ranking of each of these countries across a few key governance indicators, *vis-à-vis* the African average in 2016. This reveals that despite Ghana's impressive ranking overall, sub-indicators related to public management have registered a decrease in scores over the last decade. Some of these sub-indicators include effectiveness of public administration, budget management, ratio of revenue to expenditure, fiscal policy, and revenue mobilisation. In other words, Ghana is doing well *vis-à-vis* other African countries on governance, but it has not yet solved its problems in terms of public administration and fiscal management.

Of the other two countries that lie above the African average, Kenya has registered a real improvement in health outcomes between 2006 and 2015. This seems to be accompanied by a slight improvement also in the health sub-indicator that measures public satisfaction with

how the government handles basic health services. Uganda though, appears to be an interesting puzzle. While many education indicators have improved over the past decade, primary school completion figures have remained stagnant and the score for 'education provision', which measures public satisfaction with how government handles educational needs, has decreased. So while inputs into service delivery may be improving – an increase in school enrolment, of teachers in primary schools, in funding, and in the involvement of more actors from the private sector – neither outcomes of this delivery nor satisfaction with government services are registering commensurate increases.

For the two countries that lie below the regional average in terms of overall scores, we notice in Figure 1 that Ethiopia ranks above the African average in three out of the four categories – safety and rule of law, sustainable economic opportunity, and human development – but lags in participation and human rights on measures such as 'political participation', 'civil society participation', and various freedoms. Nigeria's problems are of a different variety. Its major issues seem to be safety and rule of law, on which it ranks 44th out of 54 countries. It has seen some improvements, mainly in police services that have contributed to stronger scores on 'personal safety', but this has not led to improvements in terms of how safe people actually feel. In fact, there has been a decrease of public perception of neighbourhood safety in particular.

What is the significance of all this information? For instance, Ghana has one of the strongest governance systems in Africa but its bureaucratic processes seem to be lagging. Nigeria has one of the weakest systems but it has registered improvements over the last decade on some important indicators, including on rule of law and safety. What types of conclusions do we draw from such findings?

The problem with most composite measures, as with studies that focus on macro narratives and broad conclusions, is that they often conceal and conflate more than they reveal. A focus on decentralisation is an important way of giving a more realistic sense of how the governance reform agenda is working out at the grass roots. The decentralisation reforms that were instituted to deal with many of these governance problems may have few big stories to tell of transformative local governance, but there may be smaller stories – either of positive outcomes, or at least of how different parts of each country and different actors experience differential outcomes in the decentralisation process. Such smaller, more micro and comparative stories have not been told in enough detail in the overall narrative on Africa's decentralisation efforts.

This *IDS Bulletin* is an attempt to get at these micro, comparative stories by accumulating evidence on how decentralisation works differently within each country, and the factors that are responsible for differential outcomes. Decentralisation reforms in their most recent form in Africa have had three main aims: 'improved service delivery, democracy and participation, and a reduction in central government

expenditure' (Conyers 2007). The studies in this *IDS Bulletin* deal with all three of these aims – the articles on Kenya, Uganda and Ghana look at issues of service delivery at the local level; those on Ethiopia and Nigeria raise questions about local democracy and participation by formal and informal actors; and the article on Ghana by Crook looks at issues of local revenue mobilisation. In doing so, each article considers in particular the country-specific areas highlighted in the IIAG 2016 previously mentioned – public administration in Ghana, security provision in Nigeria, participatory local governance in Ethiopia, education provision in Uganda and maternal health care in Kenya.

Together, the six articles of this issue interrogate the extent to which decentralisation has affected change at the local level – in terms of democratisation, participation and service delivery – and identify the factors that may allow decentralisation efforts to have greater impact through future reforms.

2 Contributing to the narrative on decentralisation in Africa

What are the smaller stories hidden within the larger trends highlighted by the IIAG 2016 on governance in Africa, and to what extent has decentralisation managed to affect change in these areas? More importantly, what are the factors that keep local government reforms from achieving more complete outcomes? These are the main questions that this *IDS Bulletin* asks. The articles in this collection focus on providing more nuanced and grounded explanations for the impact of decentralisation at the local level in Africa through detailed case studies of local governments in five countries.

This issue is also special because it brings together a unique set of African scholars who live under the region's decentralised systems (with the exception of Crook), and study them with a proximate lens often denied to visiting scholars from other, usually Northern countries. More importantly, these scholars regularly work together as a team to conduct annual trainings on research methods for university staff from across the African continent. This orientation is obvious in the design of each study, uniquely formulated to deal with research questions that are on the policy agenda in each country. The questions are all currently relevant – and so it is no surprise then that the topic chosen for investigation by each country team matches the issues highlighted by the IIAG 2016 – and they are held together by the common belief that more innovative methods should now be applied to these questions in order to achieve better and deeper explanations. The composition of the team and their approach to the subject brings a thematic and methodological freshness to this issue.

The two articles on Ghana look at public administration, fiscal transfers and local revenue mobilisation. In other words, they look specifically at the indicators on which Ghana has registered decreases over the past decade. Crook looks at the issue of local versus central funding of local government expenditures, and explores in particular whether democratic

decentralisation means that Ghana's District Assemblies can raise more local revenues, and in the process engage more with citizens to deliver better services. His article deals centrally with the question of whether public administration and service delivery are negatively affected by the way in which democratic decentralisation interacts with the logic of a clientelist political system. Doh's article, on the other hand, looks at the extent to which staff quality within the local bureaucracy makes a difference to local service provision. In the context of plans for greater decentralisation in Ghana and giving District Assemblies more devolved responsibility for service delivery, Crook and Doh's articles draw our attention to the types of factors that can limit performance both within the system (through staff quality) and outside it (through clientelism).

The study on Kenya looks at citizen perception of maternal health-care provision by local governments, and demonstrates how this is commensurate with the improvements in health care registered by the IIAG 2016. Kilonzo, Kamaara and Magak tell us, however, that there are differences in the perceptions of service users and service providers. Users are generally satisfied while providers, with a broader and more intimate view of the system, complain about the inadequacy of a number of facets, largely the result of limitations placed on local health-care provision by higher tiers of government. The fact of perceptions being closely linked to sectional views of the system is an important one, especially when it applies to deepening ethnic discrimination in more heterogeneous counties (the unit of local government in Kenya).

This works the other way round in Nigeria in the context of high insecurity and citizens' growing concerns about their own safety. Here better services do not seem to be connected to better perceptions of provision by communities. In this case, the authors Ojebode, Onyishi and Aremu tell us that perceptions are closely related to expectations that are built through the practice of local democracy, in particular through campaign promises made in a context of very limited resources, an echo of the impact of clientelism in Ghana. Democratic decentralisation interacts with limited fiscal decentralisation and autonomy to lead to unfavourable perceptions by constituents, and a feeling of being let down yet again by politicians.

The Uganda study explores the conundrum of how some of the country's education indicators have improved over time (for instance, human resources in primary schools and government support for education), while completion rates remain stagnant (they actually decrease if we look at the trend over the past 15 years (Mo Ibrahim Foundation 2016b)). Maractho points out that part of the answer might lie in how government handles educational needs, with the liberalisation of education widening a gap between public and private education, and, once again, resource differentials affecting the quality of provision by local governments.

The Ethiopia article uses the case of waste management in the capital city of Addis Ababa to provide a quite unique perspective on why

the country is not performing well on indicators for participation and human rights. Alemu examines the decline in the quality of waste collection and recycling services in the city by comparing the role of formal and informal actors, based on the premise that it is the increasing centralisation tendencies of the Ethiopian government that is leading to reduced participation by previously active actors within service delivery networks. The study alerts us to the fact that decentralisation reforms that formalise processes and procedures indiscriminately may lead to worse, rather than better, services.

What particular contributions does this issue make to the above debates over decentralisation and governance reform? First and foremost, it highlights an area where the literature continues to be very limited. By this, we do not refer simply to literature on decentralisation in Africa, but also to literature on this subject by African scholars, and to studies that are comparative and provide a systematic analysis of the outcomes of decentralisation efforts. In other words, this *IDS Bulletin* offers studies by African scholars that observe the functioning and impact of decentralisation at the most micro level through detailed cases that draw out nuanced differences between different parts of the country, different political systems, and different political actors. Besides this fundamental contribution, this *IDS Bulletin* also provides insights into three main issues within the study of decentralisation.

2.1 An incomplete agenda

Decentralisation reforms have been put forward as the answer to many of the governance problems of emerging democracies. As suggested earlier, the argument is that bringing decision-making closer to people provides greater opportunities for participation, more relevant policies, more rational expenditure, and so helps improve local governance. However, the literature also accepts that the decentralisation agenda remains incomplete in most countries. Sometimes this is because of the partial implementation of administrative, political and fiscal devolution, while at other times it is because of the absence of other complementary changes that are required to ensure that decentralisation efforts will succeed. This is the overall, collective story that the articles in this issue tell.

It is not a surprise that each study highlights a fairly similar set of missing elements. Almost everyone agrees that there is a lack of funds at the local level – in some cases central transfers do not adequately match local needs, or do not correspond to the functions legally devolved to local governments; in other cases, political manoeuvres and clientelistic politics lead to funds being distributed unevenly or ineffectively across districts; and in almost all cases, local authorities do not have the power to raise adequate local funds.

Another regularly cited issue is the continuing centralisation tendencies of higher tiers of government. The reluctance by African governments to decentralise power, noted by Conyers in the foreword of this issue and in her earlier articles (1983, 2007), remains true today. This is

recent renewed commitments to decentralisation in some countries, such as in Ethiopia in 2005, and in Kenya in 2010. A number of papers point out that national and state governments' need to hold on to power leads to limited space available for lower tier governments within districts and counties to make substantive decisions that would lead to service delivery improvements within their areas.

The studies approach decentralisation by examining specific aspects of local administration and the delivery of specific services – local revenue mobilisation and the motivation of frontline workers for public service in the case of Ghana, security provision in the case of Nigeria, urban solid waste management in Ethiopia, maternal health care in Kenya, and primary education in Uganda. This case-based exploration leads them to identify the key factors that limit the quality and efficacy of delivery in each case. For instance, there is a need:

● For central governments to provide more untied funds – and therefore more autonomy – to local governments (see the cases of Nigeria, Kenya and Uganda);

● To provide incentives to attract better quality staff to far flung parts of each country, avoiding an internal 'brain drain' to better-off urban centres and nearby regions (see Ghana and Uganda);

● To strengthen local accountability, ensuring greater fairness and equity in service delivery, reducing the impact of political patronage, as well as allowing more actors to participate in more democratically organised spaces (see Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya and Ethiopia).

Any one of these reforms may not in itself ensure better access to and quality of local services, but if decentralisation is to remain on the agenda, it cannot function within the strangleholds placed on it by limited funds, restricted autonomy, exclusive spaces and clientelistic politics. The lack of such complementary reforms only sets local governments up for failure, and risks fostering disillusionment with the system as a whole, as argued by several of the contributors.

2.2 The need for multi-actor coalitions

Effective service delivery at the local level usually involves coordinated multi-sectoral and multi-actor efforts. Together the articles in this issue tell us that when such broad cooperation is missing, the performance of local governments suffers. In fact, they make an interesting observation as a set: decentralisation does not mitigate against the centralising tendencies of different levels of government – state governments in Nigeria that maintain control over the disbursement of funds that come from the centre, as well as over the electoral process by appointing rather than electing many local governments; the city government of Addis Ababa that will not share responsibilities with other departments or with informal actors; and the concentration of development around headquarters of councils and counties, as in Uganda, Kenya and Ghana. In other words, decentralised government does not mean that

power will be shared with local governments, or by local governments with other state departments and non-state actors, or by towns with more remote parts of the county or district.

Cooperation across formal actors requires that different state departments coordinate their efforts at the frontline. Coordination between formal and informal actors occurs when local governments open up more participatory decision-making spaces for actors who have no formal responsibility for service delivery, but play an active and significant role within it in any case. The impact of informal actors and institutions, however, can work in two very different ways.

On the one hand, their inclusion in local government processes can strengthen local democracy by allowing budgetary and distributive decisions to more closely reflect local needs, and for services to be delivered more cost-effectively through existing channels (Scheye 2009; Ananth Pur and Moore 2010; Mohmand and Mišić Mihajlović 2014). This is the view that both Alemu and Ojebode *et al*. take in the Ethiopia and Nigeria articles respectively.

Alemu's study of Addis Ababa's solid waste management system adequately demonstrates how service delivery suffers when state institutions that are given prime responsibility to deliver a service refuse to build broad-based coalitions with other state and non-state actors. In this case, those actors include the health department and a range of informal actors who facilitate the collection and recycling of waste in the city. Ojebode *et al*.'s article on security provision by local governments in Nigeria also demonstrates how, despite the fact that various non-state actors, such as community leaders and groups of local volunteers, play an important role in ensuring safe communities, their integration into formal processes is *ad hoc* and arbitrary.

On the other hand, the involvement of local non-state actors can strengthen clientelistic politics at the local level (Baldwin 2007; Gay 2009), limiting the fairness and equity of distribution as service delivery becomes a *quid pro quo* arrangement tied to votes. The local power and privilege of some non-state actors could also interact with greater resources at the local level in ways that skew distribution and lead to the capture of development funds and services (Bardhan and Mookherjee 2006a). This is the view that both Crook and Ojebode *et al*. take in their articles on Ghana and Nigeria.

Crook shows how, despite years of consolidated democratic local government in Ghana through its District Assemblies, neither local resource mobilisation nor developmental efforts have improved substantially, largely because of clientelistic politics that represent the interests of only sections of the population. Politicians at all levels, including at the local level, often provide services to constituents in return for votes, and not because they are the section of population that most require those services. This form of politics distorts theoretical

linkages – such as 'principal-agent' models of political accountability – between decentralisation reforms and outcomes. Ojebode *et al.* make a similar argument, and highlight in particular the ability of local political 'godfathers' in Nigeria to squeeze local government resources to the extent that they leave little room for effective delivery by councils.

The impact of a greater number of actors playing a role in local service delivery is also highlighted in some way by the other articles. The Uganda article by Maractho focuses on differences in the provision of primary education by local governments when donors and private actors get involved. Both these sets of non-state actors use selection criteria for provision that are not always obvious to other stakeholders, but their involvement in a given district can substantially improve its performance indicators. This makes the point that despite one of the most impressive decentralisation efforts in Africa and a programme fully focused on the improvement of delivery of primary education, Uganda's local governments are unable to deliver quality services, and the existence of 'islands of efficiency' appear to be a result of interventions by external actors. The Kenya article makes reference to the impact of more political actors at the local level. Here, as in other countries, the new tier of local government has introduced party competition at the local level, and a greater role for opposition parties. Decentralisation has, therefore, increased the number of political actors at the local level, made room for political coalitions, and in the process, given citizens a larger space for demanding services.

2.3 Comparative analyses of decentralisation

Ribot's (2002b) review of studies on decentralisation in Africa points out that a comparative lens is an under-utilised tool for examining local government reforms in the continent. This has not changed much in the decade and a half since then. There is a clear need to use more innovative methods and more incisive tools. Comparative analysis carried out at the most local level – within councils that can be studied either in comparison to one another, or then contrasted as two cases – can yield more grounded, empirical stories and narratives. However, the African research context is a difficult one. There are three constraints in particular: limited availability of existing data; difficulty of access to data that does exist because of bureaucratic processes, and concerns about quality and rigour (Smoke 2015). While these constraints call for the gathering of more primary evidence, resources for doing so are limited.

These are constraints that this team of researchers faced in good quantity, and so they set out to look for fresh evidence to the extent that the resources available to them could afford. Each of the articles in this issue makes a concerted effort to use a detailed, micro and comparative lens to the extent possible. In some cases, the teams persevered. In others, it became so difficult given the circumstances that they had to modify their strategy to a more modest objective. But the contribution to the understudied comparative field of decentralisation in Africa, and

particularly of people's perception of what decentralisation means to them, is obvious in each case.

The Nigerian article compares citizens' perception of the efficacy of local councils that are elected with those that are appointed, in delivering security services, and finds that quite unexpectedly, citizens have a better impression of the work of unelected councils as compared to elected ones. Doh's study of Ghana does not directly compare the two districts in which it is based, but does examine how staff quality explains service delivery outcomes in two different District Assemblies – one that is at the top and the other at the bottom of the official District League Table – making an effort to draw out a detailed pathway to explain the different outcomes in each case. The Ugandan study compares two districts and their differential primary schooling outcomes to find that donor and private sector involvement provides positive distortions in the quality of primary education. In Kenya, Kilonzo and her co-authors consider the perceptions of citizens regarding improvements in access to health services in two different counties, comparing these largely positive perceptions to the less favourable ones of service providers themselves in both cases, a difference they suggest comes from improved access itself. As the number of users increases, while fiscal remittances from the national government do not, the local health-care system is put under ever increasing pressure. In the article on Ethiopia, the comparison is between the role of formal and informal actors in waste management.

The articles also use a variety of other tools to develop their arguments. Alemu uses social network analysis to compare the role of formal and informal actors in Addis Ababa. Kilonzo *et al.* make use of ethnographic methods to understand access to maternal health care in Kenya, while Maractho uses in-depth interviews with key actors. Both Doh and Ojebode *et al.* combine qualitative and quantitative tools to draw out causal mechanisms, or pathways, to explain how a set of initial conditions led to the observed outcomes in each case.

Each author is able to draw out a very particular perspective based on the method they use to investigate the question, and the choice of method is to a large extent based on the question itself. So, for example, ethnographic research is employed when the purpose is to probe complex and multidimensional processes; social network analysis is used when the purpose is to uncover actors and actions; and paired case and pathway analysis is used to explain how a particular outcome may have occurred. This is good practice, and recent calls for the use of more innovative and mixed methods, such as by Creswell and Plano Clark (2007), have argued that methods should be determined by the questions we ask and the contexts in which we apply them.

3 A diverse yet unified approach
This *IDS Bulletin* as a whole tests the relationship between decentralisation and a list of outcomes – from maternal health care and education, to solid waste management and crime prevention – using a mix of methods

to answer questions about whether or not decentralisation can lead to better services in emerging economies. The contents of these pages should be of particular interest to scholars working on decentralisation in Africa, policymakers in African ministries, aid agencies, and civil society organisations working on the delivery of essential services in Africa. Each case study is led and researched by an in-country team of scholars, all of whom come from different disciplines and use different methods and approaches to the central question. This allows the issue to present a real diversity of viewpoints from across the African region – allowing us to hear more directly from African scholars who work and teach in its universities, in their voice and in their style.

At the same time, the work of these authors is held together by a commitment to more innovative and rigorous approaches to studying Africa's policy questions. The researchers that came together to produce this issue represent a group of scholars who work with the Partnership for African and Social Governance Research (PASGR) and IDS to train early and mid-career researchers in African universities in a variety of methods. They are alumni of the programme themselves, and are now its main instructors. This coalition of institutions and researchers represents important steps forward in the direction of strengthening research in Africa – introducing new methods, working with university bureaucracies to expand the available space for research, improving university-based teaching of methods, and raising funds for new research – but the challenges remain large.

Decentralisation is an important issue in Africa, but the challenges faced by university-based researchers in the region mean that systematic analyses of its outcomes are still limited. The studies in this *IDS Bulletin* represent first efforts by a set of scholars to use more innovative and incisive methods to understand decentralisation and its impact in Africa. With more resources and time, these lines of enquiry can be both strengthened and deepened to provide better explanations. The set of studies presented here already represent exciting and important new contributions to a field of study that requires more attention.

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Democratic Decentralisation, Clientelism and Local Taxation in Ghana[*]

Richard C. Crook

Abstract It is generally assumed by advocates of democratic decentralisation that maximising locally-raised revenue sources will help to enhance accountability through a closer and more legitimate relationship between the local government authority and citizens. Research on Ghana and other African countries shows, however, that the dominance of clientelist forms of politics undermines the legitimacy of local taxation; where voters expect their representatives to provide specific pay-backs to themselves or their communities in return for support and payment of tax, it is extremely difficult to establish a 'collective interest' for the local government area. Citizens tend to interpret allocation decisions over expenditure of revenues as products of patronage relations rather than as a collective public good. This problem is especially acute where resources are very scarce and the revenue base limited. Central government transfers are, therefore, likely to remain the fairest and most effective way of financing local government in such contexts.

Keywords: democratic decentralisation, Ghana, clientelism, taxation, local revenue, intergovernmental transfers.

1 Introduction: accountability and central vs local revenue sources

One of the most commonly recognised problems of local or decentralised government in less developed countries is lack of resources to carry out their basic functions and services – the so-called 'unfunded mandates' or 'responsibility-resource gap' (Dafflon 2013). How to fund decentralised government in poor or developing countries is the subject of a continuing debate between those who argue that decentralisation should seek to maximise locally-raised revenue, and those who argue that central government transfers are the only realistic and equitable way to ensure adequate resources, even if those transfers become the dominant source of revenues.[1]

The main arguments in favour of central government funding are:

● In countries where the majority of the population live in poor rural areas, there are extreme inequalities of tax base resources; outside the major cities, most local authorities suffer from an inherent poverty of resources such that improvements in local tax mobilisation will only improve revenues 'at the margin', and can rarely provide sufficient funds to carry out their mandated functions (Aziz and Arnold 1996; Dafflon 2013; Davey 1994).

● Attempts to substantially increase local taxation in such circumstances will therefore inevitably run into political resistance, especially where there is already a 'vicious circle' of poor performance caused by lack of resources and unwillingness to pay tax when there are no perceived benefits.

● Central government funding is therefore essential for 'pump-priming' the resources of local authorities, enabling them to provide the services they are expected to provide.

● Central government funding is also essential to equalise resources and redistribute to poorer areas, using the usual device of a 'distributable pool' of national revenues, as well as earmarked and matching grants (Bahl and Linn 1994; Dafflon 2013).

● Concerns over the autonomy of local governments which are highly dependent on central government can be dealt with through legal and administrative devices which guarantee stable, assured funding and permit expenditure autonomy. What is required is a good balance between mechanisms of central monitoring and auditing on the one hand, and an adequate flow of block grants, combined with targeted funds for generic areas.

The main argument for central funding therefore rests on the assertion that the source of funding for local government is less important than its adequacy for the functions allocated, and how it is controlled and monitored, including the role of political accountability mechanisms at local level.

Those in favour of maximising local revenue mobilisation base their arguments primarily on the desirability of enhanced accountability of government, linked with democratic decentralisation. The main assumptions are as follows:

● Internalisation of costs and benefits: the greater the proportion of local revenue in the total revenue of a local authority, the more closely the costs and benefits are restricted to local residents.

● This, combined with the greater proximity of decision-makers to local citizens and their demands, leads to greater 'allocative efficiency' of service provision and development expenditure, since

local citizens will only demand what they are really prepared to pay for (Bird 1994; Tanzi 1995; World Bank 2004).

- Citizens' demands (through the 'long route of accountability' – World Bank 2004) will also be heard better because of the democratic accountability of elected representatives as well as other participatory devices; this will make local government more responsive to local needs, particularly those of the mass of poor citizens, and improve local service provision. Indeed, it has been argued that over-dependence on central government transfers, especially in resource-poor areas which benefit from equalisation grants, is likely to create 'rentier' sub-national governments which do not have to engage democratically with local citizens because they are under no pressure to impose taxes (Gervasoni 2010). (This is a variant of the argument that governments which need to tax their citizens will naturally develop a more accountable and reciprocal relationship with them, which is more likely to be sustained by democratic representation – see Brautigam, Fjeldstad and Moore 2008.)

- Improved accountability and responsiveness will therefore enhance the legitimacy of local taxation, given its more direct link to perceived benefits, and will create a 'virtuous circle' in which more responsive services will encourage more tax paying, and lead to further increases in revenue.

- Local governments which raise a greater share of their total revenue from local sources will also become more autonomous and have greater discretion over expenditure decisions than those which are heavily dependent on transferred revenues. This again results in a mutual reinforcement of local accountability and responsive expenditure patterns.

In this article, some of the assumptions underlying the advocacy of maximising local revenue mobilisation will be challenged, focusing particularly on the alleged link between democratic representation, greater willingness to pay local taxes, and improvements in the provision of public goods including investment in pro-poor development programmes. The key institution linking government and citizens in this context is that of the elected representative. To what extent does accountability through elections really ensure that local governments will be able to improve local tax mobilisation, and produce more developmental outputs? And what do citizens in today's poor or developing countries actually demand of their local representatives? The 'principal-agent' models popular with development analysts and donor agencies tend to assume that citizens as 'principals' will demand collective or 'developmental' public goods and accountability for expenditure decisions. But this is not necessarily the case (*cf.* Booth 2012).

These questions will be examined through a review of the experience of democratic decentralisation in Ghana, with some comparative

observations on other African and Asian countries, including a rather different form of decentralisation in Côte d'Ivoire based on a Francophone model of local government. These cases show that even after many years of consolidated democratic local government, there are still enormous problems with local tax mobilisation, and with the developmental responsiveness of the local authorities. The problems derive primarily from the role of representatives in societies dominated by a patron–client form of political competition, and also from the logic of the particular forms of electoral representation which have been adopted.

2 The Ghana District Assemblies
2.1 Formal structures and functions

Ghana's District Assembly system was introduced in 1989 by the then military government of Jerry Rawlings. The 'Rawlings Revolution' of 1981 was based on radical populist ideas of direct participation and no-party people's democracy (inspired partly by Gaddafi's Libya), and the decentralisation reform of 1989 was portrayed as a fulfilment of that commitment to introduce a 'truly Ghanaian' form of grass-roots democracy. With the transition to a more conventional, representative multiparty democracy in 1992, the District Assemblies (DAs) were incorporated into the 1992 Constitution of the Fourth Republic and are now governed by the Local Government Act of 1993. Politically, the reform was clearly an attempt to create a rural power base for Rawlings, embodying as it did a privileged position for pro-Rawlings 'revolutionary organisations' (which later became the core of his party, the National Democratic Congress (NDC)), and mechanisms for co-opting rural business, professional and agrarian elites (see Crook and Manor 1998).

There are now 216 Assemblies, ranging from 170 rural DAs with populations ranging from 75,000 to 250,000–300,000, to 40 Municipal Assemblies for towns with populations of over 95,000, and six Metropolitan Assemblies for the large cities including the capital Accra, population 2.4 million. Their primary function is to be responsible for the 'overall development of the district', together with a very wide range of specific service responsibilities. In the rural DAs, these are mainly the provision of educational and health infrastructures, minor roads, public works, markets, town planning and other projects.

Administratively, they are a mixed form of decentralisation in that their other main function is to supervise the various former line ministries which have been deconcentrated to district level since 1989, to form an integrated district governmental and financial apparatus. They are therefore responsible for drawing up an overall District Plan and a composite District Budget, although this remains problematic even after 27 years of operation. The district is administered, not by an elected mayor, but by a centrally appointed official, the District Chief Executive (DCE), who is normally a political activist loyal to the government of the day, assisted by a small group of senior civil service administrators and technical officers. Other staff (e.g. revenue collectors, drivers, clerks, labourers) are employed locally.

Table 1 **Breakdown of District Assembly funding sources (national aggregates)**

Central government transfers	%
DACF	44
DDF (donors)	25
HIPC funds	17
Government salary payments	11
Ministry sector grants	3

Local revenues	%
Fees and charges	34
Licences	20
Property tax	18
Permits and land	14
Miscellaneous (poll tax, special levies, trading services, etc)	14

Source Gilbert *et al.* (2013).

2.2 DA funding
Since 1994, the majority of funding for the DAs (currently around 82 per cent overall) has come from central government transfers (Gilbert, Hugounenq and Vaillancourt 2013); this represents a continuing trend towards increases in both the absolute amounts and the proportion of funding coming from central government or external sources, which, as will be argued, is linked to the political imperatives of democratic decentralisation. The main funding source is the District Assemblies Common Fund (DACF), a distributable pool account which is allocated 7.5 per cent of national government revenues; other elements come from the District Development Fund (DDF) (a channel for donor funds), Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) funds, royalties from natural resources and customary land rents, and government payment of some district staff salaries. The largest source of local revenues is 'fees and charges' which includes local business taxes, followed by licences and property tax (Table 1).

2.3 Democracy and the political context
Rawlings' original populist vision of the DAs was that they would build a genuinely grass-roots form of participatory democracy which would focus on 'community-based forms of self-reliant economic and social development' (or 'self-help', as it is called in Ghana). Rawlings was especially hostile to liberal, multiparty-based competitive politics, which he saw as an inappropriate, colonial imposition on African societies, and a harmful distraction from building communal consensus around practical development measures. Hence the ban on parties in local elections, which not only echoed the Libyan system, but was similar

to the Ugandan system introduced by Museveni's ex-guerrilla army National Resistance Movement (NRM) regime in 1986 (Crook 1999). (A similar approach has characterised other authoritarian regimes which have resisted political competition at the national level, such as Bangladesh under Ershad, or Pakistan under Musharraf).

These participatory aspirations were embodied in the democratic institutions of the DAs at both district and sub-district levels. At the lowest level, there are elected Unit Committees for every group of 500 electors (in practice, villages and quarters); above them are Area and Town Councils, not directly elected but composed of DA-elected members for those areas.

At the district level, which because of the size of the DAs has necessarily to be a form of representative politics, there are Assemblies which consist of two thirds-elected Assembly Members (AMs), elected by 'first-past-the-post' elections as single members for very small wards. The average ratio of AMs to electors is 1: 2,000; in the two case study districts studied by Crook and Manor in the 1990s (East Akim and East Mamprusi), the ratios were 1:1,800 and 1:2,200 (Crook and Manor 1998). This was clearly designed to foster a very close and direct relationship between elected AMs and their constituents. Together with the one third of AMs appointed by government on local recommendations, this has produced relatively large Assemblies, for example 79 members for East Akim and 69 for East Mamprusi, with populations in the 1990s of 209,710 and 183,839 respectively.

The original political context of the DAs changed substantially after 1992, following Rawlings' acceptance of the need to move to a multiparty, constitutional democracy with an elected executive president and national Parliament. Rawlings secured his continuation in power for another eight years through his NDC party, which used his incumbent power to mobilise support; control of the resources of the rural DAs through his loyal DCEs and his Committees for the Defence of the Revolution (CDRs) played a significant part in the election victories of 1992 and 1996. After the opposition, the New Patriotic Party (NPP), won power in 2000, Ghana became established as a relatively stable two-party competitive democracy, with the NDC returning to power in 2008. The two main parties represent two competing 'political traditions' associated with both class and regional power bases; the NPP is descended from the conservative nationalist movement of the 1950s, which had its main power bases in the southern Akan regions of Eastern and Ashanti, and is based on traditional elites and the established business and professional classes. The NDC grew out of Rawlings' more radical, anti-establishment movement which looks back to the Nkrumah era of state socialism and is especially strong in the northern and Volta (south-eastern) regions.

Nevertheless, in spite of these broad historic differences, both parties have adapted to multiparty democracy since 1992 in similar ways,

to construct what Whitfield has called a system of 'competitive clientelism' (Whitfield 2011). This system is built on the 'mercantilist' nature of the economy. Ghana's economy still depends mainly on the export of primary commodities such as gold, timber and cocoa grown by small/middle farmers, and more recently, crude oil. The state's revenues are drawn from the rents it extracts from the export/import economy, and the domestic business classes are relatively weak and small. Whichever party controls power uses access to state contracts and other opportunities to reward its supporters, creating a dependent or client business class, those who have 'invested' in the party's victory. Competition for power is a zero-sum game for those who depend on political patronage. And winning elections is therefore an essential prerequisite for sustaining these patronage machines. Parties, which are quite weakly organised and factionalised, also depend on regional and local elites to invest in securing election victories, and are expected to reward victorious MPs as well as the party's 'foot soldiers' at constituency level after an election win.

Most importantly, these expectations of the purpose of elections and the use of political power are generally shared by voters. One study of MPs in competitive and non-competitive constituencies found that 70 per cent of voters voted for their preferred candidate on the expectation that they would be able to provide specific local development projects or job opportunities (so-called 'club goods'); 15 per cent expected personal benefits to be given out during the election campaign, and further rewards for particular forms of support. (These expectations were higher in the more competitive constituencies; Lindberg 2003, 2010.) To be successful (and re-elected), MPs therefore have to cultivate clientelist links with higher levels of the party and government ministers if they are to deliver on their patronage promises; they also need to generate pay-back for their 'investment', through kick-backs on brokering access to government contracts and other useful opportunities. Voters themselves (especially 'swing' voters) therefore vote on clientelist principles, rather than choosing parties or representatives who will provide more programmatic public goods (*cf.* Keefer and Khemani 2005; Levy and Kpundeh 2004; van de Walle 2012; Vicente and Wantchekon 2009). It is the clientelist basis of relations between voters and their representatives, and between citizens and government authorities, which seriously undermines the notion that democracy will produce governments which are more directly accountable to citizens for the way they spend public money, or that will spend more on redistributive developmental policies, even if the funds are the product of general taxation rather than 'rents'.[2]

2.4 Representative democracy and clientelism at the local level
The clientelist assumptions of voters are reproduced at the local level in the politics of the DAs. Indeed, they have been officially acknowledged in the 6 per cent share of the DACF which was allocated to MPs to be spent on 'Constituency Development', or projects they choose for their constituencies as a way of fulfilling constituents' expectations (Lindberg 2009). MPs are also included in the DA as *ex officio* members,

and can therefore bring their political concerns to bear on DA planning and spending.

In the election of AMs, the no-party rule and the very close, grass-roots character of the representation offered by AMs has strongly reinforced the idea that the Assembly representative is a delegate of his or her specific community – a ward of one or two villages, with only a few thousand electors. The rules for the election of an AM limit the number of candidates to five; they must be resident in the district (to exclude absentee urban elites), and have to stand on their 'personal merit, integrity and proven participation in community development' (Crook 1999). The government then organises and funds a three-week period of public hustings at which the candidates present their 'life histories' and manifestos, and take questions from the public. Once elected, one of their official duties is to encourage and develop 'self-help' projects in their communities. And they have a duty to maintain regular contact with their constituents. The record of the elected AMs in developing good participatory relationships was in fact quite good for the first few years of the new system. In the districts studied by Crook and Manor in 1992, 3.83 per cent of electors could name their AM, 32 per cent said they had attended a meeting with their AM, and 12 per cent had contacted their AM individually, which in comparative terms is quite impressive. The first elections for the DAs were also met with enthusiasm, as reflected in the 58 per cent turnout (Crook and Manor 1998).

The pressure on such representatives to fight for projects for their own areas, and assistance with their self-help projects is clearly very strong. The DAs have therefore become arenas in which there is little debate over development policy for the district as a whole; instead, they are battlegrounds over the allocation of whatever resources are available to the communities represented by each of the AMs. In a situation of extreme scarcity and inadequate revenue sources, only a very few of the hundreds of villages or towns within a district can be offered any development project in any single year.[3] And in a political system dominated by patron–client linkages, whatever decision is taken will be interpreted (whether rightly or wrongly) by the unlucky ones as a consequence of the greater 'influence' or patronage connection of that community's representative; maybe he or she is close to the DCE, the MP and the ruling party in the district, or other influential government officials and 'big men' in the area. (Similar problems have been reported from Uganda: in one study of local primary health-care services, citizens did not bother to complain about poor service, or use 'participatory' user complaint mechanisms because they believed that local councillors were involved in corrupt patronage relationships with clinic staff, and therefore complaints would never be listened to fairly (Golooba-Mutebi 2005).) With the growing intensity of party competition after 2000, it also become more plausible to suspect that communities which were known not to have voted for the ruling party in Parliamentary elections were being discriminated against in development expenditure decisions.

2.5 Community representation and the legitimacy of local taxation
One of the consequences of such a system, dominated by strong community representation and clientelist politics, is that it undermines the legitimacy of local taxation, and makes it increasingly difficult to improve local revenue mobilisation. Where the fairness of district allocations of expenditures is constantly challenged, it is difficult to create a sense of the 'collective interest' of the district, and hence acceptance of the idea that taxation is for the general good. It is here that clientelist politics has its most damaging effect, insofar as it makes the link between democratic representation and acceptance of local taxation difficult to sustain, and therefore undermines any move to reduce dependence on central government transfers. As Luttmer and Singhal have shown, 'tax morale', or intrinsic motivations to comply with tax demands based on factors such as citizens' relationship to the state, and ideals of reciprocity, is an important element in the success of any taxation system (Luttmer and Singhal 2014). In the Ghanaian DAs, each community – indeed each individual voter – wants to pay the equivalent of a 'hypothecated' tax in which the community will get back what it paid as a specific service or project for their particular community. They do not want to fund benefits for other communities. This attitude was actually reinforced by a government decision to introduce 'local rebate' schemes, according to which a proportion of locally collected taxes was returned to the Area or Zonal Councils in which they were collected on a *pro rata* basis. The problem was also exacerbated in the early years of the Assemblies by the contradictory official roles of the AMs.

On the one hand, they were supposed to encourage payment of local direct taxes (flat levies or 'poll taxes', market and lorry park tolls, property taxes) which were justified in terms of the necessity for collective development resources; citizens were told that development progress depended upon them paying their taxes. In the case study districts, AMs took part in 'pay your tax' campaigns alongside Rawlings' CDR militants, who used increasingly heavy-handed methods in local markets. In Africa, both the association of direct taxation with colonialism, and the poor past performance of local government made it especially difficult to persuade citizens of the 'rightness' – and benefits – of paying their taxes. Yet AMs ended up being accused by the government officials and CDR militants of being 'saboteurs' of government policy when tax collection did not meet targets (Crook and Manor 1998: 221). When the promises made by AMs that paying taxes would lead to funding of local projects were routinely unfulfilled, encouraging tax payment became even more difficult.

On the other hand, AMs were supposed to lead local, self-help-based community development efforts as a way to bolster their own popularity and legitimacy. They knew they would ultimately be judged on their success in 'bringing development' to their wards. For citizens, this could be seen as a double jeopardy; they were told they had to pay their taxes in order to sustain the development programme of the local government. But when they requested specific projects they were told

they had to organise their own self-help, which could also involve paying locally agreed project levies. This led AMs to increasingly withdraw from encouraging payment of tax, and instead to focus mainly on self-help projects, with whatever help they could get from other patrons.[4]

The longer-term consequences for the DAs of these interactions between intensely local community representation and shortage of resources have been on balance very negative.

2.6 Decline in participation and increasing distrust of District Assemblies

In the first place, disillusionment on the part of both citizens and representatives rapidly set in. In spite of the good initial improvements in participation, by 1992, 3.71 per cent of respondents in the case study districts felt that the Assembly 'could not meet their needs', a view amply proven by comparing the actual outputs of the Assemblies with citizens' statements on what they saw as the main developmental priorities for their communities (Crook and Manor 1998). Twenty-two years later, little had changed; a national survey by Ghana's Center for Democratic Development (CDD) found that 65 per cent of citizens did not trust the DAs and gave poor ratings to their performance in key areas of public service provision (Ayee, Ahwoi and Deku 2014: 152). Participation in local elections declined, from 58 per cent in 1989 to 41 per cent in 1998, and has continued to fall since (Crook 1999). Worse, the most recent assessments have confirmed that the sub-district structures – Town, Area and Zonal Councils, and Unit Committees – which were supposed to be the core of grass-roots participation – remain for the most part 'paper' institutions which have never really been activated (Ayee *et al.* 2014: 71). When elections for the Unit Committees finally took place in 1998, 65 per cent were uncontested. The initial cohorts of elected AMs also lost heart: by 1994, only one third on average of the original AMs stood for re-election, and it has since proven consistently difficult, except in the main urban areas, to secure good candidates for the Assemblies.

2.7 Political pressure to increase central government funding, decline in local revenue mobilisation

Secondly, there has been little or no progress in improving local revenue mobilisation. The political and administrative difficulties outlined previously, combined with the increasingly powerful clientelist basis of local and national politics, have led to continual increases in central government transfers to the local government system, both in absolute and proportionate terms. Before the DA reform, Ghana's District Councils, which were administratively run, received between 24 and 43 per cent of their revenues from central government transfers. In the first few years of the DA system, when central government transfers came primarily from ceded revenues, salary payments and earmarked grants, central government funding continued to account for around 40–50 per cent of total revenues (although this actually declined somewhat in the two case study districts) (Crook and Manor 1998). A major change occurred with the introduction of the DACF in 1994;

Table 2 **DACF yearly allocations, 1994–2013 (in million Ghana cedis)**

Year	Actual amount (million GHS)	% Increase/decrease
1994	2.60	-
1995	5.40	106.46
1996	7.80	44.31
1997	7.90	1.28
1998	15.53	96.48
1999	11.24	(-27.6)
2000	14.95	33.01
2001	18.87	26.22
2002	26.53	40.6
2003	64.86	144.42
2004	85.86	32.17
2005	70.19	(-18.11)
2006	139.16	98.2
2007	173.34	6.63
2008	217.01	46.24
2009	188.57	(-13.11)
2010	340.40	80.52
2011	392.96	43.32
2012	571.70	45.49
2013	648.13	13.36
Total	**3,072.89**	-

Source Ayee (2014).

initially set at 5 per cent of national revenues, political pressure led to the fund being increased to 7.5 per cent in 2008 after the election of the NPP government (Gilbert *et al.* 2013). The NDC regime (which lost office in December 2016) was considering increasing this to 10 per cent. Over the past 20 years, funding for the DAs coming from the DACF has resulted in a tenfold increase in central funds compared to the former ceded revenues system. The increases have been especially significant over the 2008–13 period (see Table 2). In 2008, total central government and external funding accounted for between 74 per cent (largest quintile by population) and 93 per cent (smallest quintile by population) of total revenues, the differences reflecting the equalisation formulae (Gilbert *et al.* 2013). (The three big cities, Accra, Kumasi and Tema, received 59 per cent, 68 per cent and 47 per cent respectively

from central government transfers.) Latest estimates suggest that the proportions are between 80 and 99 per cent (Ayee 2014).

As noted, this significant and continuing growth in central funding has raised the average annual per capita revenue for all DAs to between US$5 and US$10 – still not very impressive, given the responsibilities of the district and Metropolitan governments. At the same time, local revenue mobilisation continues to experience the same difficulties and remains weak. One indication is the persistence of unrealistic budget estimating, whereby every year DAs set budgets based upon estimates of revenue collection which are never achieved, often by huge margins. In the two case studies, the gap between revenue estimates and actual revenues in the early 1990s was routinely between 200 and 400 per cent. In 2014, it was calculated that the actual revenues of all Assemblies were only 37 per cent of budget estimates (Ayee *et al.* 2014).

An example of the difficulties is to be found in the poll tax or 'flat basic rate', a legacy from the colonial era which Assemblies have retained and still attempt to collect. It is usually a very small, even token amount (Ayee suggests it is typically the equivalent of £0.10), but collection rates are very low – in the case studies, the revenue figures showed that only around 12–14 per cent of the adult population were paying the tax. Nevertheless, an official report on the performance of the decentralisation programme still recommends that the tax be retained, but at a more useful level (for example, the equivalent of one day of the official minimum daily wage), on the grounds that it provides an accountability link between the provision of services and payment of tax (Ayee *et al.* 2014). Clearly, the fundamental political difficulties at the root of local revenue mobilisation have not been addressed, given the context of ever-increasing pressures to provide central funding. Such a centrally-dominated system can be seen as an important element in the control of patronage which permeates the democratic political system, side by side with the laudable goal of providing realistic and adequate funding for the decentralised authorities.

3 Would a different kind of representation and electoral system work better?

If the community basis of representation on large district governments creates such deep problems, would a different form of democratic representation work better? Côte d'Ivoire introduced a 'Francophone'-style local government system between 1985 and 1996, based on '*communes*'. The distinguishing feature of the *commune* system is that it is based on an urban conception of local government, in which each town is made a self-governing unit, incorporating only a small surrounding rural area. By 1996, Côte d'Ivoire had 196 *communes*, the majority of which had populations of less than 20,000. Each is run by an executive mayor who is elected by the winning council at its first meeting. A closed list system of election is used which means that the councillors do not officially have any constituency responsibility or 'community' link. But the ratio of representation is even closer and more 'grass roots' than

that of Ghana: 1:1,000 on average, with ratios of 1:400 more common in the smaller communes such as the four studied in the 1990s (Crook and Manor 1998).

Unfortunately, the Ivorian list system does not work any better than single-member wards for encouraging local democratic responsibility and collective action including local revenue mobilisation for development. A survey of local residents revealed that 58 per cent could not name any elected councillors, whilst 90 per cent could name the mayor (Crook and Manor 1998). The political logic of the list means that most mayors are elite political entrepreneurs who put together their list before the election; they are his supporters and if the list is victorious will elect the patron mayor as expected. Worse, the list election is a 'winner takes all', so the winning list takes control of the commune council and there is no representation of any opposition. This means that collecting local taxes and even special levies for agreed commune projects is difficult because those who did not vote for the winning list and its mayor do not consider themselves in any way obliged to contribute. In one *commune* studied, a project to build a much-needed secondary school for the area had to be abandoned as it was impossible to collect sufficient funds through a *commune* special levy, even though the prefect was enlisted to try to enforce it. The mindset of Ivorian local electors is very much focused on central or national politics; they see 'development' as something which the mayor, as a big 'patron', should bring to the locality through his political connections with capital city politicians and officials.

4 Conclusions

The issues emerging from the experiences of decentralised government in Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire and Uganda, as well as Africa more generally, suggest that representative local democracy does not necessarily lead to improved local revenue mobilisation, particularly where it involves any form of direct or individual taxation. Indirect taxation is probably easier to collect but still does not deal with the problem of how to give greater legitimacy to resource allocation decisions by an elected council, where there is little or no sense of a collective public good at that level of action. Neither single-member electoral representation of communities on a 'no-party' basis, nor party list elections seem to work well, within the context of a national political system dominated by competitive clientelism.

Competitive party competition at local level could perhaps help to aggregate a broader sense of collective interest, but can also lead to an even stronger sense of exclusion and resentment if resources are denied to communities which voted for the losing party, as happens in many countries. In India, which has a nationwide system of local democratic governments, what does seem to work better is the presence of real opposition, which can challenge the most blatant examples of clientelist allocation of resources; this, combined with the very high rate of turnover in Indian elections (ruling parties at state level were thrown out after one term in over 70 per cent of elections, 1980–2008) has led to the

emergence of 'post-clientelist' initiatives in which politicians try to appeal to broader groups of voters with generic development programmes (Manor 2016). In India, such approaches are further encouraged by the enormous increase in national funding resources handed down to local governments by anti-poverty programmes such as the National Education Guarantee Programme and the National Rural Employment Guarantee. These initiatives can of course feed local patronage politics; but active democratic competition and popular accountability initiatives can help to make them into tools of broader developmental initiatives. There is some evidence that this may be starting to happen in parts of Africa as well (van de Walle 2012); but the continuing dominance of clientelist politics means that it is still very difficult to establish the legitimacy of local taxation. It may be argued, therefore, that attempting to increase the proportion of local government revenues deriving from local taxation faces many obstacles, and is not necessarily helped by the current form of democratic electoral politics in Ghana. Central government transfers are, therefore, likely to remain the fairest and most effective way of funding local government in Africa for some time to come.

Notes

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1 See Cabral (2011) for a useful summary of the main arguments for (and against) democratic decentralisation more generally.

2 Some scholars nonetheless remain puzzled that democracy has not produced more redistributive policies; Ardanaz and Scartascini's (2011) study of Argentine fiscal federalism explains it in terms of the 'overrepresentation' of richer districts in the national parliament. But this simply transfers the same argument to parliamentary representation, on the assumption that government policy will somehow directly reflect the interests represented in parliament. But there is little evidence that parliaments in either South American or African democracies have much influence on policymaking or policy implementation (see Barkan 2010).

3 In the early 1990s, the per capita development expenditure in East Akim and East Mamprusi districts was the equivalent of US$0.18 and US$0.45; even by 2008, after substantial increases in central funding, the average per capita revenue of all the Assemblies was only US$5.31, and US$10.62 for the smallest/poorest quintile (2012 exchange rates) (Crook and Manor 1998; Gilbert *et al*. 2013).

4 In one of the case study districts, respondents identified 66 per cent of the projects which had been started in their villages as 'self-help'; but 71 per cent were dissatisfied with them because few ever got completed (Crook and Manor 1998: 255).

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Is Election a Disadvantage? Nigerian Local Councils and Security Provision

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Abstract Deepening democracy through local elections is a major aim of decentralisation. But do elections always work to strengthen the relationship between local politicians and citizens, or can they set elected officials up for failure? This article examines security provisioning by local governments in Nigeria, understanding that some local governments are elected, while others are appointed by state governors. Our hypothesis was that elected local councils should be better rated than those that are appointed. By looking at local government areas that differ mainly in terms of whether their council is elected or appointed, we found that local elections are not enough singly to build strong connections between democratically elected local politicians and citizens. Democratic decentralisation in the context of limited financial resources, and limited autonomy *vis-à-vis* state governors and political bosses, can set elected governments up for failure to the extent that they are viewed as worse performers than their appointed counterparts.

Keywords: democratic decentralisation, Nigeria, local government elections, security provision, citizen perception.

1 Introduction
Nigeria operates a three-tier federal system made up of the federal government, 36 state governments and 774 local governments. Whereas assumption of the office of the president or state governor is usually by election, assumption of the office of the local government chairperson can be by election or appointment. Elected local government chairpersons emerge from multiparty elections organised by state governments, while appointed local government chairpersons are handpicked solely by state governors from their party loyalists. Among the 774 local government chairpersons in Nigeria, only 202 (26 per cent) are elected while 572 (74 per cent) are appointed. In other words, although local councils are the closest tier of government to the people, in three-quarters of these, citizens have had no input in deciding who leads them at this level.[1]

Democracy theorists and pundits (Marcus, Mease and Ottemoeller 2001; Post 2005; Maruatona 2006; Lindberg 2006; Hiley 2006) seem to strongly suggest that where citizens do not have input into deciding their leaders, there might be some form of disconnect leading to a poor perception of the government in question, disengagement and, ultimately, cynicism. This is, however, not a completely settled argument. For instance, citizens' favourable perceptions of some non-democratic or authoritarian governments such as China (Saich 2016) suggest that citizens' non-involvement in the (s)election of political leaders may not always automatically lead to disaffection. The jury is thus still out on the link between elections and citizen perception of government.

The structure of local government in Nigeria provides a useful context for further investigating this link. With elected and selected councils sharing borders in many places, it was possible to set up a comparative study that examined if and how a local council's democratic status influenced citizens' perception of a political administration. By democratic status we refer to whether a local council is elected or appointed. Existing studies suggest that elected councils should be more responsive to citizens and perform duties in a way that pleases the electorate, in order to get re-elected or get elected to higher positions (Inyang and Abraham 2013; Enejo and Isa 2014). This suggests that appointed councils should be more responsive to the state governors that appoint them, and should seek to please them so as to retain their seat or get selected for higher positions. Accordingly, we hypothesised that an elected local government council would be perceived more positively by the electorate than a selected one because, being closer to the people and being a product of their choice, an elected council should not only initiate programmes that resonate with the aspirations of the electorate but also do so in ways that involve the contributions of the citizens.

We wove our investigation around the provision of security by local councils because not only is security a major issue in Nigeria, but it is also an issue that very often affects how Nigerian citizens perceive the effectiveness of government. For instance, observers pointed out that security was a major reason that the government of President Goodluck Jonathan lost re-election in 2015 (Owen and Usman 2015; Zane 2015). Insurgency, herdsmen-related violence, pipeline destruction and oil theft, kidnapping and ransom-taking are some of the problems that make security a topical public agenda in Nigeria.

Although providing security for citizens is not one of the functions of the local government specified by the Nigerian Constitution, most local governments provide security in one form or another. In fact, the chairperson of the local government council is regarded as the chief security officer of the local government area (LGA). This is despite the fact that local governments are not permitted to have their police or armed forces or to recruit, train or arm any security personnel. In providing security for its citizens, the local government necessarily works with a variety of actors. These include agencies of state such as the

police, the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) and the State Security Service (SSS). They also include non-state actors, such as traditional rulers and other community leaders, local 'vigilante' groups (groups of volunteers that are found nationwide in Nigeria), and market-women leaders. Thus, providing security for citizens can become a local government's way of providing employment, interacting with and getting closer to the citizens, and possibly building a stronger reputation for delivery.

In the context of the decentralisation of security provision to the lowest tier of government, it is important to pay attention to citizens' evaluation of their local government for a number of reasons. First, decentralisation, whether it takes the form of devolution or de-concentration, is expected to broaden local participation in decision-making (Bardhan and Mookherjee 2006). As a result, local communities should feel a sense of ownership, which can only be examined from the perspectives of citizens. Second, most crimes are experienced locally within the community, and are committed against individuals. Therefore, it is individual citizens that are best positioned to evaluate crime prevention efforts. Third, there is often a disparity between actual crime rate and citizens' perception of their safety and security (Ojebode *et al.* 2016). So long as the purpose of a study is to understand how safe citizens feel, working with crime rate figures rather than citizens' perception can be misleading. Our study is thus based on citizens' perception of the performance of local governments in providing security, rather than on measures of actual security provision at the local level.

We paired two local government areas: Asa Local Government and Surulere Local Government. These two local governments are separated from one another by an arbitrarily[2] drawn border that cuts across them to create two different official political entities, but both areas are very similar in many ways. They face similar security situations, are identical economically, are both largely rural and agrarian, and their populations are similar in linguistic, cultural and religious terms. However, there is a key difference. While Asa has an elected local council, Surulere's council was appointed by the state governor. If our hypothesis holds true, citizens of Asa should express a more positive perception of their local council than citizens of Surulere.

Contrary to our hypothesis, however, our empirical data reveals that in spite of their shared common experiences of insecurity types and levels, citizens of Asa, the elected council, remained deeply disaffected with their local government, while citizens of Surulere, the appointed council, were satisfied with their council's performance. This is despite the fact that Asa's local government actually initiated a new project to deal with security provision, while Surulere did not. Disaffection or satisfaction was not a product of experience of crime, or actual performance by local governments. Rather, it was a product of the approach to crime prevention adopted by the council, which in itself is traceable to the democratic status of the council. Our analysis revealed

that in its bid to respond to and impress the electorate, the elected council initiated new security programmes, recruited citizens and placed them on a regular salary but was unable to sustain these programmes. This situation led to disaffection on the part of the citizens. The appointed local government, on the other hand, was committed to pleasing the state government only; it did not set up any new security programmes nor did it recruit any citizens. Its support for existing informal and community-based security arrangements was modest and irregular, but consistent. This was appreciated by citizens who, as a result, expressed a positive perception of the council. The rest of our article draws out this argument in detail.

2 What are African elections worth?

A number of issues with the quality of national and local elections in Africa have been pointed out by different scholars and commentators. Low voter turnout, violence during elections, and arrant rigging have been the recurring features of elections almost across the continent (Agbaje and Adejumobi 2006; Ikpe 2009). Yet, elections are now a regular feature of African politics, and are organised by most types of regimes, even if many of their problems remain (Brown 2001). Ake (1996: 137) has pointed out that despite several rounds of elections, 'authoritarian state structures remain, accountability to the government is weak, and the rule of law is sometimes nominal. More often than not, people are voting without choosing'. More recently, Marcus *et al.* (2001: 113) describe African elections as the elite's 'mechanism for lending authority to otherwise authoritarian regimes, rather than creating competitive processes for the attainment of power' while Adejumobi (2008: 362) describes them as a fading shadow of democracy which endangers the democratic process itself by leading Africa back to the old order of 'despotic rulership'.

The poor quality of elections leads to loss of accountability and legitimacy. Lindberg (2003) studied the electoral practices and tactics of Ghanaian members of parliament and found a resurgence of neo-patrimonial practices as politicians engaged in patron–client relationships to reproduce their political power. This threatens both vertical and horizontal accountability. Growing apathy and cynicism are other consequences of repeated rounds of elections that fail the standard tests of transparency and equality in Africa (Ake 1996; Maruatona 2006).

Yet, African elections, despite their imperfections, matter. Beyond Bratton's (1998) dictum that there can be elections without democracy but there can be no democracy without election, Lindberg's (2006: 143) rigorous study of the significance of African elections shows that 'elections do not have to be free and fair or fully democratic to have democratizing effects'. He goes on to demonstrate that even though they were grossly imperfect and far below standard, there was a strong correlation between frequency of elections and the growth of democratic ideals, as operationalised by Freedom House ratings. Going

beyond ordinary correlations, Lindberg (2006) demonstrates the causal pathway that elections in Africa take to produce democratic outcomes.

We imagined that the same principle applies to local governments as well, where repeated local elections might produce cumulative positive democratic outcomes over time, including on accountability and responsiveness. Applying Lindberg's (2006) findings on democratic 'lock-ins' to the context of the current study, we can expect there to be a marked difference in the performance of elected local councils and that of appointed councils. If we can hold other things constant, this difference should be attributable to the conduct of elections and the democratic status of local councils. This now is our methodological challenge. Importantly, we expect this marked difference to be reflected in the way citizens perceive and evaluate the performances of their local government authorities, such that citizens of local councils where there are regular elections will evaluate the local authorities better than those in local councils where council leaders are appointed by the governor. Our two selected cases serve our purpose well here – Asa Local Government has remained an elected local government since Nigeria's return to democracy in 1999, while Surulere has moved back and forth between being elected and being appointed, but has had an appointed status since 2010.[3]

3 Decentralisation and local government security services provision

Provision of security services is a constitutional duty of the federal government, the same government that controls the security and crime prevention apparatuses, such as the SSS and the police. However, crime and insecurity records show that, especially in Africa, the federal government is failing in providing these crucial services in spite of these apparatuses. Thirty-one per cent of nearly half-a-million homicides globally in 2012 were committed in Africa (UNODC 2013), and Nigeria ranked among the top 20 nations with the highest crime rates in the world (Numbeo 2015). The Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED 2014) ranked Nigeria the deadliest country in Africa, with about 29 per cent of all organised armed conflict-related fatalities in 2014. That was the year the country recorded 6,383 deaths largely caused by the insurgency in the North. Property theft, kidnapping and pipeline vandalism are among the other rising causes of insecurity in Nigeria.

However, Nigeria, like many other governments all over the world, has come to the conclusion that state policing alone is incapable of solving or abating insecurity owing to historical, economic, cultural and other limitations (Killingray 1986; Marenin 2009). As a result, the country has been promoting different forms of community-based crime prevention (Ojebode *et al.* 2016). Since these are activities at the community level, they undoubtedly call for the involvement of the local government. There are security committees within local government councils that are headed by the chairperson and bring together all state security agencies with the members of more informal community-based crime prevention

groups, such as local vigilantes, hunters and watchmen, and community leaders. Thus, although providing security services is not one of the duties of the local government as enshrined in the constitution, the Federal Government of Nigeria has devolved that duty to the local government level, designating the local government chairperson as the chief security officer of the local government area.

Literature on decentralisation is indecisive on whether or not devolved service provision is effective. On the one hand, local governments' involvement in the provision of services is believed to broaden access and improve service delivery (Kolehmainen-Aitken 1999; McLean and King 1999; World Bank 2001), enhance accountability (World Bank 2000), minimise violence (World Bank 2001) and empower local communities (Brinkerhoff and Azfar 2006). On the other hand, local government provision of services could create a platform for clientelism, budgetary constraints and bureaucratic bottlenecks (World Bank 2001). The tendency also exists for local council leaders to overreach their mandates in a bid to garner popular support during elections (where councils are democratically elected), creating high expectations among the citizens without sufficient budgetary and technical resources to deliver (Rawnsley 2001).

This inconclusive state of the existing literature necessitates context-specific investigations such as this one. Within the broad construct of decentralisation and in the specific context of Nigeria, we seek to understand citizens' evaluation of the performance of local councils in the decentralised provision of security services, and also why citizens hold such views.

4 A typology of local councils' democratic status

The constitution of Nigeria mandates local councils to be elected by citizens, but at the same time it also allows state governments to select members of a local council if they believe an election is not feasible. Using this constitutional provision, many state governments do not organise elections and prefer to nominate local councils. This decision is entirely that of state governors, and the reason most often cited for nominating local councils is a lack of funds for organising elections, or a tense atmosphere in the state that can ignite electoral violence. A popular perception is that this happens most often when governors are unsure if their party would win the local councils. In other cases, some state governments are simply unable to organise local government elections owing to resource and logistical constraints.

These different practices allow us to construct a descriptive typology of the democratic status of local councils. When the ruling party selects local councils from among party loyalists, we can think of these Type 1 councils (as seen in Figure 1) as 'state envoys' or representatives of the state government and the ruling party. Their assumption of office does not involve the citizens and they are also the least autonomous type of local council *vis-à-vis* state governments. This type of local council exists

Figure 1 **A typology of democratic statuses**

		Ruling party	Opposition
Status	Appointed	Type 1: **State envoys** (572 local councils)	Type 3: **Token to the opposition** (0 local council)
	Elected	Type 2: **Dual loyalists** (202 local councils)	Type 4: **Electoral heroes** (0 local council)

Position

Source Authors' own.

in many states in Nigeria, and constitutes about two thirds of all local governments. When states organise local council elections and the ruling party wins, these are Type 2 councils, which we can call 'dual loyalists' because they have both the ruling party and the local electorate to serve. Quite often, such councils emerge amidst widespread allegations of electoral irregularities, which are made more credible by the fact that the ruling party is empowered by the constitution to constitute the electoral body and appoint the chair of the electoral commission, so that elections can be manipulated to bring their chosen candidates into power. However, these are elected councils and have far more legitimacy and possibly also greater autonomy *vis-à-vis* state governments than nominated councils.

Type 3 councils – selected by the opposition – are possible theoretically but not in practice. It is usually only the ruling party that is able to select local councils. If this does ever happen, it would be a token by the ruling party to pacify the opposition, or a strategy to bring it on board a coalition. On some occasions, the opposition party is able to wrest the control of some local councils from the hold of the party ruling at the state level. When this happens, it is often an expression of the locals' dissatisfaction with the performance of the state government and an invitation to the opposition to prove that it can perform better. There have been very few local councils of this Type 4 variety in Nigeria, and there are none at the current moment. Given how hard this has proven in the history of democratic decentralisation in Nigeria, we can call this category of local politicians 'electoral heroes' for managing to win against the state government. This type of council, when it exists, may enjoy the greatest legitimacy and autonomy *vis-à-vis* state governments.

Each type of democratic status has implications for the extent to which local councils can exercise autonomy in service delivery. However, given the distribution of councils in Nigeria at the moment, we focus on just Types 1 and 2 – the state envoys and dual loyalists. Restated in the terms

of this typology, our hypothesis is that with regard to the performance in providing security services to citizens, dual loyalists would enjoy more positive perception by the electorate than state envoys. The rest of this article checks on the extent to which this is true.

5 Methodology

Experimental designs come in handy when researchers try to determine if and how a certain cause produces a certain outcome. These designs, which are necessarily comparative, allow the researcher to control the environment of the research, randomly select their subjects and hold some factors constant while manipulating others to determine the effects of these other factors on the outcome (Wimmer and Dominick 2011).

In many study settings, pure experiments are impracticable and evidence of causation has to be based on quasi-experimental designs. One of the key differences between pure and quasi-experiments is the inability of the latter to randomly assign subjects to groups. In other words, researchers have to work with existing groups, not the ones they randomly created. This raises the question of internal validity – a doubt as to the extent to which differences between the groups are solely the outcome of the manipulation of a variable or the presence or absence of an intervention. Yet, carefully constructed quasi-experiments can produce valid causal claims.

With the intention of studying if and how the democratic status of a local council influences the way citizens perceive its performance in providing public goods, specifically security services, we adopted the cross-case spatial comparative case study design. Paying attention to the nuances in the democratic status summed up earlier, we selected two diverse cases: a council appointed by the state governor, and one elected by citizens. We controlled for spatial, ethnic and socio-demographic confounders by choosing contiguous local government councils located in neighbouring states. The two local government councils are Surulere in Oyo State (appointed council) and Asa in Kwara State (elected council). They are separated by the artificial boundary between Oyo and Kwara states. Both local councils have Yoruba-speaking populations that are mostly rural subsistence farmers and traders. Both local government areas also experience the same kind of insecurity problems – mostly property theft and clashes between farmers and herdsmen. In both of them, there are formal crime prevention agencies (the police, the SSS, and the NSCDC) and informal actors, such as vigilantes, hunter-volunteers and other forms of community-driven crime prevention arrangements.

With reference to factors that might affect security provisioning, such as population size and population mix, neighbourhood density, level of urbanisation or industrialisation, presence of state security agencies, and level of unemployment, among others (Ojebode et al. 2016), the two local government areas are identical. According to the 2006 census, Asa has a population of 126,432 (Kwara State Government 2015) while Surulere has 126,692 (Oyo State Government 2015). Both have

population densities below the national average: 90.3 per sq km for Asa and 129 per sq km for Surulere against the national average of 200 per sq km. Furthermore, both Kwara and Oyo states are ruled by the same political party, the All Progressive Congress (APC). The main observable difference between the two local government areas is that for one the executive council was elected, while in the other it was appointed.

We began with the collection and analysis of quantitative survey data, a stage designed to show citizens' perception of the performance of their local councils in the provision of security services. The outcome of that analysis called for, and thus guided, further in-depth qualitative investigation in a second round of data collection. This second round focused on understanding why the local councils were perceived as they were by the citizens, and helped us unravel the unexpected manner in which democratic status influenced citizens' perception of security provisioning by leading us to map a causal pathway between status and security provisioning. The integration of both findings led us to a third and final round of data collection, which was also qualitative and was meant for the purpose of validation through in-depth interviews with community leaders and security officials, and through field observations.

This sequencing and combination of methods was advantageous. As we show later, the analysis of the first wave of quantitative data collection largely nullified the hypothesis that the elected council would be better perceived by its citizens than appointed councils. The second wave of data collection focused on why this was so, as it tried to establish the link between democratic status and citizens' perception, while the third wave helped in further clarifying this and validating our claims as we discussed our findings with community leaders and security officials.

Although our case and unit of analysis is the local government area and our design is, therefore, a small-N design, our data come from an aggregation of the views of randomly selected individuals. We selected 235 respondents to the questionnaire using a combination of systematic and convenience sampling techniques. Focusing mainly on the headquarters of the local government areas – Iresadu town in Surulere council, and Afon town in Asa council – we selected the first willing adult respondent each from every fifth house with a random start. This gave us 139 males and 96 females; 121 respondents from the Surulere Local Government Area and 114 from the Asa Local Government Area.

As part of the qualitative data collection, we conducted 16 interviews with local government officials, traditional community leaders, members of the Police–Community Relations Committee (PCRC), two officers of the NSCDC, and some community members and leaders. We included security personnel because we wanted an insight into the structure of security services rendered or supported by the local council, especially to be sure these were similar in the two councils; we included community members and leaders to gain additional insight into community perception of the local council.

6 Similar structure, similar experiences of (in)security

We found a tripartite structure of security provisioning in each council that comprised government services; community-led and community-driven security services; and private and commercial services. The relationship among these is somewhat nondescript and required our attention.

The first set of security services are provided by the government and involve the police, the SSS, the NSCDC and the local government officials. These agencies are independent of one another: the police, SSS and the NSCDC take orders from their state headquarters located in the state capitals, while the local government officials take orders from the local government chairperson. Together, they form a committee that meets once every month to deliberate on security issues and sometimes to plan joint actions. The committee also includes community leaders. There are no guidelines or standard operating procedures guiding the collaboration between these parties, and the chairperson does not have power of veto. He is more of a coordinator than a chairperson. The main funding for security agencies comes from the federal government through the commanding offices in the state capitals. However, local government councils support the police, SSS and NSCDC materially by donating vehicles (including motorcycles), and sometimes also maintaining these vehicles.

Disagreements sometimes occur among them, as happened during the last general elections when a chairperson deployed certain anti-opposition tactics which were interpreted by the security agencies as being too political and which 'our commanding officers (in the state capital) did not sanction'.[4] Such disagreements sometimes fester to the point that the committee members have to assert their independence and their loyalty to their commanding officers in the state capitals, over the wishes of the council chairperson.

The second set of community-driven security services are mainly the activities of neighbourhood or village-based associations led by a community leader, or *baálé*. These associations or network of associations hire watchmen who work mainly nights and pay them from contributions by members. They may hire members of a registered and recognised national association, the Vigilante Group of Nigeria. Some communities hire members of hunters' associations – those who professionally hunt for game, mostly in rural areas – that provide protection to the community for a fee. In many cases, vigilante members simply volunteer 'without receiving a dime' from the local government.[5] However, there were indications that the two local councils not only involve community leaders in the security committee but also support hunters and vigilante groups financially and in kind. They do this using different formats, to which we will return shortly.

The third set of services comprise private and commercial security arrangements by banks and a few rich people who can afford these.

Table 1 Results of 2 by 2 Chi-square test for status of Local Government Area (LGA) and experience of crime

Status of LGA	No	Yes	df	x^2	p-value	phi
Appointed	93 (76.9%)	28 (23.1%)	1	.532	.466	-.058
Elected	93 (81.6%)	21 (18.4%)				
Total	186 (79.1%)	49 (20.9%)				
		235 (100%)				

Source Authors' fieldwork.

This category is independent of the government and community-based security services, and are therefore not included in this analysis.

The three types of security arrangements – government, community-based and private security – are unevenly distributed across the local government areas. Whereas all three are clearly visible in the local government headquarters, the presence of government and private services wanes as one moves from the headquarters to the interior, more rural parts of the jurisdiction, where community-driven services become more prominent. This has a key implication for our understanding of decentralisation. Rather than being a process that brings government and administrative decisions closer to the grass roots, decentralisation has become the process of multiplying little centres or nuclei rather than of scattering the centre and moving government closer to the citizens. As noted by Kauzya (2007), 'if decentralization has to be successful it needs to be conceived as the transfer of power and authority to the people and not only to local governments'. Local government headquarters have become little state capitals where facilities and government presence are concentrated, and they present a sharp contrast to the rest of the local government areas that lie just a few kilometres away.

The similarities between the two local governments go beyond the structure of security services that exists. There are also similarities in citizens' experience of crime. A Chi-square test[6] for independence (with Yates Continuity Correction) was conducted to test whether citizens in Surulere, the appointed local government council, experienced more crime than those in Asa, an elected local government council. We asked citizens about whether or not they have experienced a serious crime. The results in Table 1 indicated no significant association between status of local government and experience of crime. To be significant, the p-value needs to be .05 or smaller. In this case the value of .466 is larger than the value of .05, so we concluded that our result is not significant. The effect size ($phi = -.058$) is also considered a very small effect using Cohen's (1988) criteria of .10 for a small effect, .30 for a medium effect and .50 for a large effect.

Table 2 **Results of 2 by 7 Chi-square test for status of Local Government Area (LGA) and types of crime experienced**

Status of LGA								df	x^2	p-value	Cramer's V
	Unarmed robbery without aggression or physical threat	Unarmed robbery with assault or physical threats	Armed robbery	Household theft	Others	Property damage	None	6	9.603	.142	.202
Appointed	1 (0.8%)	3 (2.5%)	5 (4.5%)	17 (14.0%)	2 (1.7%)	3 (2.5%)	90 (74.4%)				
Elected	1 (0.9%)	1 (0.9%)	1 (0.9%)	10 (8.8%)	0 (0.0%)	8 (7.0%)	93 (81.6%)				
Total	2 (0.9%)	4 (1.7%)	6 (2.6%)	27 (11.5%)	2 (0.9%)	11 (4.7%)	183 (77.9%)	235 (100%)			

Source Authors' fieldwork.

In addition to comparing the local councils on the frequency of crime experienced by citizens, we also compared them on the type of crime experienced. This is important because types of crime experienced can also influence perception of safety and how citizens judge the performance of government. Here too we found no significant differences across the two local government areas. As Table 2 shows, a 2 by 7 Chi-square test for independence shows that there was no significant association between the democratic status of local government and types of crime experienced by its citizens. The effect size (*Cramer's V* = .202) is also considered a very small effect.

The two local government areas are similar in terms of the structure of security service provision at the local level, and citizens' experience of crime. This adds to the earlier similarities we pointed out in terms of culture, demographics and economics across the two local government areas to show that they are largely similar units. And yet, the perception of their citizens of the performances of their local government councils is not the same, despite the fact that the council that is perceived negatively has actually initiated security projects, while the council perceived positively has not. We look at and explain this curious finding in the next section.

7 Different levels of satisfaction with local government
We asked respondents to state their level of satisfaction with the security services provided by their local governments. Table 3 shows the result. An independent-samples t-test[7] was conducted to compare the level of satisfaction with security services of those whose local government leaders were appointed and those whose leaders were elected. The p-value results show that there was a statistically significant difference (p<0.05) in satisfaction here – those whose local government leaders were appointed were more satisfied with security services than those whose local government leaders were elected. The magnitude of the difference in the means is -0.62, and about 10 per cent of the

Table 3 Local government democratic status and citizens' satisfaction with local government's security services

Group	N	M	SD	t	p-value	Eta squared
Appointed	114	9.75	2.12			
Elected	121	9.13	1.82	-2.37	0.05	.100

Source Authors' fieldwork.

variance in satisfaction with security services is explained by the groups (appointed and elected).

The contrast in the perceived performance of both councils is starker in the interview data. Interviewees in Asa Local Government Area (the elected council) could hardly find a kind word to describe the security services of their local government council. Recurrent references were made to the recruitment of the vigilantes and the local government's inability to pay them. Some claimed that even when the vigilantes were being paid, they were deployed to guard government property not citizens. An interviewee[8] in Asa (elected) Local Government Area stated why the local government was unresponsive:

> The local government authority has done nothing to ease the pains of the security threats… They have not performed to the expectations in other aspects too. In my opinion, they have good intentions but are being thwarted by financial constraints. Joint Account with the state government has made progress at local government impossible.[9] I am an insider myself. The local government is paralysed; they can't even pay the salary of their workers.

On the other hand, interviewees in Surulere Local Government Area (an appointed council) were satisfied with the performance of the local government council in terms of security provision. An interviewee[10] in Surulere Local Government Area (appointed) said:

> The Local Government Authority has been a tremendous supporter of the Security Agents. They assist with money and other necessary gadgets. The police and vigilantes have benefited from this good gesture. They are doing very well.

In spite of the shared common experiences of insecurity types and levels across the two local government areas, citizens of Asa, the elected council, remained deeply disaffected while citizens of Surulere, the appointed council, remained satisfied with their council's performance. The difference in the level of satisfaction could not have been a product of experience of crime or a result of any cultural, economic or demographic differences, since these were held constant. As the next section shows, it is rather a product of the style of security service provision of the local government councils, which is itself traceable to their democratic status.

Figure 2 **Approaches adopted by elected and appointed local governments with formal and informal agencies**

8 How democratic status matters

Why would the citizens in a local government area perceive the security services of its local council poorly while another next to it perceives those of its local council in much better light when these two groups of citizens have similar experiences of insecurity and similar security provision structure, among other germane similarities? Our analysis shows that the reason for this disparity in perception was not the security situation or the performance of the local government authorities but rather in the approaches adopted by each council in providing security. We discovered that these approaches are a reflection of the democratic statuses of these local government authorities. The two different approaches are presented graphically in Figure 2.

Both local governments adopted a formal approach to working with formal agencies such as the police, SSS and the NSCDC. There are regular monthly meetings, with minutes of meetings and other formal procedures. However, they have markedly different approaches to working with informal security providers, which constitute a significant part of security provision in both areas. Asa Local Government Council, an elected council, adopted a formal approach in providing security services with the traditional informal security service providers – the community leaders and associations, vigilante groups and local hunters – by starting a major project with these groups. They were recruited, trained, kitted out and put on a monthly salary of N7,000 (less than US$20). However, the local government could not sustain this and the arrangement failed, creating a feeling of disaffection on the part of the citizens. On the other hand, Surulere Local Government Council, an appointed council, adopted an informal approach to working with informal partners. By implication, the appointed council did not have a commitment to regularly support or sponsor the informal agents. If there were funds, the council supported the agents, if funds were unavailable, the council did not support them. Why did the two local governments adopt such different approaches?

8.1 Asa
We probed further to understand why the elected council in Asa would embark on the formalisation of an informal but widespread

and reportedly effective security arrangement (Ojebode *et al.* 2016). Recruiting and kitting up local vigilante members and hunters, it seems, has apparent strategic and intrinsic value for security provisioning. Being locals, they have a thorough knowledge of the geography of the area and can therefore monitor movements and follow trails. Not only this, they know the residents in the communities and have a better idea of likely offenders than the police would have, and they are also known by the community, and so are most likely to abstain from conduct unbecoming of a community member – such as extortion or victimisation. Selecting them and training them was thus strategic. Closely related to this is the fact that recruiting and kitting out locals was also a way of providing employment and reducing the incidence of crime.

There are extrinsic values of this strategy as well. The council strategically chose a method that would have the greatest impact on the psyche of the locals: official uniform, training (including drills and march-pasts) and kits. In a seminar paper presented on the non-verbal significance of official uniforms, Deinde (2013) explained that the official uniform in colonial and postcolonial Africa was more than mere clothing or, as it is in the West, an expression of state presence. It was also an expression of the wearer's worth and importance. To kit a person out was, therefore, to give them legitimate state presence as well as enhance her or his worth in the community. This, according to him, explained the awe with which colonial police officers were treated and the widespread cases of corruption against them even at that time.

At the beginning, our interviewees observed, the programme attracted the attention and commendation of communities for its ingenuity and its immediate impact, not just on security, but also on employment.

> *Everybody was happy. Hunters and many of these other jobless people were bringing something home at the end of every month. They had uniform and salary. Like soldiers. And their families were happy too and they were proud. And people said this chairman had good ideas and he was like a saviour. We said he made (electoral) promises and we voted for him, and now he is fulfilling them.*[11]

However, the chairperson could not sustain the programme beyond the first 18 months. A community leader who also worked in the local government informed us that funds coming in from the federal government through the state reduced, and internally-generated revenue did not increase. Soon, the chairperson stopped paying the recruited and kitted-out locals.

> *When our salaries stopped coming, (there was) nothing to show at home at the end of the month. What is uniform? What is boots? Is that food? People even made jest of us; uniform without salary.*[12]

The economic and social aspects of this funding discontinuation was negatively felt by both the affected workers, their dependants and others in the local government area. The eventual outcome was palpable disaffection against the local government authority.

Figure 3 Causal pathway from elected democratic status to poor perception of performance
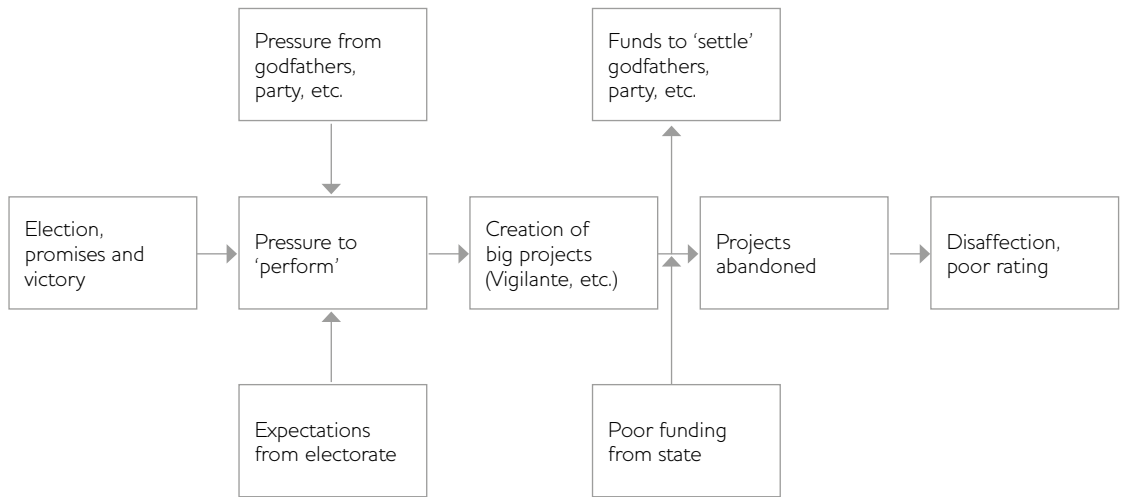
Source Authors' own.

A simple depiction as the one in Figure 3 risks over-simplifying a complex situation, yet it is invaluable in laying out the basic skeleton of a complex problem. Figure 3 summarises the likely reasons the elected council may be perceived negatively by the electorate, in this case with reference to their performance in providing security services.

An elected local government chairperson is a dual loyalist: he has the electorate to serve but also has party stalwarts to please. Figure 3 shows that the dual loyalist faces pressure from two separate directions. At the top of the list of these loyalists are those influential people, called 'godfathers', who dictate the distribution of party tickets to contest elections and can influence votes and victory. Edigin (2010) points out that large resources are expended to please and service these godfathers or 'kingmakers'. Those who refuse to serve the godfathers after their electoral victory are 'subjected to indecent manipulations' and risk being impeached (Albert 2005: 105). Edigin (2010) cites examples of such impeachments, which godfathers can affect either through legislative means, which they also control in many cases, or through more informal means, such as gangs that are used to create violence and other forms of crisis in the jurisdiction of their estranged 'godsons' (Ellis 2008; Olarinmoye 2008). We do not have firm evidence of how many resources went into pleasing the godfathers in our two cases, but most analyses suggest that Nigerian politicians expend substantial financial resources to service godfathers. In fact, Albert (2005: 103) explains that while there are powerful people all over the world who are capable of influencing electoral victory, the Nigerian political godfather is unique in that he has 'turned politics into a money-making business... an economic investment that must yield superlative dividends by all means'.

Figure 4 Causal pathway from appointed democratic status to good perception of performance

```
                    ┌─────────────────┐
                    │ Funds to 'settle'│
                    │ godfathers,      │
                    │ party, etc.      │
                    └─────────────────┘
                             ↑
┌──────────────┐   ┌──────────────┐   ┌──────────────────────┐   ┌──────────────┐
│ No election; │→  │ Instruction  │→  │ Support existing     │→  │ Favourable   │
│ no promises  │   │ from         │   │ informal security    │   │ perception   │
│              │   │ governor     │   │ arrangements         │   │              │
│              │   │              │   │ without commitment   │   │              │
└──────────────┘   └──────────────┘   └──────────────────────┘   └──────────────┘
                             ↑
                    ┌─────────────────┐
                    │ Poor funding    │
                    │ from state      │
                    └─────────────────┘
```
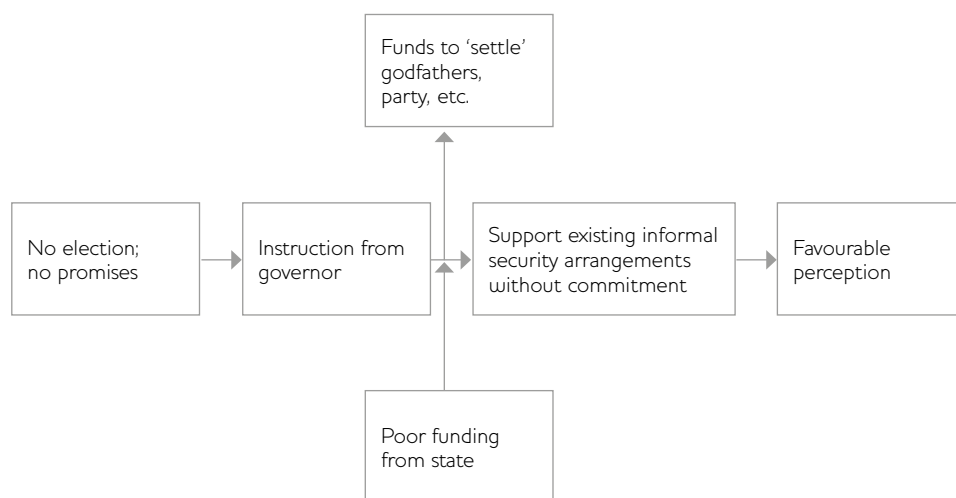
The second source of pressure comes from the electorate and their expectations of effective delivery, based on promises made during election speeches, rallies and campaigns. To meet these, the elected council chairperson creates big projects, in this case security projects. However, as funds eventually reduce but demands from godfathers and party bosses do not, projects are abandoned. People lose jobs and the community at large witnesses other obvious signs of the local government moving away from projects and electoral promises, and as disaffection sets in, the chairperson is seen as yet another deceitful politician by citizens.

8.2 Surulere

Why would a state envoy, that is, the appointed local council chairperson, neither adopt a formal approach to security nor initiate a new security project? The chairperson of Surulere local government council did not initiate a project; he depended on instructions from the state government for every project. He had no independence and could not recruit workers for a project except with the approval of the state governor. Since he did not campaign for elections, he did not make promises and therefore, there is little or no expectation from the electorate. Given the ubiquity of godfather-ism in Nigerian politics, as discussed previously, we suggest that he is faced with pressures from godfathers as well, but that is the only set of pressures he faces since there is no electorate in this situation.

Our interviewees from Surulere expressed satisfaction with the performance of the local government in security provision. A leader of the local watchmen (hunters) whom we interviewed[13] claimed that the chairperson:

supports us very well. He donated motorcycles to us and also gives us money from time to time… not every month. We don't get money every month since we

are not civil servants. Sometimes the money is much; sometimes the money is small. We all know that things are hard in this country.

It is important to note that the motorcycles were regarded as donations rather than entitlements. Donations evoke a sense of gratitude; entitlements do not.

Another interviewee commended the chairperson of Surulere for occasionally attending their meetings or sending his representatives. This was a sign that the chairperson recognised and respected them. Others spoke of his 'closeness' to the traditional rulers which is interpreted as a sign of his humility and respect for tradition and culture: 'He does not pass on this main road without stopping to greet our leader'. That these simple and generally common gestures are commended shows that the citizens did not expect these from the appointed chairperson who, in their view, is not under any obligation to make such gestures.

Occasionally, when specific needs arise, the leaders of the informal security agents approach the local government chairperson in Surulere for financial assistance. One such instance was when the vigilante group wanted to buy uniforms. The chairperson donated some money for this. At another time, he donated money for repairing their motorcycles. At other times, he simply invited them and gave them some money for their operations and logistics, such as when the state governor visits the local area and all informal agents are mobilised and put on high alert. The spontaneity of such acts, and the fact that they were unexpected, left the informal agents deeply impressed.

From the perspectives of the citizens of Asa and Surulere, one chairperson represented unmet expectations and unfulfilled promises, while the other represented unexpected gestures. The former was thus regarded with disaffection while the latter was positively rated. It seems that democratic status and its attendant politics matters in citizens' perception of the performance of local councils, and that the pathway works through two particular factors – whether citizens have expectations of delivery from their local governments, and whether there are enough resources available to elected leaders to meet the various pressures that they must operate under.

9 Conclusion: is being elected a disadvantage?

The evidence presented in this article shows that local elections in a context of party control, godfather-ism, and a lack of financial resources and autonomy sets elected local councils up for failure, and disaffection from their constituents. Elections lead to a sense of entitlement by citizens, a particular strength of democracy, but this needs to be accompanied by an ability to deliver on electoral promises and on the particular expressed needs of the electorate. When promises are not met by delivery, disaffection results. Where no promises are made, any delivery or gesture by leaders is unexpected, and therefore, considered generous. In either case, the imperatives of democracy and the needs of citizens are not well served.

As opposed to Lindberg's (2006) findings on the significance of African elections and on democratic 'lock-ins', our findings suggest that local government elections that operate under political and financial constraints may actually create a constituency against further democratic decentralisation. If community members perceive the performance of those democratically entrusted with leadership positions as being worse than those appointed to these positions by party bosses, then it is possible that support for elected local governments may reduce over time. Making democratic decentralisation work requires a legal and constitutional framework that protects elected council chairpersons from the stranglehold of political 'godfathers', and provides them with some measure of fiscal independence and autonomy *vis-à-vis* state governors to provide services.

Notes

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1 An appointed local council is made up of a caretaker committee headed by the chairperson: all the members of this committee and the chairperson are appointed by the state governor. An elected council is headed by an executive chairperson who chooses his/her own cabinet.

2 Like most African borders, these borders are not coterminous with language, ethnicity or cultural boundaries. They are arbitrary.

3 About four months after our data collection, the Kwara State governor dissolved the elected council of Asa Local Government, thereby turning the local government into an appointed one.

4 Interview with official of a security agency, May 2016.

5 Interview with member of Vigilante group, June 2016.

6 We used the Chi-square test to analyse categorical outcome variables.

7 We used the t-test to analyse continuous outcome variables.

8 July 2016.

9 State governments created what they called Joint Accounts to which all funds sent by the federal government for local governments are deposited. This account is controlled by the governor who decides which local government gets what and for what purpose.

10 July 2016.

11 June 2016.

12 July 2016.

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Formal and Informal Actors in Addis Ababa's Solid Waste Management System

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Abstract Decentralisation reforms in Ethiopia aimed to empower both formal and informal actors involved in different socioeconomic development efforts. However, an investigation of solid waste management in Addis Ababa shows that informal actors that play a significant role in solid waste collection – and especially in recycling, in which the city government has no capacity of its own – are not recognised by the city government and excluded from the management of the system. Using social network analysis, this article argues that the integration of informal waste collectors and recyclers within the city's waste management system will improve the state of services offered to Addis Ababa's residents.

Keywords: participatory decentralisation, Ethiopia, informal sector, solid waste, recycling, networks.

1 Introduction

Solid waste management is a serious challenge faced by African cities today (Guerrero, Maas and Hogland 2013). Most cities are unable to manage the alarming increase in volumes of solid waste due to rapid urbanisation and population growth. As a result, poor urban environment, poor public health and illegal dumps are evident in the major cities of Africa. In response to these problems, African cities adopted decentralisation policies and strategies for solid waste collection and disposal (UN-Habitat 2010a). The aim was to give more power to lower levels of city administrations to deal with these issues at a more local level, and to bring non-state actors into solid waste management in order to enable 'good rubbish governance' through more public–private partnerships and more cost-effective service delivery (UN-Habitat 2010b).

In Ethiopia, solid waste management was highly centralised until 2003. As part of a broader decentralisation effort in that year, the city administration of Addis Ababa was divided into ten sub-cities and 117 districts that comprise the local administration (FDRE 2003). The purpose of reorganising the city was to give more power to lower

levels of the city administration, and to empower local communities and their institutions (Taye and Tegegne 2007; Paulos 2007). As part of the reforms, the city government promoted integrated solid waste management by local administrations, and strengthened the role of both formal, informal, public and private sectors in solid waste collection, transportation, disposal and recycling activities (FDRE 2003). At the beginning of the reform, many informal private enterprises were involved in the collection and disposal of waste, and were allowed to operate without paying taxes. In a very short period, the number of actors involved in solid waste collection and disposal increased significantly. There was high competition among the informal operators and this reduced the price they charged for their services. The problems related to solid waste in the city were subsequently reduced; more waste was collected and the city became cleaner (Zelalem 2006; Bjerkli 2015).

The city government decided to change the system of solid waste management in 2005. It shifted the focus of waste collection, transportation and disposal activities towards government-affiliated cooperatives and micro- and small-scale enterprises (MSSEs). Informal private collectors were now excluded, and this resulted in the systematic eviction of pre-existing informal enterprises from their established service areas (Zelalem 2006). Part of this decision was politically driven, as the MSSEs and cooperatives provided an additional source of employment that the city government and the ruling party could use to distribute patronage to party members. Today, the majority of waste collection, transportation and disposal is carried out by these government-affiliated organisations together with the city, sub-city and district-level governments. This politically driven reconfiguration of services worsened the situation of solid waste management in the city. The existing waste management system is rated inefficient and characterised by inappropriate collection, lack of provision of containers and collection trucks, illegal dumping, and complex waste collection fees (Bjerkli 2013).

The fact that the informal sector can contribute in significant ways to the improvement of local government service delivery is supported by a growing number of empirical studies, and by experiences in other countries (Azam and Ali 2004, 2006; Baud, Grafakos and Post 2005; Kaseva and Mbuligwe 2005; Oteng-Ababio 2010; Tukahirwa, Mol and Oosterveer 2010). Mohmand (2016) argues that the inclusion of informal institutions in formal governance can make a difference to service delivery by encouraging greater citizen participation in decision-making around services, and ensuring that public service delivery meets the specific needs of different populations. Rouse (2004, 2008) argues that informal enterprises are vital parts of urban service provision and there is a need for a paradigm shift in the way informal service providers are viewed. Other scholars in both the academic and donor literature call for policies aimed at integrating informal actors into municipal solid waste management strategies (Asmamaw 2003; Azam and Ali 2004; Wilson, Velis and Cheeseman 2006; UN-Habitat 2010b; Omer *et al.* 2015).

In line with this literature, this article aims to investigate the role of informal actors in the solid waste collection and recycling system in Addis Ababa. There is evidence to suggest that despite their exclusion from waste management services in Addis Ababa, informal actors play an important role in waste collection, and especially in recycling waste material, in which the city government has no capacity of its own. The main question the article asks is about the extent to which informal actors continue to be involved in the waste management system in Addis Ababa – given all the changes over the last decade – and about the particular nature of their role within the system. Social network analysis is used to provide answers to both questions. It helps define the specific role that various informal actors play; to better understand the nature of the interaction between different formal and informal actors; and to identify bottlenecks in resources and information sharing that affect daily operations and strategic planning, and which have led to the deterioration of Addis Ababa's waste collection and disposal system. The finding that informal actors are indeed a key part of this system, and that they help connect a number of formal and informal actors within the network of solid waste management in Addis Ababa, leads to the conclusion that a greater integration across formal and informal actors would lead to more sustainable and effective solutions to the city's current waste management issues.

2 Solid waste management in Addis Ababa

Addis Ababa – the capital city of Ethiopia and the diplomatic centre of Africa, where the African Union is head-quartered – was founded in 1887. According to the Central Statistical Authority (CSA 2016), close to 4 million people now live in Addis Ababa, over 30 per cent of the urban population of Ethiopia, and it is one of the fastest growing cities on the continent. Its population has nearly doubled every decade, and as a result, Addis Ababa has expanded geographically to cover about 540sq km. Its geographic location, combined with its political and socioeconomic status, have made it a melting pot for hundreds of thousands of people that come from all corners of the country in search of employment opportunities and services (SBPDA 2003; UN-Habitat 2008). Demographic pressure has led to a high rate of unemployment, high concentration of slum dwellers, and very poor quality housing infrastructure and sanitary development (AACG 2006).

Prior to 2003, solid waste management in Addis Ababa was highly centralised (Kokebe 2007). Addis Ababa Health Bureau was responsible for managing solid waste in the city and the municipal system for waste collection was based on door-to-door collections and the use of containers. However, this door-to-door service was only available to households near main roads, where containers were placed in open spaces close to the roads. The system was largely ineffective due to a lack of trucks, high operational costs, lack of awareness among people, and the lack of a proper landfill site (SBPDA 2003).

In response to the need for better service, the city government reorganised the structure in 2003 and changed the centralised solid

Figure 1 The waste collection system in Addis Ababa: waste materials identified for sale (left) and a container for collecting waste (right)


Source Author's own.

waste management system to a relatively decentralised approach, at least in principle. An agency called the Sanitation, Beautification and Park Development Authority (SBPDA) was established and made responsible for solid waste collection, transportation and disposal. It was also responsible for the coordination of different stakeholders in solid waste management. Compared to the previous system, more power was given to the lower level administrative bodies. A solid waste manager was appointed for each sub-city and district level. The aim was to stimulate more efficient delivery of urban services by promoting decentralisation, participation, transparency and accountability, in line with good governance in service delivery (Bjerkli 2015).

During this time, the city government recognised and formalised the informal collectors operating in the city. The city administration seemed quite amenable to these informal actors. They were registered and given licences to allow them to operate as private enterprises, and were exempted from tax payments. As explained earlier, all this changed in 2005, when the city government suddenly decided to establish MSSEs, and forced informal enterprises out of solid waste management. The city government has now formally established cooperatives to manage solid waste under the supervision and support of the city government.

Currently, the daily solid waste generation by households, institutions and public spaces in Addis Ababa is estimated to be 0.36kg per capita per day. The majority of waste generated is organic in nature. While wastes like vegetables, wood, bone, combustible and non-combustible leaves, and miscellaneous other wastes are collected and disposed by the government solid waste collection system, informal actors remain involved in the collection of plastics, metals, glass, paper and clothes for resale and recycling purposes. They are particularly central to the recycling system, so that even though there is no formal waste recycling in the city, informal recyclers use solid waste to produce glue, plastic bags, shoes and different types of equipment. The picture on the left in Figure 1 shows valuable waste materials collected by informal actors and traded for recycling.

Figure 2 Waste management system in Addis Ababa
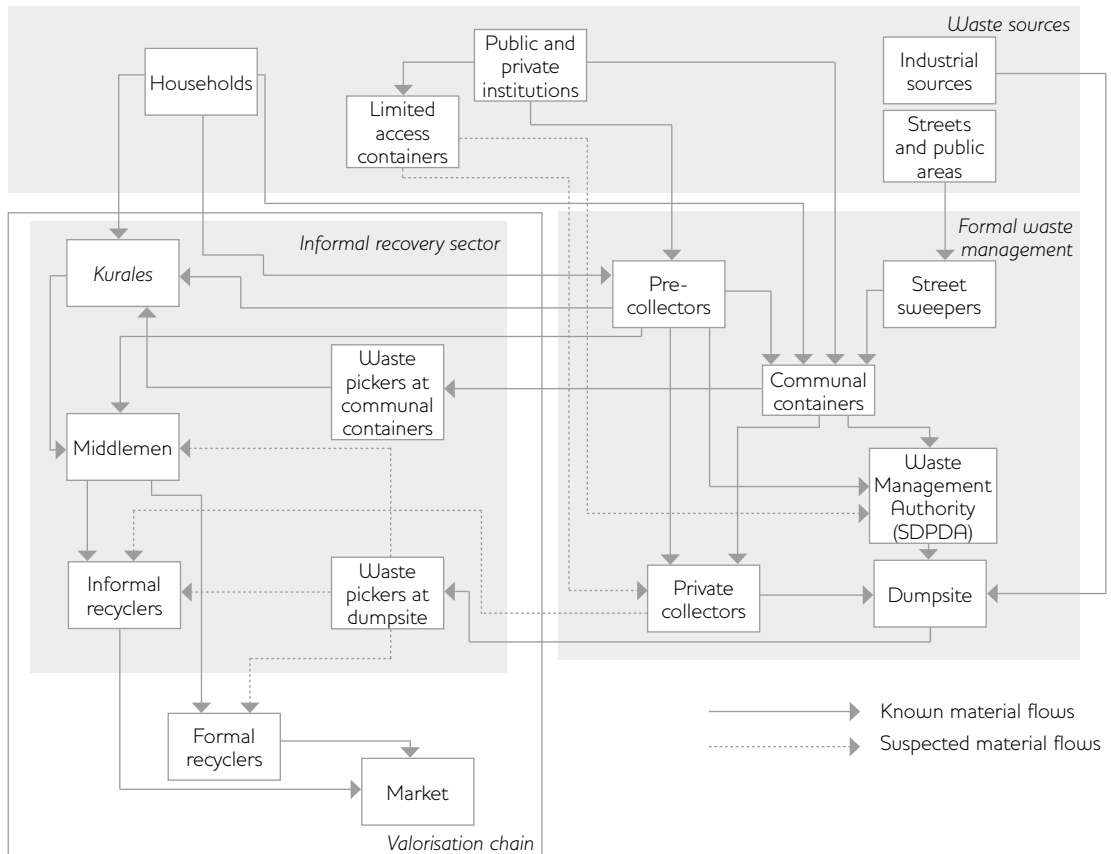
Source Escalante, Rymkiewicz and Kranert (2010).

Waste collection and disposal in Addis Ababa, therefore, follows formal and informal approaches. The formal approach is the sole responsibility of the city government. This is handled in two ways: door-to-door collection for households along accessible streets, and the container system under which residents are expected to carry and dump their waste in containers located at accessible sites. The picture on the right in Figure 1 shows these containers, where most non-recyclable waste in the city finds its way. Once these are full, municipal trucks dispose of this waste in two major landfill sites in Addis Ababa, called Repi and Koshe. Door-to-door primary collection is carried out by pre-collectors' associations and street sweepers, and this too is put in containers for final disposal by the waste management agency, SBPDA. So in practice, the majority of waste is collected via the containers system, but the efficiency of this method is limited because of a lack of capacity of the city government to deploy adequate numbers of vehicles and waste containers. Besides, containers are not protected from rain and sun, which makes the rubbish rot and smell, creates unsightly urban spots, and leads to the deterioration of neighbourhoods and a disturbance of human activities. The site is also exposed to stray animals that scatter the waste while scavenging.

The second approach is the informal recovery and recycling system. *Qoralés*[1] buy waste materials door-to-door from households and institutions. Waste pickers collect waste materials from municipal containers and from Rupi or Koshe dumpsites. Once the materials have been collected by *Qoralés* and waste pickers, they are taken to the market at Minalesh Tera, a central market of Addis Ababa, and sold to middlemen or wholesalers. These then sell the materials to formal and informal recyclers. Figure 2 illustrates Addis Ababa's full waste management system and shows both formal and informal actors. Despite the role that informal actors quite obviously and visibly play within this system, their role is ignored and unacknowledged by the city government. This has put pressure on the system which makes it important to re-examine both formal and informal institutional arrangements and networks for waste management in Addis Ababa. The following sections deal centrally with this task.

3 Methods and data

Social network and stakeholders' analysis methods are used to better understand actors' roles, actions and interactions within networks, and to investigate relationships between individuals, groups and systems (Wasserman and Fraust 1999; Caniato *et al.* 2014). This is, therefore, a useful methodology to better understand the nature of the role and influence of the various formal and informal actors involved in the solid waste management network in Figure 2.

The study targeted solid waste collection, disposal and recycling in the whole city of Addis Ababa. In social network analysis, sampling is not possible. Therefore, all stakeholders were identified and included in the study. First, 31 stakeholders were identified with the help of local experts in the waste management sector and then categorised as informal actors, formal (public), formal (private), formal (local non-governmental organisations, NGOs), academia, households, media and international organisations.

The following were included under the category of informal actors:

1 *Qoralés* (itinerant scrap buyers who purchase small quantities of waste such as plastic, paper, glass, metals, etc. from households);

2 *Scavengers* (those who collect different kinds of materials at the municipal landfill site);

3 *Foragers* (those who pick waste materials from municipal containers, rubbish bins and streets);

4 *Wholesalers* (those who buy the waste materials from the collectors);

5 *Middlemen* (those who supply waste material to wholesalers or factories);

6 *Local factories* (who use the collected waste in the manufacture of new metal or plastic products);

Table 1 Parameters and value scales used in key informant interviews

Parameter	Possible response	Score
Interest: This measures the interest stakeholders have in solid waste collection, disposal and recycling.	No or minimum interest	1–2
	Limited interest	3–4
	General interest	5–6
	High interest	7–8
	Primary interest	9–10
Power: This measures the power and level of influence of stakeholders in decisions on solid waste collection, disposal and recycling.	Low power	1–3
	Medium power	4–7
	High power	8–10
Interaction: This measures the level of interaction between the stakeholder interviewed and other stakeholders.	Rare interaction	1
	Quite frequent interaction	2
	Frequent interaction	3
Material exchange: This measures whether there was waste material exchange between the interviewed actor and other actors.	No exchange	0
	There is exchange	1

Source Adapted from Caniato *et al.* (2014).

7 *Small artisans* (who are involved in recycling the waste materials in the form of shoes, metal equipment); and

8 *Rural traders* (who come from rural areas to buy waste materials to resell).

Formal government organisations identified as stakeholders include:

1 Addis Ababa City Administration (AACA);

2 Sub-city administrations;

3 District (*kebele*) administrations;

4 Sanitation, Beautification and Park Development Authority (SBPDA);

5 Addis Ababa Environmental Protection Authority (AAEPA);

6 Ministry of Health (MoH); and

7 Ministry of Urban Development (MOUD).

A number of other organisations were also identified and included in the study. These included formal private organisations, such as cooperatives, MSSEs, private companies, and the plastic Union, as

well as some local NGOs and international organisations, like GIZ and the International Labour Organization (ILO). Moreover, universities, Wub Consult (a consulting firm working in environmental issues) and some media groups were also included in the study. A few households were included for the purpose of understanding how they interact with pre-collectors and *Qoralés*, and were selected purposively and interviewed as a group.

The empirical data analysed in this study was collected from each category of stakeholders using semi-structured interviews. First, a total of 31 stakeholders were identified, of which eight were informal actors and 23 were formal actors. All of them were then interviewed as key informants. Both formal and informal actors were asked standardised questions regarding their power, interest, interaction and material exchanges in solid waste collection and recycling. Power in this case refers to the decision-making ability of stakeholders and their level of influence within the solid waste management system. Interest refers to their level of involvement within the network, based either on their responsibility to play certain roles, or because they derive economic benefit from the activities they are involved in (Ackermann and Eden 2011). Respondents were asked a range of questions within each of the categories indicated in Table 1, and measures were assigned accordingly.

Stakeholders were analysed with respect to their power and the interest they have in solid waste management, using a power–interest matrix that illustrates how powerful different stakeholders are, and the extent to which they are interested in solid waste management. The scores for power and interest were recorded, calculated and then visually represented in a matrix (see Figure 4).

The network data were collected with the various stakeholders considered as 'nodes', and the relationship between them as 'oriented ties'. Arrows (as in Figure 3) indicate the direction of the flow of resources or relations as reported by the interviewees. Social networks were graphically represented with the use of the UCINET software program (Borgatti, Everett and Freeman 2002). Three main social network measures were used to see how actors interact in the solid waste management network. These are: (a) *degree centrality* (a measure of connectedness in the network, calculated by recording the actual number of ties as a proportion of the maximum number of possible ties); (b) *closeness* (the degree to which an individual lies closer to all others in the network); and (c) *betweenness* (the extent to which a node lies between and helps connect other nodes) (Borgatti, Everett and Freeman 2013). Each of these measure different aspects of the centrality of an actor within a network, and imply the following: an actor with a higher degree score indicates a very active actor with many direct connections with other actors within the network; an actor that has a higher closeness score indicates that the actor has the shortest paths to all others, and is thus in an excellent position to monitor the information flow in the network; and an actor with a greater betweenness score

Figure 3 Waste material exchange network among informal actors in Addis Ababa
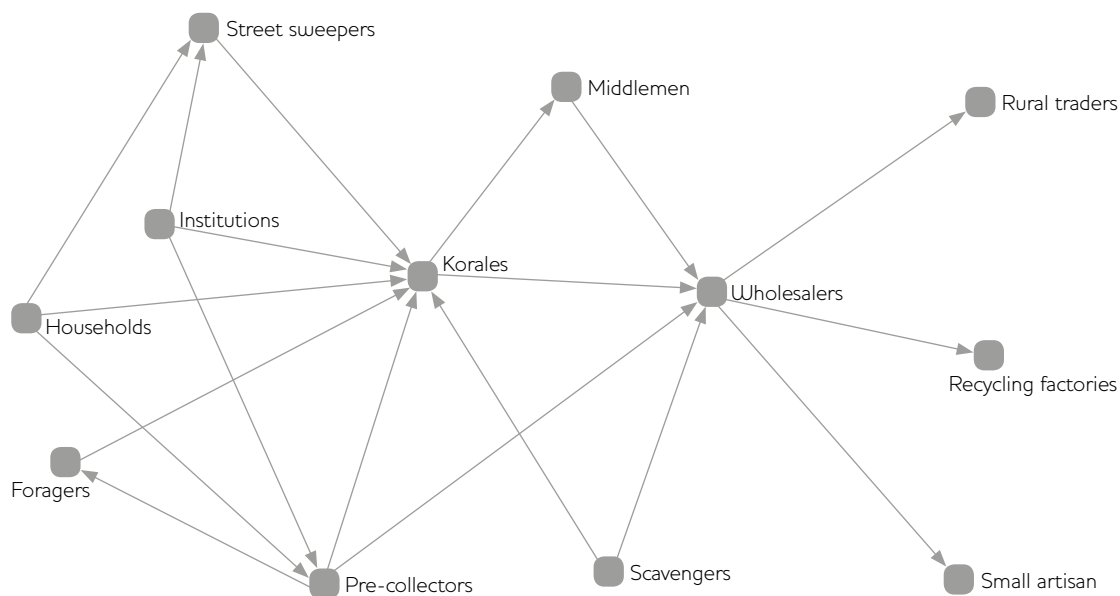
implies that the actor can play a broker role in the network because they connect the other actors in the network to one another. In addition to the social network data, other qualitative data from key informant interviews and document reviews were used to support the argument.

The remaining sections of this article present the results and findings of this methodological strategy, and are organised as follows. Section 4 provides a descriptive overview of the types of exchanges that take place between the different actors involved in the network of solid waste management in Addis Ababa. Section 5 then maps these various actors in terms of their influence and interest within this network. The aim here is to find where power really lies within the decentralised system, and whether power has been devolved to local actors. Section 6 then analyses centrality measures for the various types of actors, formal and informal, to provide more concrete evidence for the extent to which informal actors play a role within solid waste management networks in Addis Ababa.

4 Informal actors and the waste material exchange network
The interviews probed respondents on the particular exchanges that occur between different actors, especially informal ones, in the system of waste management in Addis Ababa. Their responses revealed that waste material flows from the source – from households and institutions – to recyclers in a fairly organised way in Addis Ababa, and involves a wide array of informal actors that include *Qoralés*, scavengers, wholesalers, middlemen, small artisans, rural traders and recycling

factories. These exchanges are mapped in the network diagram in Figure 3, and described in the rest of this section.

Households and institutions are the primary sources of waste materials. Most of this waste is collected by street sweepers and pre-collectors that are employed by government-affiliated cooperatives and MSSEs to keep streets and neighbourhoods clean. However, waste that can be recycled – such as metals, plastics, glasses, old shoes, electronic materials, and so on – is often separated out by households and sold to *Qoralés*, who are scrap buyers that collect these directly at the house. *Qoralés* carry bags over their shoulders and wander from neighbourhood to neighbourhood, calling out 'Qoralé' as they go to inform people of their presence, so that people can come out to the street with their recyclable materials. According to interviewees, the value of the waste material depends on its type, quantity and quality. In principle, the formal employees – street sweepers and pre-collectors – are not allowed to sell waste material to anyone, especially since the city government is now trying to curb the activities of the informal sector, but they often sell large volumes of waste materials to *Qoralés* informally to make some extra income.

There are a number of other informal actors that also sell material to the *Qoralés*. These include foragers, who are young boys that sit near the municipal containers and wait for valuable materials to arrive, which they collect and sell to the *Qoralés*. Sometimes these foragers also collect waste materials directly from pre-collectors. Scavengers work as gangs who collect different kinds of materials at the municipal landfill site, around which they usually live. They collect waste material from the dumping sites on a regular basis and sell it mainly to wholesalers and *Qoralés* as a means of livelihood.

Qoralés sell their collected materials to middlemen or directly to wholesalers who specialise in certain materials. Quite often, *Qoralés* have a contractual agreement with wholesalers, who may also extend them financial assistance and guarantee to purchase their collected waste. Middlemen supply these used waste materials to several recycling factories in and around the city. They act as brokers to link *Qoralés* with wholesalers, and wholesalers with recycling factories. These factories use the waste to produce glue, plastic bottles, shopping bags, and plastic shoes.

Wholesalers and middlemen also sell their waste to small artisans and rural traders, who come from rural areas to buy waste materials (plastic or metal) to sell in rural areas for reuse. Small artisans recycle waste materials based on traditional technology, such as, for example, plastic shoemakers, blacksmiths and electronic maintenance service providers.

Constructing the network of waste material exchange in this manner helps establish that although the city government does not recognise the contribution of informal actors within this system now, they play a critical role in solid waste collection and recycling in Addis Ababa, and that *Qoralés* and wholesalers in particular are key players in the network.

Figure 4 **Stakeholders power–interest matrix in Addis Ababa**
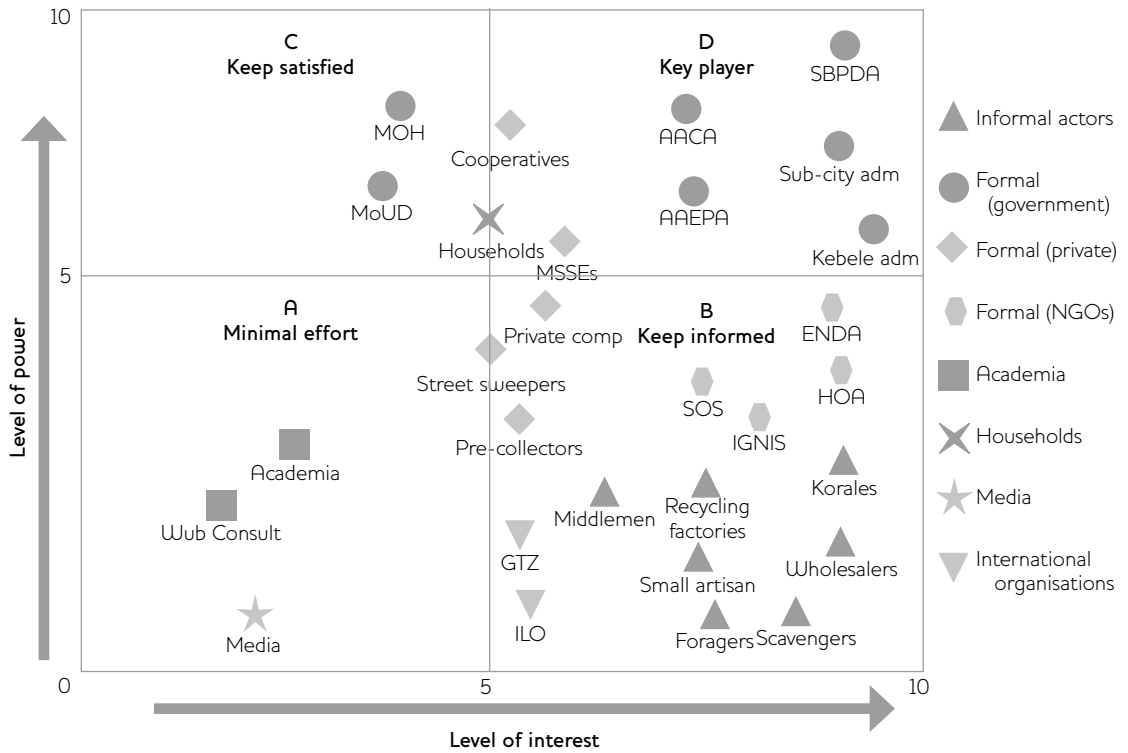
Source Field data, 2016.

To what extent are these actors able to play a defining role within the formal management of this system? This is answered next.

5 Mapping actors by power and interest

Bjerkli (2015) points out that one of the main aims of decentralising the delivery of urban services in Ethiopia was to promote greater participation by local actors, and that the city of Addis Ababa had introduced various reforms to bring more power to local actors. Interviews confirmed these efforts. However, to what extent has this really happened? A power–interest matrix, using the key concepts developed earlier, is a useful instrument for answering this question.

According to Gardner, Rachlin and Sweeny (1986), power–interest matrices classify stakeholders in terms of the power that they hold and the extent to which they are likely to be involved in a given network, in this case the network of solid waste management in Addis Ababa. The level of power of each stakeholder is measured on the vertical axis in Figure 4, and their level of interest is measured on the horizontal axis. So actors in Group A in the lower left corner of the matrix have little power and interest, while those in Group D in the upper right corner have a lot of both power and interest. Actors in Group B have more interest than power, and those in Group C have more power than interest.

The power–interest matrix can be used to identify the type of strategy required to interact with each set of actors within any proposed policy reforms. The stakeholders in Group A require only minimal effort and monitoring since they are not influential and they have fairly low stakes and interest within the network. The stakeholders in Group B should be kept informed. They have little power but their stakes may be higher, and they can thus be important and committed allies in influencing the more powerful stakeholders. The stakeholders in Group C are powerful, but their interest is low. They are generally relatively passive, but certain events and moments can spike their interest and move them to Group D on that issue. The stakeholders in Group D are the key players within the network. They are both powerful, and highly interested in the strategies of the solid waste management sector. Any proposed strategies and changes must be acceptable to this group to be effective. Figure 4 uses the empirical data to map the various actors of Addis Ababa's waste management system according to these categories, and the rest of this section provides details of the actors that fall within each quadrant.

Quadrant A: As stated earlier, this group represents actors that have low power and low interest within the network of solid waste management in Addis Ababa. Media, academia, and consultants fall within this category – they are connected at the periphery but they do not play an important role in solid waste management. For example, both the media and some scholars may regularly report on the state of pollution or other environmental hazards in the city, but beyond that they do not have invested stakes within the sector, and usually have little influence on government policy in this area. The interviews revealed that interest within such sectors was quite low, and this may explain why very few studies are launched in solid waste collection and recycling. It is also evident that in Ethiopia the role of this sector is limited by the autocratic nature of the government. Various interviews revealed that researchers, academia and consultants have an important role to play in highlighting environmental problems and suggesting workable solutions, but that they do not play a prominent role in this respect.

Quadrant B: This group represents a low power of influence on the system but a high level of interest in the issue of solid waste management. In this category lie international NGOs (ILO, GTZ), formal local NGOs, such as ENDA (Environmental Development Action), HOA (Horn of Africa), SOS Addis and IGNIS, which work on environmental and waste management issues, some formal private actors (pre-collectors, street sweepers and private companies) and all informal actors (middlemen, recycling factories, small artisans, foragers, wholesalers and scavengers). International and local environmental NGOs are engaged in a variety of environmental protection activities and sustainable waste management projects. Some NGOs have played a very important role in several waste collection and recycling projects in the past few years, but they have relatively few resources and little influence over the city government in terms of policy.

Informal actors are amongst the most interested stakeholders of waste separation and recycling, because for many this constitutes their main economic activity and livelihood. Their influence over the system on which their business depends, however, is low and in the current situation, their role has no recognition from the city government. Their risk is high, and so their capital investment is low. The restriction of their role, regardless of their high interest in the sector, has created waste management issues with detrimental effects for the whole city. The interviews suggested that more recognition, financial support and a conducive working environment for these actors could help resolve the current deterioration of waste management in the city.

Quadrant C: Actors in this group represent a high power of influence but low interest in the sector. The ministries of Health, and Urban Development and Construction fall within this category. They have the power to influence the system but the interviews revealed that they have not shown much interest in getting directly involved in solving the existing issues within this sector. However, this is not how things have always been. Officials from Addis Ababa's health bureau mentioned that their role within the same had been much greater five years ago, but that this had shrunk considerably once the main responsibility for managing the waste collection and disposal system moved to SBPDA. This is the main reason for their lack of interest now. This division of responsibility has contributed to a less integrated and less multi-sectoral approach to waste management.

Quadrant D: This group of actors have both high power of influence and high interest. In Addis Ababa, government organisations such as AACA and SBPDA, sub-city and district (*kebele*) administrations, government-sponsored cooperatives, MSSEs and households are included in this category. The city government is the most important actor related to policymaking, strategic planning, solid waste operation and supervision. However, the whole system is dominated by either government or affiliated organisations.

Mapping where actors lie within the matrix in terms of their power of influence and interest in solid waste collection and recycling helps identify that in line with what we know about the recent reforms, government organisations have strong power of influence and interest in solid waste management, while almost all informal actors and local NGOs have strong interest but not much power of influence. This provides an interesting point of analysis. In theory, decentralisation reforms were meant to empower local actors in the management of solid waste in the city (Taye and Tegegne 2007). In practice, Figure 4 shows that the system is highly controlled by government and its affiliated actors, and that most other interested actors exist on the periphery of the system and have little say within decision-making processes. This implies that the system is largely non-participatory and that decision-making rests with formal state institutions, despite the existence and involvement of a multitude of other actors within the system that have high stakes within it, and depend on it for their livelihoods.

Figure 5 Actors' frequency of interaction in solid waste management in Addis Ababa
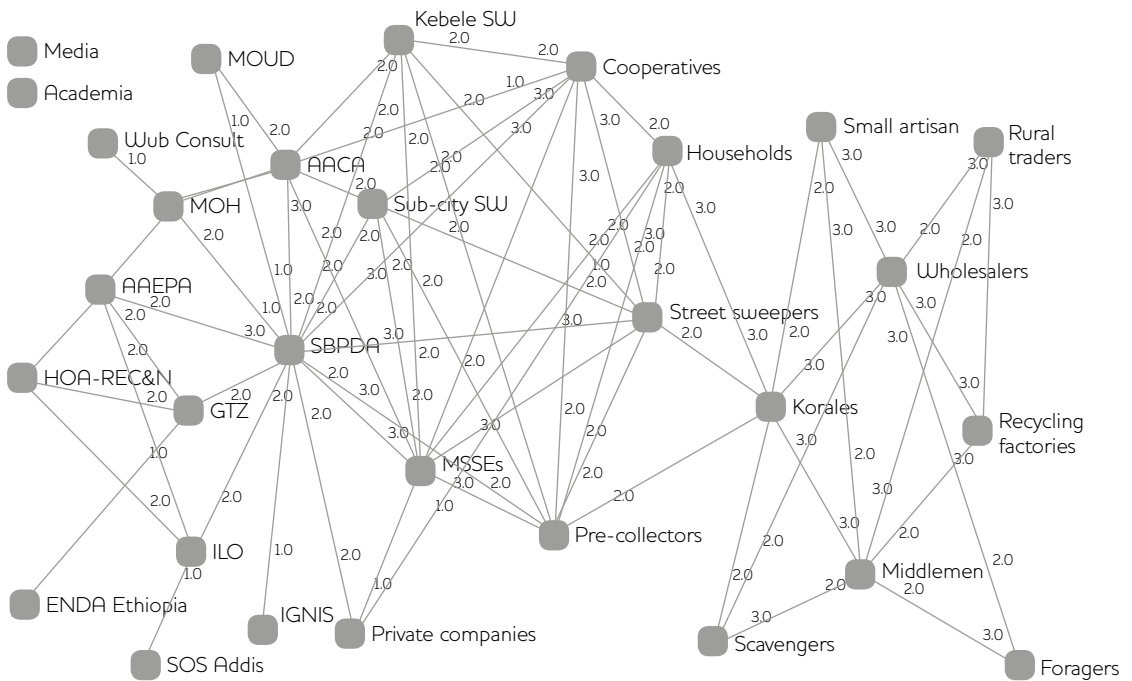
6 Measuring network centrality of formal and informal actors

Both formal and informal actors were asked questions about the frequency of their interaction with other actors, with regard to waste collection and recycling in Addis Ababa. Their responses are used to create the network of interaction in Figure 5. The evidence shows that almost all actors, except for the media and academia, lie within a connected network, and engage with one another on a regular basis.

The frequency of their interaction, however, varies. SBPDA, as the government organisation responsible for solid waste management, is the key player in the network. Table 2 provides further details of the centrality of each actor by providing measures for their *degree centrality*, *closeness* and *betweenness*. SBPDA has the highest number of ties at almost 47, indicating multiple ties with a number of actors, such as government and formal private organisations. It is also the highest ranked actor in terms of *closeness* and *betweenness* measures, which shows that it is the most active and best located actor within the network, and can access any other actor more quickly than anyone else.

What is important to note here is the extent to which SBPDA's scores are replicated by the scores of the informal *Qoralés*. Though their *degree* score is similar to a number of other actors (such as middlemen and wholesalers), their *betweenness* and *closeness* measures are much higher than those of other actors. *Betweenness centrality* is a measure of the

Table 2 Centrality measures: degree, closeness and betweenness

Stakeholders	Degree	Closeness	Betweenness
Informal actors			
Scavengers	10.000	20.270	0.000
Foragers	6.667	17.751	0.000
Qoralés	**23.333**	**23.622**	**36.858**
Middlemen	23.333	20.979	10.996
Wholesalers	23.333	20.979	10.996
Small artisan	10.000	20.270	0.000
Recycling factories	13.333	18.072	6.207
Rural traders	10.000	17.964	0.000
Households	20.000	22.901	4.023
Formal actors			
Pre-collectors	26.667	25.210	16.309
Street sweepers	26.667	25.210	16.309
Cooperatives	26.667	23.622	1.442
MSSEs	30.000	23.810	2.017
Private companies	10.000	22.727	0.466
MOUD	6.667	20.979	0.000
AACA	23.333	22.059	1.845
SBPDA	**46.667**	**25.641**	**44.895**
AAEPA	16.667	22.059	3.333
MoH	13.333	21.583	6.379

Source Field data, 2016.

extent to which a node serves as a bridge between other nodes, or actors. SBPDA clearly forms this bridge within the formal system with a high score of 45, but *Qoralés* have a fairly similar score and play an important role in serving as a bridge within the informal system with a score of 37. This is true also of the *closeness* measure, where they score 24, in comparison to SBPDA's score of 26. This shows that the *Qoralés* are almost as well located within the network as SBPDA, and serve as an important bridging node that connect formal and informal actors.

The policy implication of this finding is that despite all the recent changes, the *Qoralés* in particular continue to be central to the network of waste management in Addis Ababa. They interact regularly and work closely with a large number of actors within the system, and

connect a number of other informal actors, not just to one another but also to various formal actors. This is mainly because they collect waste from households, pre-collectors and street sweepers and then sell this to different informal actors. It seems reasonable, therefore, to suggest that a system that integrates the work of the formal and informal systems may provide more effective solutions to Addis Ababa's current waste management issues. Such an integration would require the city government to recognise, once again and in particular, the role that *Qoralés* still play within the waste management system of the city. This will allow for more coordinated service delivery, especially between waste collectors in the formal system and recyclers that lie almost entirely in the informal sector.

7 Conclusion

The decentralisation reforms of 2003 in Ethiopia were aimed at the improvement of service delivery at the local level. Using the case of solid waste management in the city of Addis Ababa, this article found that despite a considerable restructuring of the city administration and its service delivery system, actual service provision has not improved. A large part of the reason for this is that in restructuring its systems, the city has moved away from its previous close collaboration with informal actors in the delivery of waste collection and disposal services.

This article investigated the network of solid waste collection and recycling in Addis Ababa and found that informal actors continue to play a significant and central role within these. Yet they are ignored by the city administration. Informal actors have a high level of interest and stakes in solid waste management, but they have no power of influence and cannot affect decision-making, despite the fact that their livelihoods are directly affected by many policy decisions. They are particularly important players within waste material exchange networks, and given that the city has never developed any formal system to recycle municipal waste, most of this is carried out by informal actors. Where the state sees 'waste' (something to get rid of), informal actors see 'recycling' (an opportunity). Despite this, the system continues to be controlled by government and its affiliated actors, and leaves most stakeholders out of decision-making processes. The article concludes that by ignoring informal actors, the decentralised government has an incomplete view of waste management, and that a reintegration of informal actors into the system would lead to more coordinated and efficient service delivery.

Notes

1 This is a local term for scrap buyers who purchase small quantities of waste such as plastic, paper, glass, metals, etc. directly from households. The word is also sometimes spelt as *Kurales*, as in Figure 2. *Qoralé* comes from '*Qorkoro Yaläh*' in Amharic, which literally means, 'Do you have any scrap metals?'

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Staff Quality and Service Delivery: Evaluating Two Ghanaian District Assemblies[*]

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Abstract This study examines the nature of staff quality and the extent to which it can explain variations in service delivery outcomes using two selected District Assemblies in Ghana. Staff quality is measured by the interaction of individual-level competences and public service motivation. Depending on intensity, the interaction of competence and public service motivation produced four types of staff quality with varied implications for service delivery outcomes. It is argued that the relationship between decentralisation and service delivery remains complex, and therefore the role of staff quality remains critical. This is important in the light of calls to implement full devolution in Ghana where all decentralised services will operate directly under the District Assembly. It is imperative for public administration and human resource experts to look more closely at attracting employees with the demonstrable public service motivation and skillsets needed for decentralisation, and to create favourable social conditions that support family life.

Keywords: decentralisation, Ghana, public administration, organisational culture, service delivery, public service motivation.

1 Introduction

Ghana's decentralised District Assembly system, which is funded primarily by central government transfers, uses a needs-based equalisation formula to distribute funds from the District Assemblies Common Fund (DACF). In this sense, it can be characterised as a fair or balanced form of funding. Given this context, why do some sub-national units improve their levels of service delivery more than others? In particular, how do variations in staff quality explain differences in improved service delivery among sub-national units? There are substantial ongoing debates about the relationship between decentralisation and service delivery. Whilst some of the arguments demonstrate positive images of these relationships (Ghuman and Singh 2013; Mehrotra 2006), others show unfavourable relationships (Conyers 2007; Oyugi 2000; Robinson 2007). There is recognition in the current

debate that the causal relationship between decentralisation and public service delivery remains complex with multiple causal factors shaping the process (Conyers 2007; Ghuman and Singh 2013; Robinson 2007). Ghuman and Singh (2013), for example, indicated that full devolution has better chances of improving quality service delivery than a truncated system of devolution. They also acknowledge the role of financing and human resource management as important factors in improving service delivery. Similarly, Robinson (2007) and Conyers (2007) identified factors such as the nature of the service, the decentralisation process, the mode of implementation, the capacity of individuals in charge and the overall sociocultural and policy environments of decentralisation. Grindle (1997) and Crook and Ayee (2006) additionally proposed the context of organisational culture to explain differences in public service delivery across different organisations.

Whilst acknowledging the importance of all these factors, this current article is concerned more about the capacity of individuals managing sub-national units to shape service delivery outcomes.[2] In particular, the article explores the following questions: (1) What is the nature of staff quality in District Assemblies in Ghana? (2) To what extent do variations in staff quality explain differences in service delivery outcomes among District Assemblies?

The focus on staff quality for service delivery outcomes is important for two reasons. First, the debate over the years about the failure of decentralisation for service delivery in Africa has largely focused on financing difficulties (Banful 2009; Dafflon and Madiès 2012). For example, Schulze and Suharnoko (2014) noted that the level of fiscal endowment of a sub-national organisation explains variations in improved service delivery in Indonesia. Similar arguments were made by Bogere (2013) and Muriisa (2008) who stated that the challenge of Uganda's decentralisation is the issue of inadequate financing for improved service delivery. Again, Banful (2009) attributed the challenges of Ghana's decentralisation to financing difficulties. In effect, theoretical propositions for improving service delivery have centred on improving fiscal decentralisation (Martinez-Vazquez, Lago-Peñas and Sacchi 2015; Soto, Farfan and Lorant 2012) to the extent that there is very little discussion about how staff quality can affect the way decentralised institutions raise revenue independent of intergovernmental transfers, which in turn can affect service delivery.

The second reason is that discussions on staff capacity for decentralisation have largely been concerned about the number of people employed and their technical competences in managing sub-national units (Raga and Taylor 2012; Steiner 2007). Thus, the policy approach has always been to champion better conditions of service including higher salaries to induce performance (Grindle 1997; Paul 2010). The argument here is that in the wake of increasing country-level budgetary constraints on the capacity to provide higher salaries, and a decline in other external modes of motivation to improve the performance of employees in public service

(Paul 2010), there is a need to seek alternative approaches to improving performance for service delivery. These should include examining staff quality within the context of technical or academic competences and individual-level internal motivation towards public service delivery (public service motivation, or PSM). There is also the need to examine how the interplay of staff competence (technical and or academic) and the level of PSM produce different types of staff quality, with implications for service delivery outcomes.

2 Staff quality and service delivery outcomes: a conceptual framework

The central concept under consideration is staff quality. Conceptually, staff quality means different things to different people. Although the concept is rarely used in contemporary human resource literature, its implication in everyday usage connotes the idea of efficiency and effectiveness of employees to achieve results in a given context. In this study, however, staff quality is conceived as a two-dimensional concept which includes competence on the one hand and PSM on the other. Competence has been defined variously (Fernandez *et al.* 2012; Garside and Nhemachena 2013). However, within the context of this study, competence is understood as the measure of the individual's knowledge and skills acquired through education and other job-related trainings, and the individual's experiences gained in years of work. This conceptualisation is in line with Rodolfa *et al.* (2005) who identified three dimensions of competence in professional psychology: a foundation dimension, a functional competencies domain and the stages of professional development (Fouad *et al.* 2009).

The concept of PSM as a dimension of staff quality in this study rests on the idea that people have an altruistic tendency to make an impact in society, irrespective of the level of rewards they gain (Perry 1996). As explained by Perry, Hondeghem and Wise (2010), PSM is considered as the orientation individuals have towards work in public life in order to do good things for others and society. Paul and Robinson (2007) referred to PSM as non-materialistic motivation which is made up of social, intrinsic and moral motivations. The theoretical assumption is that the nature of public service is different from private sector business, hence any proposition that seeks to induce staff performance based exclusively on external motivations, as characteristic of private sector business, will jeopardise the essence of public collective interest. For example, within the context of public service, Grindle (1997) observed that external motivation through higher salaries does not necessarily lead to better performance. Kim and Vandenabeele (2010) further argued that PSM includes three main elements, oriented towards values, identity and those that are instrumental. Value-based motives for PSM relate to the extent to which individuals aspire to achieve public values through their actions and behaviours (Bozeman 2007). In addition, the affection and bonding the individual has towards a group of people that the individual intends to serve provides the identity motive for PSM. Crook and Ayee (2006), for instance, recognised that in spite of low pay and demoralising work conditions among health and sanitation workers in

Figure 1 **Conceptual framework**
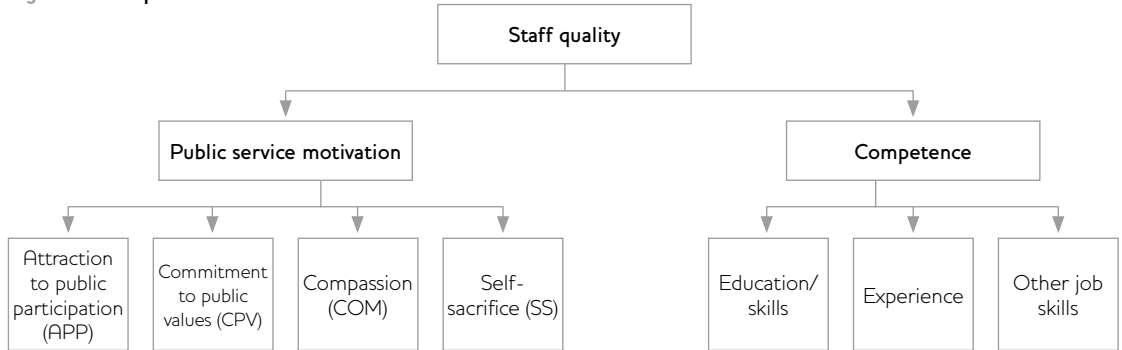
Source Author's own conceptualisation of staff quality.

Kumasi and Accra in Ghana, the effect of their organisational culture, induced to some extent by PSM, explained the relative success of service delivery. Their study demonstrates the important role of PSM in understanding staff quality and the extent to which they contribute to service delivery. In terms of measurement, as shown in Figure 1, PSM in this study is measured using four key indicators suggested by Kim *et al.* (2010) as derived from Perry (1996). The indicators include attraction to public policy issues, the extent of public values, the individual's level of compassion and a propensity for self-sacrifice.

The concept of service delivery as used in this study refers to basic social services provision which has implications for the wellbeing of people. In particular, the services discussed in this article are directly drawn from the 2015 Ghana District Ranking report (UNICEF and CDD-Ghana 2015). The District League Table (DLT) ranks all districts in Ghana in six key service areas with specific indicators for measurement.[3] The purpose of the DLT is to understand the level of wellbeing of people in these districts. It is important to acknowledge, however, that since Ghana is not practising full devolution at present, some of the direct service delivery systems such as health and education fall under the purview of other decentralised (deconcentrated) institutions such as the Ghana Education Service and the Ghana Health Service. Nevertheless, by its mandate, the District Assembly, through its committee system and the District/Municipal/Metropolitan Coordinating Council (DCC/MCC), has significant roles to play in service delivery. Some of these include providing facilities and resources to support other decentralised institutions to carry out their services. Also, DCCs design and implement medium-term development plans which include activities to promote service delivery in all the aforementioned service areas. The DLT shows districts that are performing fairly well and those that are not performing very well. Why is this so and what is the role of the District Assembly in coordinating these services?

3 Research design
There are two specific questions of interest to this current study. The first question seeks to examine the nature of staff quality and the second question seeks to explore the causal mechanism through which staff

quality contributes to service delivery outcomes. Given the nature of these questions, an appropriate methodological approach is a concurrent mixed methods research design that combines medium-N cross-sectional surveys with in-depth interviews. As explained by Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) and Creswell *et al.* (2003), concurrent mixed methods research is that which combines both qualitative and quantitative research approaches in a single project, giving equal priority to both approaches. In this instance, the survey is useful for describing the nature of staff quality, leading to the creation of a typology of staff quality. In addition, a qualitative analytical approach that draws on in-depth interviews with selected staff within the study districts and some regional officials is used to explore the causal relationship between staff quality and service delivery outcomes as currently described in the DLT, whilst paying detailed attention to all possible antecedent factors to staff quality and other confounding factors within the causal chain. Arguably, the notion of causality is complex and controversial (Sobel 2000); however, as suggested by Sloman (2005), there are a variety of ways to establish a causal mechanism as to how an event has occurred.

3.1 Sampling and data collection

A multi-stage sampling was used to select participants for this study. In the first instance, given the aim of the study, it was important to understand why service delivery outcomes were seen to have improved more in some districts than in others according to the DLT. On the basis of the 2015 DLT, two districts were purposively selected. They include the best performing district (Tema) and the worst performing district (Gomoa West). (See Figure 3 for district locations on the map of Ghana.) The second stage of the sampling involved simple random sampling of frontline staff of the two selected districts. In this instance, a sample frame was drawn from the two districts and random numbers were assigned to each staff member on the frame using Microsoft Excel formula (=rand).[4] Using the random numbers generated, 25 staff were selected from each district, making a total of 50 participants.[5] The 50 sampled respondents participated in a short survey that captured data on key socio-demographic variables and PSM. The PSM is a standardised measurement tool developed by Kim *et al.* (2010). It is a 17-item measurement index of PSM with four central dimensions.

A third stage of the sampling for in-depth interviews involved purposively selecting District Coordinating Directors or Chief Executives, Planning Officers and other senior staff to provide in-depth discussions on how the districts and service delivery have evolved since they were established. The process also involved undertaking in-depth interviews with purposively selected regional oversight officers, civil society institutions and an official from the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development who also provided secondary data on human resource deployment for decentralisation in Ghana.

For the purposes of this article, the functional units of the District Assembly structure are considered. As shown in Figure 2, the District Assembly has

Figure 2 Functional units of District Assembly and other agencies for service delivery in Ghana
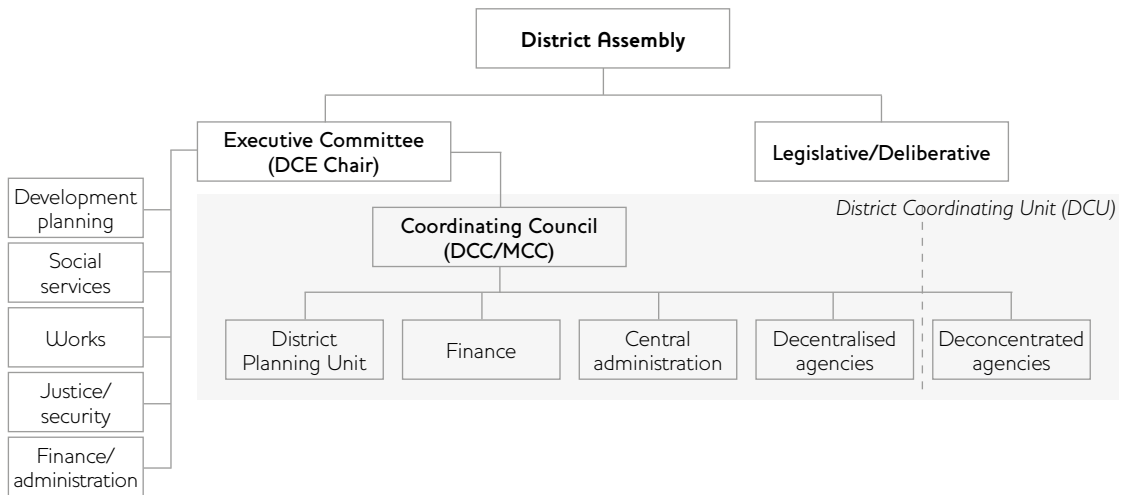

Source Constructed based on author's understanding of the structure of the District Assemblies in Ghana.

two central bodies. These include the legislative or deliberative body which is made up of 70 per cent elected members called Assembly Members, and 30 per cent government-appointed members. This is called the General Assembly. Through their periodic General Assembly sittings, they provide legislative and deliberative support to the entire system. The second unit is the Executive Committee. This body is the highest administrative decision-making body of the District Assembly. There are at least five functional committees within the Executive Committee. These include Development Planning, Social Services, Works, Justice and Security, and Finance and Administration. The Executive Committee is chaired by the District Chief Executive (DCE) who is appointed by the government and confirmed by at least a two thirds majority of Assembly Members. Other members of the Committee include the Presiding Member who is elected from the General Assembly, heads of respective decentralised agencies such as Health, Education and Agriculture and heads of other sub-committees of the Assembly. The District Coordinating Director who is an appointed civil/public servant is the secretary to the Executive Committee (Gilbert, Hugounenq and Vaillancourt 2012).

The central focus of study (shaded region of Figure 2) is the District Coordinating Unit (DCU) under the Executive Committee wing of the Assembly. The DCU provides the overall management of the Assembly's public services. Even though the District Chief Executive has the oversight of the DCU, the day-to-day management of the unit is led by the District Coordinating Director. He/she and all other staff of the DCU, including the planning, budget, finance and central administration staff, are employees of the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development. The DCU has total oversight of administration of the Assembly in terms of facilitating planning, budgeting and service delivery. It provides infrastructure and other service support to deconcentrated agencies such as health and education to function

Figure 3 Ghana: selected districts for comparative case analysis
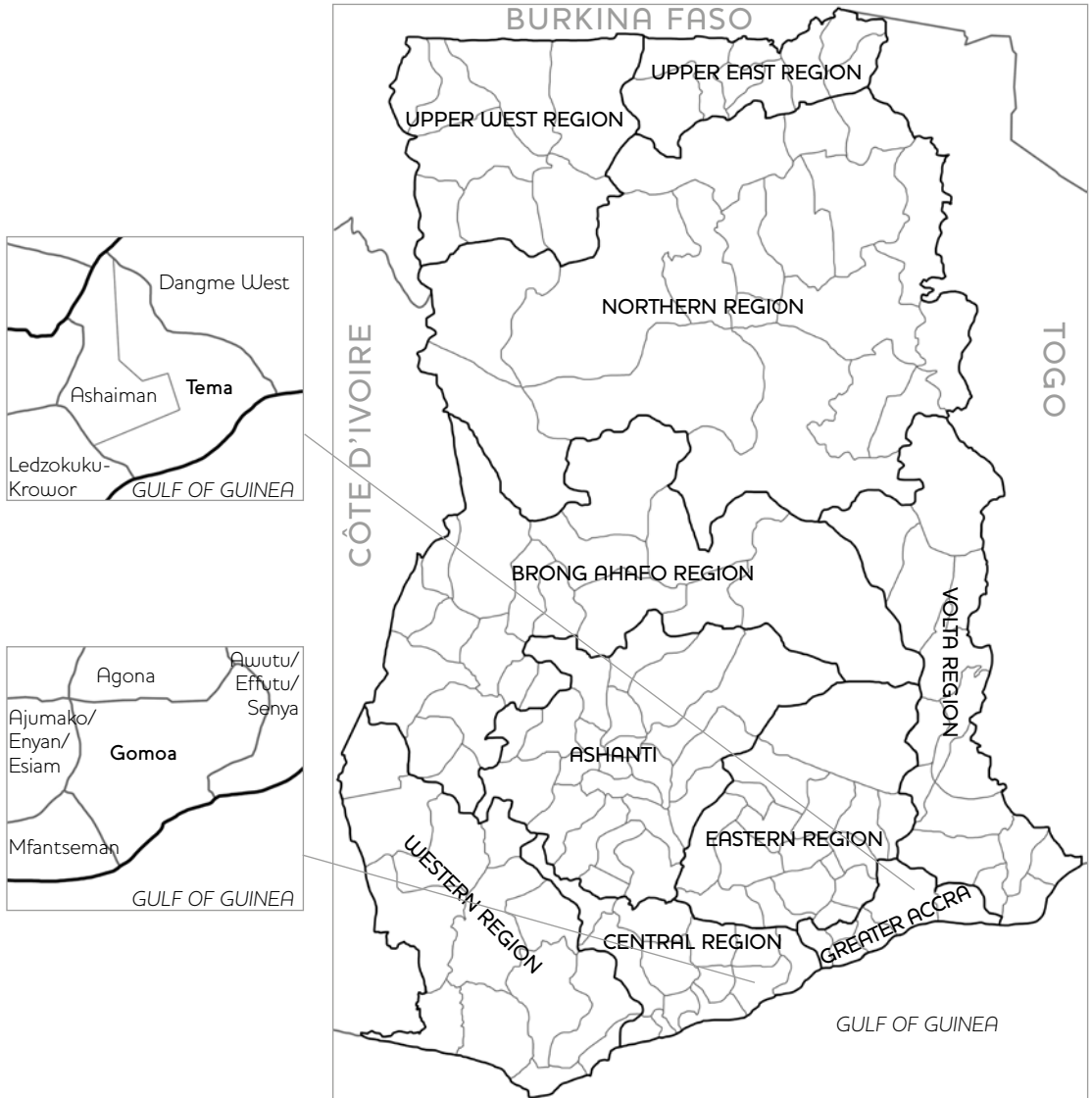
effectively (Gilbert *et al.* 2012). It also facilitates water and sanitation service provision throughout the district.

3.2 Data analysis
The first part of the study examines the nature of staff quality in the two selected study areas. In doing this, a descriptive analysis of key socio-demographic variables and PSM was conducted. The survey data on PSM was analysed using descriptive statistics. It also includes the aggregate score of each participant on PSM and competence. Competence was computed using three main sub-variables with dichotomous measures that include education, years of work experience and other job-related technical trainings. The scores were later used to construct a typological theory for the

Table 1 Public service motivation (PSM) score – Gomoa West (N=25)

PSM item	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
APP1	25	3.00	5.00	4.36	0.907
APP2	25	2.00	5.00	3.88	1.092
APP3	25	3.00	5.00	4.44	0.651
APP4	25	3.00	5.00	4.40	0.764
APP5	25	3.00	5.00	4.24	0.723
CPV1	25	3.00	5.00	4.36	0.810
CPV2	25	1.00	5.00	3.56	1.083
CPV3	25	1.00	5.00	4.16	1.248
CPV4	25	2.00	5.00	4.32	0.900
COM1	25	2.00	5.00	3.72	1.021
COM2	25	3.00	5.00	4.12	0.833
COM3	25	3.00	5.00	4.36	0.810
COM4	25	2.00	5.00	4.64	0.810
SS1	25	2.00	5.00	3.92	1.077
SS2	25	1.00	5.00	3.60	1.258
SS3	25	1.00	5.00	3.32	1.145
SS4	25	2.00	5.00	4.00	0.957

Source Author's own, based on analysis of data in this current study.
Notes Overall mean PSM = 4.08. APP – attraction to public participation;
CPV – commitment to public values; COM – compassion; and SS – self-sacrifice.

classification of different qualities of staff based on the interplay between individual scores on competence and PSM. Descriptive statistics were used in this case to determine the proportion of staff that fell into each of the categories. The second part of the study constructs a causal pathway that leads from antecedent conditions to the eventual outcome, using qualitative data from in-depth, key informant interviews. A theory-based analysis of how each type of staff quality contributes to the outcome of service delivery is conducted using stories associated with such classifications.

4 The nature of staff quality

4.1 Analysis of public service motivation (PSM)

A central objective of this study is to measure the PSM of District Assembly officers and to examine how PSM interacts with staff competence to produce different staff quality types within the selected District Assemblies. As indicated earlier, PSM was measured on four general dimensions which include attraction to public policy, public values, compassion and self-sacrifice, with a total of 17 items.[6] The mean score of each of the

Table 2 Public service motivation (PSM) score – Tema (N=25)

PSM item	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
APP1	25	1.00	5.00	4.00	1.291
APP2	25	1.00	5.00	4.16	1.106
APP3	25	1.00	5.00	4.00	1.118
APP4	25	1.00	5.00	4.04	1.136
APP5	25	2.00	5.00	3.96	0.935
CPV1	25	1.00	5.00	4.20	0.913
CPV2	25	1.00	5.00	4.32	0.627
CPV3	25	1.00	5.00	4.08	1.077
CPV4	25	1.00	5.00	4.28	0.936
COM1	25	1.00	5.00	4.08	1.115
COM2	25	1.00	5.00	3.88	1.481
COM3	25	1.00	5.00	3.80	1.190
COM4	25	1.00	5.00	4.32	1.345
SS1	25	1.00	5.00	3.72	1.370
SS2	25	1.00	5.00	3.56	1.356
SS3	25	1.00	5.00	3.60	1.291
SS4	25	1.00	5.00	3.52	1.503

Source Author's own, based on analysis of data in this current study.
Notes Overall mean PSM = 3.97. APP – attraction to public participation; CPV – commitment to public values; COM – compassion; and SS – self-sacrifice.

17 items[7] on a five-point scale was determined. First, a descriptive analysis of public service motivation shows that overall, mean PSM score was 4.03, which is an indication of fairly high PSM in both cases. However, there are variations with respect to the different dimensions, with the self-sacrifice dimension scoring the lowest. Furthermore, in Gomoa West, overall mean PSM score was 4.08, which is slightly higher than the mean PSM score of Tema which is 3.97. Tema is slightly low on the self-sacrifice dimension of PSM as well. Tables 1 and 2 provide detailed information on the PSM scores of both Gomoa West and Tema. The implication of this analysis is that PSM is generally high among respondents but slightly higher in Gomoa. However, PSM score alone does not tell us much about the nature of staff quality, unless it is linked up with competence level.

4.2 Analysis of staff competence

Competence has been conceptualised as three sub-variables in this study in line with Rodolfa *et al.*'s (2005) conceptualisation of competency. The variables used in this study include level of academic knowledge and

Table 3 **Descriptive analysis of competency variables**

Measurement		District	
Variable	Category	Tema N=25 (%)	Gomoa West N=25 (%)
Academic qualification	Below degree	0	10
	Degree and above	100	90
Work experience	Less than five years	48	72
	Five or more years	52	28
Other job-related training	No	20	44
	Yes	80	56

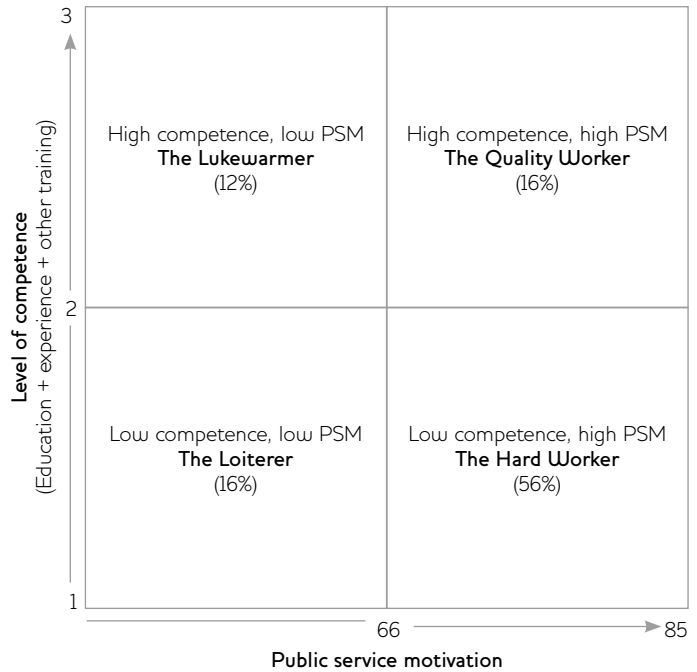Source Author's own, based on analysis of data in this current study.

skills, years of work experience on the job, and other specific job-related technical skills acquired. These three variables were re-categorised from the data into dichotomous variables. Education was categorised as degree and above (2), below degree (1). Work experience was categorised as above average years of work experience (2) and below average as (1). Other job-related trainings received was categorised as Yes (2) and No (1). An average score of competence was then computed. For example, if a respondent scored 2 on education, 1 on years of experience and 1 on other training, the aggregate score is 4. In order to fit into the model, the average of the score was determined as 4/3 = 1.3. A score below the midpoint of 2 was considered low.

As shown in Table 3, all (100) participants in Tema have attained a university degree or above. In Gomoa West also, almost all (90 per cent) had a degree and higher qualifications, except one participant. This was expected due to the nature of the sample (frontline officers). On-the-job work experience, however, varied significantly between the two cases. There are more experienced participants in Tema than in Gomoa, counting those with more than five years on the job. The mean work experience in Tema was 7.2 years with a maximum of 22 years, and in Gomoa was 5.1 years with a maximum of 13 years. In addition, the data show that there were more participants in Tema (80 per cent) who had received other specific job-related technical trainings than in Gomoa West (56 per cent). In summary, competency levels in Tema were much higher among participants than in Gomoa West. As indicated, competency alone without the right mix of PSM does not guarantee quality staff. Subsequent discussions will highlight the interactions between competence and PSM and the types of staff quality they produce.

4.3 Typological theory of staff quality
In determining variations in staff quality and its implications for service delivery, there was a need to classify research participants into subgroups based on their score on competence which is measured by the aggregate

Figure 4 Typology of staff quality in Gomoa West District (N=25)

High competence, low PSM
The Lukewarmer
(12%)

High competence, high PSM
The Quality Worker
(16%)

Low competence, low PSM
The Loiterer
(16%)

Low competence, high PSM
The Hard Worker
(56%)

Level of competence
(Education + experience + other training)

3

2

1

66 — 85

Public service motivation

Source Author's own.

Figure 5 Typology of staff quality in Tema Metropolitan Assembly (N=25)

High competence, low PSM
The Lukewarmer
(8%)

High competence, high PSM
The Quality Worker
(44%)

Low competence, low PSM
The Loiterer
(16%)

Low competence, high PSM
The Hard Worker
(32%)

Level of competence
(Education + experience + other training)

3

2

1

66 — 85

Public service motivation
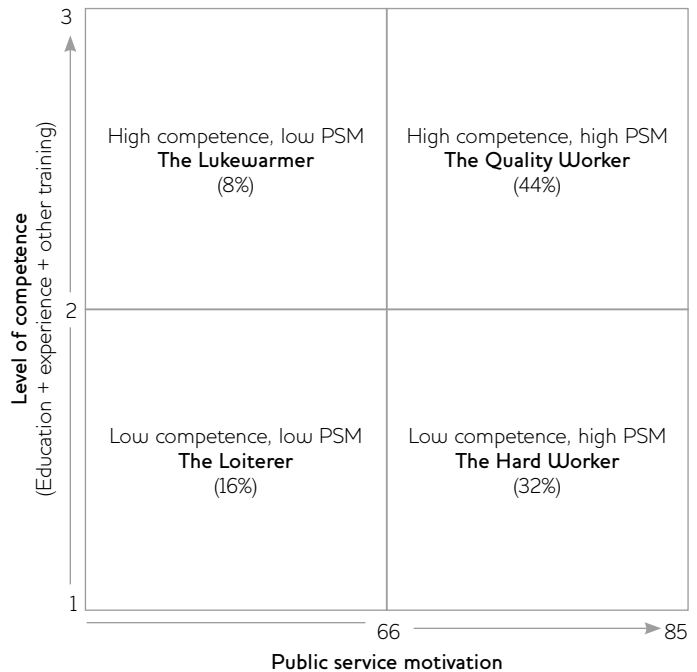
Source Author's own.

score on academic qualification, years of work experience on the job, and other related technical trainings, combined with individual scores on PSM. An appropriate analytic tool for this approach is typological theory (Bennett 2013; George and Bennett 2005; Cornelissen 2016; Fiss 2011). According to Bailey (1994), theory-based typologies can effectively be subjected to rigorous empirical testing using the quantitative models.

In this study, a two-dimensional figure with four different quadrants was developed to create types. As shown in Figures 4 and 5, the y-axis shows competence level, marked from 1 to 3 with a midpoint of 2, where scores below 2 were classified as low competence, and 2 and above were classified as high competence (academic qualification + years of experience + other technical training). The x-axis shows the PSM dimension marked from 0 to 85, with 85 as the highest possible score an individual can score on the scale of 1 to 5 for the 17 items, and 66 as the mean individual-level score in the distribution. All scores above the mean were considered high and those below the mean were considered low.

As shown in Figures 4 and 5, four different types of staff quality are noted in this study. These include those participants who were low on PSM and low on competence. This category is referred to as 'loiterer' staff in this study. Respondents in this category were very young staff with limited experience, knowledge and skills and who also did not demonstrate sufficient intrinsic motivation. Qualitative data show that many of them chose to work at the District Assembly as the last resort. There were 16 per cent (four each) of this type of staff in both Tema and Gomoa West. A higher proportion of such category of staff can jeopardise service delivery considerably. A second category of staff are those who were highly competent with all the requisite knowledge and skills, but with low PSM. This category is referred to as the 'lukewarmers'. These people were very apathetic towards their work with the Assembly and were not prepared to make sacrifices to see the work of the Assembly progress. There is a higher concentration of this category in Gomoa West (12 per cent) than in Tema (8 per cent).

A third category of staff are those who were high on PSM and low on competence. This category is referred to as the 'hard workers'. They have the drive, the energy and the heart to work to serve the people. Their scores on compassion and self-sacrifice were higher but they do not have the requisite experience and technical training to undertake activities that promote service delivery. There is a very high concentration of this category in Gomoa West (56 per cent) as compared to Tema (32 per cent). A fourth category of staff are those who were both high on competence and PSM. These were referred to as the 'quality workers'. In this study, this group are shown as the best quality of staff who can spur on service delivery at the sub-national level. They are individuals with the right mix of qualifications and experience and with a zeal for change in the respective District Assemblies. They demonstrated selflessness and willingness to improve performance, no matter the conditions under which they worked. As shown in Figures 5 and 6, Tema has a higher concentration of staff in this category.

Figure 6 Pathway from staff quality to better service delivery in Tema
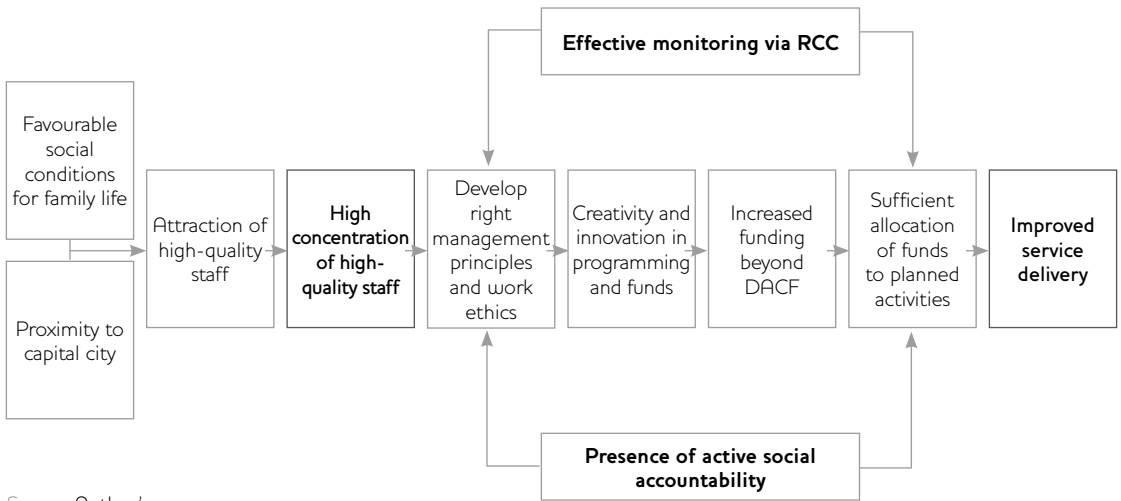
Source Author's own.

In summary, analysis of the nature of staff quality in this study shows that there are four different staff types working currently in District Assemblies in Ghana. They are 'loiterers', 'lukewarmers', 'hard workers' and 'quality workers'. The hypothesis is that a high concentration of quality workers with the right mix of competence and PSM will be more likely to move service delivery to an appreciable level. This proposition is discussed next, using process tracing to track the historical and proximate factors that might explain why Tema is believed to be performing better in service delivery than Gomoa West, according to the 2015 Ghana DLT (UNICEF and CDD-Ghana 2015).

4.4 Staff quality and service delivery: constructing a pathway

There is significant agreement among researchers that the type of human resource has implications for service delivery (Grindle 1997; Hoogendoorn and Brewster 1992; Robinson 2007). However, the process through which this occurs is vaguely discussed within the context of decentralisation and service delivery. The purpose of this section is to show the contribution of staff quality to the overall service delivery arrangements of District Assemblies and the extent to which different concentrations of distinct types of staff quality can partly explain why service delivery outcomes vary across District Assemblies.

It is acknowledged that the relationship between decentralisation and service delivery can be complex with several factors acting independently of each other or in conjunction to shape service delivery. However, the role of staff quality remains distinct and appears to be a major factor among the causal variables of service delivery in decentralisation. This can be demonstrated from our comparison of Tema and West Gomoa District Assemblies.

Tema Metropolitan Assembly was established in 2007 from the previous Tema Municipal Assembly. The current state of service delivery in Tema

Table 4 **Internally generated funding streams of Tema Metropolis**

Item	2015 Budget	Actual as at November 2015	2016 Projection
Rates	5,840,000	6,387,725.51	11,105,000.00
Fees and fines	7,197,400	3,898,473.38	7,340,973.00
Licences	5,788,500	5,304,806.64	8,297,500.00
Land	100,000	1,773,414.20	250,000.00
Rent	11,000	107,240.10	25,000.00
Investment	5,000	-	10,000.00
Misc.	279,584	110,797.96	305,000.00
Total	19,221,484	17,582,457.79	27,333,473.00

Source Tema Metropolitan Assembly (2016).

developed over a period of time. Historically, the commissioning of the Tema port in 1962, the Volta Aluminium Company in 1967 and other industries within the port enclave of Tema, and the activities of the Tema Development Corporation has led to the development of a modern social infrastructure. The presence of these social infrastructures such as schools, hospitals and recreational opportunities created favourable conditions for family life which are the basic issues people consider in accepting postings to different places. At the same time, Tema benefits from proximity to the capital city, Accra, which offers different official and personal activities. Thus, prior to becoming an autonomous district council in 1974, these two antecedent factors set Tema apart. The conjunctural effect of favourable social conditions for family life and proximity to the capital city made Tema attractive to job-seekers and highly competitive to get in. As shown in Figure 6, this has led to the attraction of high numbers of quality staff with the right mix of competence and PSM over time.

In this instance, the critical point for Tema was the high concentration of quality staff which led to the creation of the appropriate management principles and work ethics necessary for any productive activity. These management principles and work ethics are what Crook and Ayee (2006) and Grindle (1997) referred to as a positive organisational culture. Crook and Ayee (2006) argued that a positive organisational culture was an important factor in shaping service delivery among sanitation workers in Ghana. In the case of this study, it is argued that organisational culture is a creation of the right quality staff. Furthermore, it is observed that as a result of the development of sound organisational culture, some appreciable level of creativity and innovation was evident in the way the Tema Metropolitan Assembly developed its programmes and its fund-raising.

The District Medium Term Development Plan (DMTDP) of Tema and its Composite Budget for 2015 to 2017, for example, are valuable evidences of the extent to which creativity and innovation are

brought to bear on the planning process. As part of this creativity and innovation, Tema now has online services for many activities and a very functional website. In addition, even though Tema has several economic advantages to raise extra revenue beyond state transfers, the role of quality staff cannot be ignored in the process. There is evidence of diversified fund-raising activities which ordinarily many districts have ignored. To this extent, actual internally generated revenue for Tema for 2015 (GHS17,582,457.79) was more than five times actual government releases through the District Assembly Common Fund for the period. This represents more than 90 per cent of projected revenue for the period. See Table 4 for fund-raising streams of Tema Metropolis.

In addition to how staff quality contributed to improving fund-raising performance in Tema, the evidence also shows that the role of staff quality in harmonising sector level plans to provide support for other deconcentrated agencies such as education and health was critical. For instance, the Assembly's support for providing educational and health infrastructure is partly responsible for the improvement in basic educational outcomes and skilled deliveries. In effect, it is not surprising that a study of the DMTDP and actual service delivery activities of Tema shows that some appreciable level of funds has been made available for direct service delivery, and this has translated into the current state of service delivery outcomes within the Metropolis. However, it should also be noted that due to the proximity of Tema to the regional and national capital, Accra, there is consistent oversight supervision from the Regional Coordinating Council (RCC). The evidence suggests that Tema Metropolis is one of the most visited Assemblies in Ghana. This level of consistent oversight supervision also contributed to some extent in modifying the emphasis of performance towards service delivery. Similarly, the presence of different community-based organisations, faith-based institutions and other professional associations constantly puts some form of social pressure on officials to demand for quality services in the areas of water, sanitation and some road infrastructure services.

In Gomoa West, on the other hand, the district was only established in 2008 following the division of the erstwhile Gomoa District. This happened a year after Tema was elevated to a Metropolitan status. Unlike Tema, Gomoa West, with Apam as the capital, is largely a farming, fishing, mining and tourism district. The district lies almost equidistant between Accra (69km), the national capital, and Cape Coast (68km), the regional capital. The social infrastructure necessary for family life such as good schools for children of workers, good hospitals and other functional support systems is limited and this, coupled with the issue of proximity to both the regional and national capitals, made the district an unattractive destination. As a result, the concentration of high-quality staff was low. Some staff used the district as a conduit to better opportunities; many others have the right PSM but had limited competence in terms of experience and other technical training ('hard workers'). This resulted in a fairly weakly developed positive organisational culture, evident in the way development activities have been organised. In effect, the issue of

creativity in programme and fund-raising activities remained unresolved. For example, actual internally generated revenue for Gomoa stood at GHS291,612.80 in 2014, a situation that was blamed on staff capacity and the lack of sources of income. The following is an extract from the medium-term plan, which strengthens the argument about staff capacity and revenue mobilisation:

> The problem has been mainly due to low collection of property rates which would need much attention. Some measures taken to mitigate the challenge include capacity building programmes by the district administration for all revenue staff, area council chairpersons and development planning, finance and administration sub-committee chairpersons and recruitment of revenue guards to supplement the effort of the revenue collectors and regular interface meetings with stakeholders to identify challenges and concerns (Gomoa West District Assembly 2014: 18).

As a result of the difficulties in generating sufficient revenue beyond the DACF, the district is unable to allocate sufficient funding to planned activities leading to the current state of weak service delivery outcomes. Furthermore, as a result of limited staff quality in Gomoa West, the process of harmonising sector plans for effective service delivery appeared uncoordinated resulting in service delivery gaps in basic education outcomes, skilled deliveries, water and sanitation, security and overall governance indicators.

5 Conclusion

Human resource deployment for public service remains critical for overall service delivery in sub-national institutions. Whilst there is substantive debate about human resource capacity for specific decentralised social services such as health and education (Channa and Faguet 2016; Couttolenc 2012; Frumence *et al.* 2013) there is little debate about the generally low quality of staff who coordinate overall service delivery mechanisms in Ghana's decentralisation system. Hence, although many of the failures of decentralisation have been blamed on inadequate financing for service delivery it is argued in this study that, while the level of financial endowment of a District Assembly may be important in explaining variations in service delivery outcomes (Schulze and Suharnoko 2014), it is important to look beyond funding. Overall, this study posits that given all possible antecedent causes, staff quality determines how the overall institution is structured, which in turn sustains flawless processes (organisational culture) capable of providing a creativity and innovation in programming and revenue mobilisation that goes beyond the DACF. Such a capability is also necessary for implementing those plans, based on carefully prioritised activities, and is more likely to result in better service delivery outcomes. However, the process is dependent on the presence of an effective oversight monitoring system and a functional social accountability system.

In the wake of the unflinching quest to implement full devolution in Ghana, where all decentralised service institutions will operate directly

under the District Assembly (Government of Ghana 2010), the subject of staff quality for decentralisation must preoccupy contemporary debate. Moreover, given recent concerns about the extent to which staff can be externally motivated to improve service delivery amidst the dwindling fortunes of country-level economic growth (Perry and Hondeghem 2008), it has become imperative for public administration and human resource experts to look more closely into attracting employees with the demonstrable PSM and skillsets for decentralisation. This is, however, dependent on creating the right preconditions to attract quality workers. In the case of Gomoa, for example, the need for technical capacity building is imperative.

This current case study, whilst inevitably limited in scope, provides important insights into how staff quality affects service delivery. There is, therefore, the need for a broader national-level study into human resource capacities and service delivery in the District Assemblies of Ghana, focusing on PSM and competences.

Notes

1 School of Arts and Humanities, Edith Cowan University, Western Australia.
2 *Cf.* Steiner's study of Uganda (Steiner 2007).
3 The services and their indicators include education (pass rate for Basic Education Certificate Examination), sanitation (open defecation), rural water (rural water coverage), health (skilled delivery), security (police coverage) and governance (functional and organisational assessment tool minimum conditions) (see UNICEF and CDD-Ghana 2015 for details).
4 This is an MS-Excel spreadsheet formula used to assign random numbers to a list of items.
5 Given that this study is a pilot study and the nature of the population of frontline staff in the two districts, this sample size (approximately 35 per cent of the population), though relatively small, is considered appropriate according to the guidelines suggested by Hertzog (2008).
6 See Kim *et al.* (2010) for details on PSM measurement.
7 The items listed: APP1–5; CPV1–4; COM1–4 and SS1–4 in Tables 1 and 2 are PSM indicators based on questions in the questionnaire as shown in Kim *et al.* (2010). The acronyms stand for 'attraction to public participation', 'commitment to public values', 'compassion' and 'self-sacrifice', respectively.

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Improving Access to Maternal Health Care through Devolution in Western Kenya

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Abstract Devolution was greeted with great anticipation in Kenya as a means of bringing services closer to the people. However, since the implementation of the recent devolution reforms, criticism has mounted, with evidence of corruption, poor management, late payment of county staff and considerable disaffection among service providers, especially health professionals. In this study, we examine health-care users' and providers' perceptions of the effect of devolved health services on referral maternal health-care access in Kisumu and Uasin Gishu counties in Western Kenya. Our findings suggest that while health workers are dissatisfied, there is considerable satisfaction among users of referral maternal health services. Users largely associate their satisfaction with devolution. However, closer analysis suggests that improved access is not only linked to devolved health services but also to other developments both at the national level (health campaigns, increased mobile telephony) and county level (improved transportation, relocation of available funds).

Keywords: devolution, Kenya, maternal health care, access, citizen perception.

1 Introduction

Devolution, especially by central governments, transfers power to lower levels of administration, thereby reducing top-down approaches in decision-making (Bossert and Beauvais 2002; Naeem *et al.* 2012). Article 174 of the 2010 Kenya Constitution[1] stipulates the role of devolution as enhancement of self-governance, economic development and equitable sharing of local and national resources. Yet, according to Robinson (2007), the history of decentralisation reforms in Africa is full of bad examples, mostly due to the absence of meaningful local political process, over-centralisation of resources, weak local revenue base, lack of local planning capacity, and limited changes in legislation and regulations. Since the 1990s, there has been a shift in the aims of decentralisation – to enhance democratisation and reduce the role of central governments – as well as in its form, from deconcentration to

devolution (Conyers 2007). Still, the problem remains, with most central governments reluctant to devolve enough power to local governments for them to have a significant impact on service delivery.

Devolution affects every aspect of governance, which in turn affects the totality of development, including health. Recent devolution reforms in health care across Africa have displayed some interesting outcomes, although a key undercurrent remains: central governments' reluctance to let go of power. For instance, although health-care services have been devolved in Uganda, the national government still controls the budgets and provides conditional grants for the promotion of primary health care (Bossert and Beauvais 2002: 24). The implication of such controls is that the communities and administrators at local levels have limited say over the operations of health-care services that affect them. Looking at cases of what he calls 'deep democratic decentralization', Mehrotra (2006: 270) points out to the more successful cases of Benin, Guinea and Mali, where decentralisation of primary health-care services led to increased access to affordable health services, which in turn increased immunisation rates and reduced infant mortality. Part of this success was the fact that in all three cases, the state remained a relatively weak central authority, that could not support public health services in the early 1980s. More recently, Inkoom and Gyapong (2016) highlight that despite advances in the implementation of more ambitious health-care decentralisation plans in Ghana, Malawi and Tanzania, in all three countries policymaking is still based at the centre and local governments report a high dependence on central government for funds (usually earmarked), allowing for central government interference.

As a signatory to most international and continental agreements on improving access to maternal health, Kenya has launched several health campaigns. However, the country failed to achieve UN Millennium Development Goal 5 (to reduce maternal deaths by 75 per cent between 1990 and 2015) and Kenyan mothers still experience many maternal health-care challenges including complications during pregnancy and childbirth, as well as HIV/AIDS-related issues (Maoulidi 2011). This problem is even more acute in some areas, with the centralised decision-making system in Kenya being blamed for regional health disparities (MoH 2006). Still, there is a noted reduction of maternal deaths and the country remains committed to the improvement of maternal health through the implementation of various strategic initiatives including the Free Maternity Services programme and Beyond Zero Campaign.[2]

Before the promulgation of the 2010 Kenyan Constitution, the Ministry of Health (MoH) had already committed to decentralising its services in order to provide increased local-level authority in decision-making, resource allocation and management of health care. The aim was to involve communities in the management and implementation of essential clinical and public health services (MoH 2002, 2006). The 2010 Constitution, which transferred the health service delivery function to the newly created 47 counties in 2013 (Baker et.al 2014), provided

an opportunity through a constitutional framework for an ongoing ministerial devolved health initiative. The health-care responsibilities that were devolved include community health, primary health care and county referral services. The national government retained the responsibility of national referral services. Unfortunately, there have been various challenges including an unprecedented number of strikes by health-care workers: there have been more than two dozen strikes since the devolution of health services in 2013 (Masika 2016). Cheeseman, Lynch and Willis (2016) caution that time is vital in assessing the full impact of devolution in Kenya. Studies on devolved health services in Kenya have mainly focused on the job satisfaction of health workers, devolution as a strategic approach to health care, and the implementation processes (Baker *et al.* 2014; Oyugi 2015; Mwamuye and Nyamu 2014). Overall, most studies provide a general overview of the effects of devolved governments on health care. Our literature review did not find any study that focused on access to referral maternal health care.

This study fills this gap by exploring the perceptions of maternal health-care users, health providers and administrators on how devolution of health services affects access to referral prenatal and postnatal maternal health care in Kisumu and Uasin Gishu county hospitals. A United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) report (2014) indicates that 15 of the total 47 counties in Kenya account for 98.7 per cent of total maternal deaths in the country. Within these, Kisumu County ranks seventh in this list with an infant mortality rate of 249/100,000 and a maternal mortality ratio of 597. While Uasin Gishu county is not within the top 15, it was chosen alongside Kisumu because both are urban counties in the Western Kenya region and they are both cosmopolitan. Besides, Uasin Gishu and Kisumu are the only two counties with a teaching and referral hospital to which the county hospitals across Nyanza, Western and North Rift regions of Kenya refer maternal users. The main maternal health challenges in Kisumu County include poor access to reproductive health services, poor quality of services, a high number of unskilled birth deliveries (Maoulidi 2011) and HIV/AIDS. The county referral health facility is Kisumu County Hospital, but the county also hosts the Jaramogi Oginga Odinga Referral Hospital, a national referral facility. The Uasin Gishu County Hospital is the county referral facility and the Moi Teaching and Referral Hospital hosts the Riley Mother and Baby Hospital, a national maternal referral facility. The main maternal health challenges in Uasin Gishu include poor health systems, poor management skills of health workers and poor community structures.

In this article, we examine health-care users' and providers' perceptions of the effect of devolved health services on access to referral maternal health care in these two counties. We start by describing what we mean by 'access', the relationship between health-care users and health-care systems, breaking this concept into four dimensions – availability, accessibility, affordability and acceptability – which guided us in data collection, analysis and interpretation. In the subsequent section, we

outline our methodology, followed by a discussion of our findings across the four dimensions of access. Opposite to findings from previous studies on users' perceptions of the quality of local government service provision (see Conyers 2007), and health providers having generally a negative view of devolution, we found that users' perceptions are overwhelmingly positive. We conclude by stating that while other health-related developments at national level (namely national health campaigns) have improved health-care access and played a role in users' perception of the effects of devolution, county-level decisions have also contributed significantly to the perceived positive effects of devolution in referral maternal health care.

2 Accessing health care: a framework
Worldwide, access is an essential element to the performance of health-care systems (Levesque, Harris and Russell 2013). In this study, we use a conceptual framework that builds on longstanding descriptions of access to health services, drawing on the work of Penchansky and Thomas (1981) and further developed by Peters *et al.* (2008) and McIntyre, Thiede and Birch (2009). Like Penchansky and Thomas (1981), we think of access as a multidimensional concept that summarises a set of more specific dimensions describing the fit between the user and the health-care system. The interaction between these dimensions determines access, even though each dimension is distinct and focuses on a set of clearly distinguishable issues (McIntyre *et al.* 2009). Ultimately, this framework provided us not only a structure to help our data collection, but also a conceptual lens to interpret the data collected on how devolved health services are perceived by health providers and users to impact access to referral maternal health care.

In this framework, we incorporate four dimensions of access: availability, accessibility, affordability, and acceptability. By availability, we mean having the right type of health services available to those who need them, that is, supplying the appropriate health-care providers and/or services in the right place and at the right time to meet the prevailing needs of the population. In accessibility, we refer to the relationship between the location of supply and the location of users, taking into consideration user transportation resources and travel time, distance and cost. Affordability deals with the relationship between the price of services and the willingness and ability of users to pay for those services. Finally, acceptability deals with how responsive health service providers are to social and cultural expectations of individual users and communities.

3 Methodology[3]
For this study, we adopted a mixed methods approach combining initial observation of hospitals with qualitative interviews with a range of stakeholders and a focus on perceptions. For the former, we engaged in participant observation to study and record the everyday life in spaces and places of interface between health-care users and providers, and for the latter we mostly made use of in-depth semi-structured interviews. As such, we relied mostly on ethnographic methods. Ethnography has

evolved from its traditional application in anthropology to be used in fields such as policy, design and engineering, helping us provide rich explanations of the *hows* and *whys* of peoples' lives (Button 2000: 322). Ethnographic health studies focus on the health challenges that face people and provide frameworks of how and why people access or do not access health care. We adopted this approach to understand the *whys* and *hows* of existing perceptions of the effect of devolution on access to referral maternal health care. Using key ethnographic methods such as participant observation and qualitative interviews allowed us to provide narratives, verbatim reporting, and descriptions of what we heard and observed regarding the effect of devolved health services on access to maternal health care in the two counties. Ultimately, what emerged were the peoples' interpretations of their own health world.

We collected data sequentially in three phases, with each phase lasting about three weeks. The first phase involved participant observation of prenatal and postnatal referral contexts at Kisumu and Uasin Gishu county hospitals. The initial unstructured nature of our participant observation allowed us to reduce potential researcher biases and assumptions by 'looking around' without a set agenda. In this first stage, a series of issues became salient, namely, issues related to facilities and supplies, training and motivation of medical staff, and application and effectiveness of referral policies. We used these issues as themes to guide a more structured observation in a second phase of our research, together with informal conversations with health-care providers and users. Subsequently, guided by what emerged from the second phase, we proceeded to develop semi-structured questions that guided qualitative interviewing (including in-depth interviews) of key informants. We also made use of our observations to select key respondents, as well as to triangulate their answers not only with themselves, but also with our observations.

We purposively selected 32 key informants for different purposes:

- To provide us with individual perspectives on the *hows* and *whys* of the perceived influence of devolved health services on access to referral maternal health care, we interviewed eight maternal health users receiving care at Jaramogi Oginga Odinga Referral Hospital and at Riley Mother and Baby Hospital having been referred from Kisumu and Uasin Gishu county hospitals respectively (four from each hospital);

- To provide us with the view from a managerial perspective, we interviewed eight national and county-level medical health officers and four hospital administrators from the two counties;

- To provide us with vital perspectives (and perceptions) on the effects of devolved health services on access to referral maternity health care, we interviewed 12 health-care providers, namely, two doctors, two nurses, and two midwives/birth attendants from each county.

Data collected from different sources and by different methods were triangulated to strengthen the validity of findings on contextual issues specific to each county. The issues included perceptions on leadership, governance and effectiveness of devolved health services policies, especially those related to access to referral maternal health care. The overall theme was access (using the 4As framework, as detailed in Section 2). Field notes emerging from jottings made over six weeks of observations and recorded interviews were systematically transcribed, cleaned, manually coded, and thematically categorised. We made use of this data to analyse the explanations, interpretations, examples, cases and illustrations of the perceived effects of devolution on availability, accessibility, affordability and acceptability of referral maternal health care. We focused our interpretation of the data on how and why devolved leadership and governance is perceived to affect access to referral maternal health care.

4 Unpacking access: initial findings

This study investigated perceptions on the influence of devolved health services on referral maternal health-care access in Kisumu and Uasin Gishu county hospitals and the origins of those perceptions. Overall, the study indicated mixed perceptions: while nearly all maternal health users agreed that devolved health-care services have a positive impact on access to referral maternal health care, health-care providers expressed various misgivings. Devolution of health services has spawned a widespread perception among users that health services, including referral maternal health care is now closer to *mwananchi* (citizens) in terms of availability, accessibility, affordability and acceptability. These positive perceptions of improved access to referral maternal health care have led to an influx of patients, an indicator of acceptability of devolved health care by users. But the increase in patients has not been matched with expansion of facilities and human resources, two factors that partly explain the misgivings of health providers. Finally, and similar to what D'Arcy and Cornell (2016) suggest, some health-care providers think devolution has 'devolved' corruption to the county level. This perception is further strengthened by local newspaper stories and television programmes featuring the affluent lives of county government officers, difficult to maintain on their current salaries.

Despite positive perceptions of the effects of devolution on access to referral maternal health care, there are still big challenges including fiscal dependence of county governments on the national government and the delay in fiscal remittances from the national government. Over the period of data collection, remittances were late by eight months. County governments in both Kisumu and Uasin Gishu continued to offer free services using funds from other sources, an advantage of autonomous decision-making by county governments. This finding agrees with Cheeseman *et al.*'s (2016) argument that Kenya is a unique case in which central government may not manipulate county governments given the dynamism of power relations and political actors, whose presence in the succeeding governments is highly determined by their ability to campaign for new powers and sources of revenue.

A key finding in this study is that users perceive devolved health systems to have positively influenced access to referral maternal health care. This is contrary to some of the studies on effects of devolution on health care, particularly maternal health care (see Bourbonnais 2013), where service providers remain insensitive to the needs of women with respect to cultural and socioeconomic demands. Yet, we found that although users' perceptions strongly associate devolved health services with improved referral maternal health care, there are other factors playing a role in this (real and perceived) improvement. Still, while the policies behind some of these factors originated at central government (for instance, the Free Maternity Services programme and the Beyond Zero Campaign), the implementation happened because of county governments choosing to do so. In other words, county-level decisions had a significant role to play in the perceived positive effects of devolution as regards to access to referral maternal health care.

Finally, users in Uasin Gishu county reported one negative implication of devolution: tribal discrimination of minorities. The perceived discrimination emanates from respondents associating devolved governance with tribal conglomeration. Health-care providers and administrators indicated a difference between this perception and the actual situation, indicating that priority service is provided only on the basis of level of emergency. As Cheeseman *et al.* (2016) observe, though the introduction of devolution was expected to diffuse Kenya's chronic ethnic conflicts, the findings of this study suggest that this is not the case. We now present the specific findings of this study along the 4As of health-care access: availability, accessibility, affordability, and acceptability.

4.1 Availability

Maternal health patients perceive devolution of health services to have improved availability of referral maternal health care. This availability seems to have increased the number of users seeking services in public health facilities. The situation is still far from satisfactory, but it is a major step from the old centralised health system in which commodities were almost always unavailable. There are no new health facilities in either Kisumu or Uasin Gishu though there were visible repairs and improvements on already existing facilities. None of the study respondents referred to an increase in facilities since devolution. However, they did indicate that with devolved health services, referral maternal health-care services are more readily available than before:

> *You cannot compare what is happening today with what was happening before. Before the new constitution, it was very difficult to come here. You could die at the district hospital as the doctors tried to transfer you. I say this from experience. My sister died in my arms at the UGC Hospital three days after the doctor told her that they were going to refer her.* [She chokes with emotion as tears welled up in her eyes.] *The first day they said there was no bed space in the referral hospital. The second day they said there was a bed but there was no ambulance. The third day my sister died. I was so scared when I was*

> *admitted in that same hospital for delivery, but I was happily surprised when*
> *they brought me here so fast in a brand-new ambulance.* (Twenty-five-year-
> old postnatal user, Riley Mother and Baby Hospital[4])

Closely associated with improved availability of referral services is
availability of ambulance services which was commonly cited by both users
and providers. Maternal care patients perceived ambulance services to have
greatly improved with devolution. Observations at the four health facilities
corroborated this positive perception about the availability of referral
maternal health care. During the course of the study, many ambulances in
good condition brought or took away patients to the maternal health-care
sections of both county and national referral facilities. Follow-up interviews
confirmed that the ambulances delivered women who required emergency
health care from lower level health facilities and even from homes.

Patient respondents attributed the availability of ambulances to the
ability of county governments to access and make decisions over available
resources, and so did other respondents. Although other bodies also
operate ambulances across the country, and some of them are donated,
a health official indicated that the Uasin Gishu county government has
bought many ambulances for both county and sub-county health facilities:

> *Before devolution, there were no funds at the local level to do this so ambulances*
> *were rare. And you see we in the county health departments can make decisions*
> *on whether to buy ambulances and how to use and maintain them.* (In-depth
> interview, Uasin Gishu County Officer[5])

Availability of medicines was also perceived to have improved with
devolution. Both interviews and observations revealed that most
maternal health-care patients were able to get the prescribed drugs from
the hospital pharmacy:

> *I notice that the pharmacy is well stocked. There are various kinds of medicines.*
> *An expectant woman limps to the pharmacy. Her lips are dry and cracked and*
> *she appears tired. 'Sema mama [yes ma'am]?' asks the man. 'Wamesema*
> *unipatie hii dawa [They said you give me this drug]?', she replies, handing*
> *over piece of paper to the man. […] The man gives the woman the drugs and*
> *she walks away. Other patients come, give a piece of paper to the pharmacists,*
> *pick drugs and go.* (Fieldnotes, Uasin Gishu County Hospital)

Some of the patients interviewed noted that initially most hospitals
lacked enough and readily available medicine and patients would always
be given prescriptions to purchase drugs from private pharmacies.
Referral maternal health-care users said that they can now get many, in
some cases all, the medicines that they require.

> *Things have really improved since devolution. Now, you can be sure that you*
> *will get the medicines that the doctor prescribes for you. Before, it was like a*
> *miracle to get these medicines here in the hospital. That is why many patients*
> *only came to this hospital as a last resort.* (In-depth interview with male
> partner of a postnatal user, Uasin Gishu County Hospital[6])

While patients overwhelmingly opined that devolution has improved availability of referral maternal health care, health-care providers were not so unanimous:

> *The perception out there is that devolution has been a magic bullet to all that ails public health services. This perception is mainly spearheaded by the county governments. Devolution has worsened some aspects of health services. For example, the capacity of this health facility has not been expanded to meet the increased referral maternal health-care demand that has been occasioned by free maternal health care policy*. (Administrator, Kisumu County Hospital[7])

However, the perceptions of health-care providers seem to relate more to their working conditions and environments than to referral maternal health-care access. They noted that, though there is a significant increase in maternal health-care patients being referred from lower public and private health facilities, this is not matched by expansion of the needed facilities and human power. This was clear at both the Riley Mother and Baby Hospital and the Jaramogi Oginga Odinga Referral Hospital where the maternity wards accommodated more than their capacity. Mothers and their children were forced to share beds. This was mainly attributed to both devolution and implementation of policies that encourage maternal patients to seek services in public health facilities:

> *There is this general widespread notion that services are cheaper, free and better in the health facilities run by the counties. While this may not be necessarily true, this notion encourages users to seek prompt medical attention at various public health facilities*. (Hospital superintendent, Kisumu County Hospital[8])

In spite of this observation, some health-care providers shared perceptions with users that devolved health services have improved the availability of supplies and ambulance services.

4.2 Accessibility

Devolution in general and devolution of health services in particular has had a visible impact on accessibility to maternal health care. For instance, we observed a remarkable improvement in the means of transportation and condition of roads, both of which directly influence physical and cognitive accessibility to maternal health care. Although the four health facilities under study have always been available, physical accessibility due to poor infrastructure created inaccessibility. Respondents indicated that there is improvement and construction of existing and new road networks by county governments.

The two county governments have also contributed significantly to improved physical accessibility to referral maternal health care through provision of ambulances. As mentioned already in the previous section, both user and service providers averred that ambulances are now more available than before devolution. A patient narrated how she and her baby were quickly ferried by ambulance from the Uasin Gishu County Hospital to the Riley Mother and Baby Hospital on referral. Her baby

had developed breathing problems and needed support. This patient's assertion was corroborated by a health official in Kisumu:

> These days we have ambulances taking patients from mashinani [grass roots] to the referral health facilities. In terms of referral maternal health, ambulances have become available and mwananchi – hata yule mama wa huko ndani, [the common person, including that woman at the grass roots] is able to access this referral hospital. Devolution has greatly improved health facilities and services. (In-depth interview, Kisumu County Officer[9])

Motorcycle taxis locally known as *boda boda* have had a huge positive impact on physical access to referral maternal health care. The *boda bodas* have the ability to penetrate to the remotest parts of the countryside along footpaths that even the hardiest of four-wheel-drive vehicles cannot access. Both patients and service providers hailed the presence of these two-wheeled taxis as a game changer in the provision of timely maternal health care. The role of *boda bodas* surpasses that of ambulances not only because *boda bodas* can access areas that are impassable by cars but also because many taxi operators have personal relations with their patients which is beneficial to maternal health-care access. Nearly all maternal user respondents indicated that they have personal *boda boda* operators that they can call on any time, day or night. Although the *boda bodas* are not part of devolved health services, the conducive environment created by devolution has allowed them to prosper, helping access to maternal health care. According to the World Bank (2016), between July 2015 and May 2016, Kenya improved 21 positions (from 129th to 108th) in terms of ease in doing business. In the same survey, Uasin Gishu and Kisumu were ranked first and second most investor-friendly counties in the country. In both counties, there are *boda boda* associations registered with the county government, which the county governments use to mobilise the *boda boda* riders for civic education on road safety.

Access to referral maternal health care has also had a major boost from the explosion of mobile telephony in Kenya. According to the Communications Authority of Kenya (2016), mobile penetration hit 90 per cent in June 2016. Besides the most common use of mobile phones to call taxis to take patients to hospital and to transfer money electronically to people in need of health services, the digital revolution has provided a number of mobile-based health-care services, thanks to information and communications technology (ICT) innovations. Mobile health services and innovations are fast emerging in Kenya such as: mHealth Kenya, a national company overseeing and managing mobile technology health projects; Daktari 1525, which enables over 25 million Safaricom subscribers access to doctors any time to receive expert advice on various health conditions; MedAfrica, a free mobile phone application that allows Kenyans to access health-care-related information (including personalised first aid and reproductive health guidance, as well as access to reputable doctors and hospitals in their area); and the Health Information Technology (HIT) run by the Academic Model Providing Access to Healthcare (AMPATH), at

Moi University, Moi Teaching and Referral Hospital and a consortium of North American academic health centres led by Indiana University working in partnership with the Government of Kenya. HIT provides automated patient-specific care suggestions and reminders. Although this digital revolution is independent of devolved health services, the ubiquity of the mobile telephone enables users to access maternal health literally at the click of a button.

4.3 Affordability

Users of maternal health care across Uasin Gishu and Kisumu counties perceive affordability of referral maternal health care to have improved with devolved health services. All respondents were unanimous that the average cost of prenatal and postnatal services was cheaper in the devolved health system than in the old centralised one. While the Beyond Zero Campaign and the policy on free maternal health care in all public health facilities in Kenya is responsible for this, county governments play a key role as devolved decision-making processes allow them to allocate resources to the health facilities even when the National Treasury delays the release of health-care resources to county governments. Both counties grapple with the challenge of inadequate and delayed funding from the national government. At Kisumu County Hospital, we learnt that the last disbursement received was eight months ago. The hospital is forced to use credit, cost-sharing and the Supply Systems Facility Improved Fund. This delay and inadequacy directly affects acceptability of referral maternal health-care services due to low staff motivation, inadequate commodities supply and infrastructure. Cheeseman *et al.* (2016) argue that Kenya is a unique case in which the central government may not manipulate the county governments given the dynamism of power relations and political actors, whose presence in the succeeding governments is highly determined by their ability to campaign for new powers and sources of revenue. There are efforts, however, for some politicians to be close to the ruling government, and when this happens, the focus is not only on electoral votes but development projects that the central government can afford for the counties.

On administration and management of health facilities, health managers and patients in both Kisumu and Uasin Gishu county hospitals said that devolution has eliminated unnecessary bureaucracies that were bottlenecks to referral maternal health-care access. Some respondents said that the devolved health system had less barriers compared to the old centralised system:

> *I was referred to this hospital from a lower health facility. At first I thought I would be sent away the way it used to be. However, when I arrived, I was quickly attended to. I will happily return for the next appointment because I know I will be treated well.* (Prenatal user, Kisumu County Hospital[10])

Hospital management and personnel-related improved health-care access to devolved governance highlights issues such as ease of management of hospital activities without necessarily consulting the

national government, easy planning and budgeting, quick decision-making, ability to prioritise key areas of urgent need, time management, better monitoring, supervision, more accountability and public participation. An official said:

> In my view, there is improved governance in health-care provision in general because we can make decisions here. This is in spite of financial constraints necessitated by late disbursement of funds from the national government. At the county level we are able to quickly make decisions on what priority health issues to focus on and to allocate these funds without the red tape that characterised the situation before devolution. And of course county governments are more closer [sic] to the people and are therefore able to identify the really [sic] needs of their communities. (In-depth interview, Kisumu County Health Officer[11])

Whereas the cost of maternity services is presumed to be free, user respondents mentioned that they have to cater for costs such as transport, cotton wool and drugs. A prenatal user said:

> I was once detained at a hospital due to delivery charges. Now I am not worried about delivering in hospital because of high costs. However, I have to have some money for my fare and basic supplies such as cotton wool needed in preparation for delivery. (Referred prenatal user, Jaramogi Oginga Odinga Referral Hospital[12])

Use of mobile phones to call taxis and the facility of mobile money transfers which have already been mentioned also help to make services affordable. With extended families and communalism relatively strong in Kenya, individuals can now quickly reach out to their relatives and friends for financial support. *Boda boda* transport is also cheap compared to taxis, charging about a quarter of what vehicles charge.

4.4 Acceptability

Devolved health services have also had an overall favourable perceptual influence on the acceptability of referral maternal health care. Acceptability is based upon the adequacy of services, infrastructure, equipment, commodities and human resources to local social and cultural expectations. The influx is one of the indicators of acceptability of devolved health care. Yet, the increase in users has not been matched with expansion of facilities and human resources, two factors that partly explain the negative perceptions of health providers regarding the impact of devolved health services on access to referral maternal health care.

While a good number of patients seemed satisfied with the referral maternal care offered in both Kisumu and Uasin Gishu counties, health-care workers at the national referral hospitals are not comfortable with the situation essentially because they are overworked. The proportion of doctors and nurses are important indicators of a county's capacity to provide adequate primary health-care coverage. With the deficits of medical personnel noted in Kisumu and Uasin Gishu counties, the workload remains high yet the number of patients has continued to increase. This breeds mixed reactions from patients

and health-care workers on levels of acceptability of referral maternal health-care services. At the Riley Mother and Baby Hospital, for instance, the number of babies born daily has risen from an average of 30 to 60 babies but the staffing remains unchanged. While the nurses are stationed either at the emergency, labour ward, prenatal wards, NICU[13] or postnatal ward, at both Uasin Gishu and Kisumu County Hospitals we observed nurses in charge of maternity wards attending to other stations such as emergency labour wards and postnatal wards. Some respondents noted that not only has there been an improvement in community health centres and clinics, but where services are not adequate, access to referral services to county and national hospitals is now easy. A respondent observed:

> With devolution, a local dispensary in my village has been improved and maternal health services introduced, hence, I can secure prenatal services within my village on time. This time round I had complications with my pregnancy and I was quickly referred to Kisumu. (Prenatal user, Kisumu County Hospital[14])

However, at Kisumu County Hospital focused observation revealed that patients overwhelmed primary care centres in both post-labour and labour wards. There was only one operation theatre, no ambulance dedicated to the maternal wing and the patients outnumbered the beds. We witnessed two or three mothers and their children at the postnatal ward sharing a bed with no mosquito net. One user respondent observed:

> Whatever is hanging here as mosquito nets are mere decorations, they are torn and mosquitos have littered every corner of this ward. To make it worse, I have witnessed medical staff attending to us with borrowed equipment. (Postnatal user, Kisumu County Hospital[15])

Devolved health services face a huge increase of patient self-referral, putting a lot of strain on staff. We heard that patients who refer themselves to county or national referral hospitals are never turned back because childbirth is always an emergency situation. But it would seem that the strain effect depends on the cadre of staff:

> For the doctors, most of us who are teaching with Moi University, we like it when there are many patients because we want our students to learn. And as you know our learning method is problem based (PBL) so the more cases the better for us. Our students are able to encounter all the different kinds of emergencies that a mother or a neonate can have. Actually in this hospital you find more doctors than nurses. You can find that you are doing a ward round with six doctors but there is only one nurse. (Medical doctor, Riley Mother and Baby Hospital[16])

According to the doctor, the solution lies in enhancing 'down referral' where expertise from the national hospital is posted to train staff in lower level hospitals and also in improving facilities and equipment and enhancement of supplies in lower level hospitals.

Finally, another negative implication of devolution is a deepening of cultural and religious differences within counties (KPMG International 2013): tribal discrimination of minorities was perceived to negatively affect access to referral maternal health services in Uasin Gishu county. The perceived discrimination emanates from respondents associating devolved governance with tribal conglomeration. As Cheeseman *et al.* (2016) observe, though the introduction of devolution was expected to diffuse Kenya's chronic ethnic conflicts, the findings of this study suggested that this is not the case. Yet, devolution in Kenya largely followed ethnic lines and as D'Arcy and Cornell (2016) observe elsewhere, some ethnic minorities within some of the counties feel marginalised. This may explain why some maternal health users perceived devolved health services to fan tribalism. Some respondents believed that the dominant tribe in a county receives better services than 'outsiders':

> *In these hospitals, there is* ubaguzi wa ukabila *[discrimination based on tribe]. For those of us who do not belong here* [are not indigenous], *devolution means that we do not get good services if we are not in our home counties. In those other hospitals, all the doctors and the nurses are local people. One feels out of place there.* (In-depth interview at Riley Mother and Baby Hospital[17])

5 Conclusion

There are clear differences in the general perceptions of the effect of devolved health services on access to referral maternal health care in Kenya. If at one end health workers and other providers seem discontented with devolved health services, at the other end there seems to be considerable satisfaction among users of referral maternal health services and their partners. Users largely perceived county governments to have improved access to referral maternal health care through a series of actions, namely: speeding up referral services, as well as by providing medicines and ambulance services that were previously not available (availability); improving transport to and communication with both county and referral hospitals (accessibility); and supporting the free maternity health-care service even when money is not remitted from the national government promptly (affordability). While the increasing number of referral maternal health patients is perceived to have increased tremendously, there are still some problems of acceptability, including the deepening of tribal discrimination along ethnic lines in provision of services.

Resource mobilisation at the county level and the opportunity for quick decisions have contributed significantly to the perceived positive effects of devolution in referral maternal health-care access in Kisumu and Uasin Gishu counties. However, improved access is partly related to developments that are not directly connected to the devolution of health services, such as free maternity services, the Beyond Zero Campaign, *boda boda* transport, and mobile telephony. Yet, perceptions matter, and based on that, devolution can be seen to have contributed to improving health systems, specifically in maternal health care. Besides,

positive perceptions by users (who are citizens and voters) provide an opportunity for elected officials in Kenya to seek to maintain and even increase levels of user satisfaction.

Devolution is not devoid of challenges. Improved accessibility to referral maternal health care has increased pressure on equipment, commodities, infrastructure and personnel. This renders meaning to the discontent generally found among the health workers involved in this study. Discontent among health workers has been exacerbated by delays in fiscal remittances from national government. There are also perceptions that devolution has increased tribalism. In the study, we did not find any effort to mitigate this even though the perception is not unexpected given the broader Kenyan political context. Therefore, the challenge for policymakers in Kenya at both national and county level is not only to maintain and increase levels of user satisfaction, but also to simultaneously address the misgivings of health workers and mitigate against the perception that corruption and tribalism have increased with devolution. Better governance and accountability structures are critical for success.

Notes
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1 The Constitution of Kenya (2010), www.kenyalaw.org.
2 The former (enacted in June 2013 through presidential declaration) encourages women to give birth at health facilities under skilled personnel, in keeping with the African Union resolution to exempt user fees for pregnant women and children under the age of five, and the latter (led by the First Lady since 2014) aims to promote maternal, newborn and child health – while controlling the prevalence of HIV/AIDS – through mobile clinics.
3 The research protocol was approved by the Institutional Research and Ethics Committee of Moi University's College of Health Sciences and Moi Teaching and Referral Hospital.
4 Interview, 28 May 2016.
5 Interview, 18 May 2016.
6 Interview, 27 May 2016.
7 Interview, 22 June 2016.
8 Interview, 23 June 2016.
9 Interview, 22 June 2016.
10 Interview, 28 June 2016.
11 Interview, 4 July 2016.
12 Interview, 6 July 2016.
13 Nursing Intensive Care Unit.
14 Interview, 29 June 2016.
15 Interview, 8 July 2016.
16 Interview, 28 May 2016.
17 Interview, 18 May 2016.

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Local Governments and Primary Education in Uganda

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Abstract Decentralisation was one of the major reforms in the 1990s in Uganda, geared towards improving democratic governance and service delivery. However, districts have had variable performance, especially in providing primary education through public schools. In this article, I ask what explains the difference in local governments' performance across two districts that were given similar powers and share a similar history. I explore this through in-depth interviews in the two districts and find that local governments are severely constrained in their performance by a lack of funds, which, along with development priorities, are controlled by the central government. Within this scenario, variable performance is explained to a great extent by the presence of donors and investments by the private sector, but that these funds are attracted to areas where greater capacity exists. While this improves education performance, it can contribute to growing inequality in educational attainment across districts.

Keywords: decentralisation, Uganda, service delivery, primary education, donors.

1 Introduction

The main legal framework for Uganda's current local governments is the Decentralisation Statute 1993, aimed to transfer power to the people and promote equitable distribution of resources. The 1995 constitution detailed the modalities of a decentralised government while the Local Governments Act of 1997 made Local Government Council responsible for ensuring implementation and compliance with government policies (GoU 1997). According to Saito (2003: 203), 'Uganda today probably has the most elaborate legal framework for decentralising measures in Africa and is firmly committed to decentralisation. The amount of financial resources transferred to local governments is one of the largest in Africa'. Whereas it can be argued that the amounts of financial resources transferred are significant, what really matters is whether these financial resources have over the years translated to effective service delivery as promised in the decentralisation objectives.

One of the areas of transfer of power is primary education, which became the responsibility of local governments after decentralisation. The Universal Primary Education (UPE) programme was introduced in 1997, becoming part of the mandate of local governments. While initially the policy was to target four children per household, it later expanded to include all school-aged children. The reform led to the empowerment of ordinary Ugandans and improved implementation and monitoring of primary education (Mukunya 2007: 233). There was initial excitement about the policy as Ugandans would for the first time access free education (Buwembo 2016). Within this plan, local governments were to be responsible for education planning and management, school inspections, teacher management and classroom construction.

Almost two decades later, there is growing public concern over the quality of service delivery by local governments. Existing research shows that local government delivery failures are connected to a host of factors, including multiple leadership conflicts across different tiers of government, low levels of revenue collection and limited financial autonomy, distortions inherent in the decentralisation policy, and central government's control of the national budget resources (ACODE 2014: 3). Yet, not all local governments are performing badly. Some local governments are able to perform well in delivering their functions as per their mandate while others are not (ACODE 2014). What are the reasons for this differential performance?

Using the two cases of Arua and Nebbi districts in the West Nile region, I examine reasons for differences in performance across two areas with similar history, geography and powers. The question I pose is: *What factors explain the difference in local government performance across two districts that were given similar powers?* The outcome I consider here is local government performance in service delivery and the factors that account for variations in outcomes. An analysis of the two cases leads to the finding that in the case of primary education – a key mandate of local government – external factors such as private sector engagement and donor involvement contribute to the difference in performance.

For the past 15 years, there have been several studies on Uganda's decentralisation, local government and service delivery (Saito 2003, 2006; Golooba-Mutebi 2004, 2006; Uwezo Uganda 2016; Green 2010, 2013; ACODE 2014). While these have largely focused on the challenges of decentralisation or its impact on specific service delivery and popular participation, they left unexplained most of the reasons for variations in outcomes and why some districts emerge as 'islands of effectiveness'. While concurring with Crook (2010) that lack of organisational commitment is a key variable to explain why some districts underperform, I contend that this gets exacerbated in contexts where local governments have little capacity to deliver services, limited financial autonomy and decision-making powers, and remain dependent on central government, with their powers limited to legal frameworks only. Comparing the two districts of Arua and Nebbi allows

us to make some propositions in terms of which other factors account for these variations.

This study thus examines why there are variations in local government performance in service delivery when local governments have similar powers, and face similar challenges *vis-à-vis* the central government. This article is organised as follows. In the next section, I revisit decentralisation in Uganda, focusing ultimately on service delivery, and in particular, primary education. In Section 3, I explain the rationale for the use of comparative analysis in my methodology, and in Section 4, I analyse the two cases. In Section 5, I present the key reasons for variations in performance across the two cases, before concluding with policy implications in Section 6.

2 The promise and reality of decentralisation in Uganda

Uganda's decentralisation and its extensive legal framework is considered impressive on the African continent, and represents 'a radical reengineering of the mechanisms of governance towards political, administrative and fiscal devolution' (Steffensen 2006: 93). 'What is beyond dispute […] is that Uganda's local government reforms in the last 20 years count among the most ambitious and arguably the most successful on the African continent' (Golooba-Mutebi 2006: 61). This claim of success in comparison to decentralised systems in Africa is difficult to make today in light of service delivery challenges in local government districts that are commonplace in the media and in debates about decentralisation. A recent television discussion, one of many commentaries, debated the relevance of decentralisation. The debate, entitled 'Is Decentralisation Dead?', led to an open questioning of the usefulness of decentralisation today among participants of the show (*People's Parliament* on NTV), who are Ugandan citizens from all walks of life. Throughout the dialogue, various participants echoed ongoing popular debates by affirming that Uganda's decentralisation was ineffective and was doing little to improve service delivery, which has been the main objective of the reforms all along. Members of various local governments invited for the show expressed concern over how the decentralisation policy has evolved over the years, wondering if it still existed. This questioning is not limited to citizen participation on national media, but also research has indicated that decentralisation is in trouble. Green (2013) discusses the rise and fall of decentralisation, in which he argues that much of the initial gains of the 1990s have not been matched in recent years and excitement about programmes has tapered off.

Decentralisation in Uganda happened within larger economic reforms driven by neoliberalism and structural adjustment policies that prioritised the role of the market and private actors. As a result, while services like primary education delivery were transferred to local governments, this process was implemented through a system of partnerships with the private sector and other development actors that reduced the role of the local state as the primary provider. This is evident in the way that government documents differentiate between service delivery and service provision:

Service provision refers to the whole process of planning public services while service delivery refers to mechanisms of policy implementation. In Uganda's local government system, service delivery approaches include: direct provision by the local government, public–private partnerships (PPPs), participation of civil society (CSOs) and privatization (GoU 2013: 10).

Any assessment of local government performance must inherently take into account all of these elements rather than focus on the one approach of direct provision. The government of Uganda perceived many benefits of decentralising education service delivery, including the elimination of what it saw as unnecessary bureaucratic channels; reduction of corruption; increased level of monitoring; management of the education system according to local priorities; improved financial accountability; and increased local revenue to fund services (Namukasa 2007). Empirical evidence on how things have worked out, however, is mixed. Decentralisation opened the way for more realistic planning and mobilisation of resources (Mukunya 2007) and brought significant improvements in service delivery (Katono 2007; Ssemakula 1996). The purported significant improvements in service delivery now remain under question in light of new developments such as the impulsive creation of new districts that are deemed unviable for service delivery, but formed in the spirit of political patronage as compensation for lost reforms (Green 2010) with full knowledge of their political and economic limitations (Green 2013).

In addition, a number of issues have created hindrances to positive results. These include lack of human and social capital; local power structures obstructing citizen participation; public disinterest in payment of taxes if not accompanied by improved services; and an inability of the state to effectively involve civil society (Saito 2003) and what has been termed an obsessive creation of districts (Green 2010). Dependence of local governments on the central government, limited autonomy, and limited community participation in local government decision-making processes (Nkalubo 2007) are some of the other limitations.

Evidence from the annual reports series, *Are Our Children Learning?* (Uwezo Uganda 2011) and from local government scorecards (ACODE 2014) seem to confirm this discouraging perspective in the area of service delivery and in particular primary education provision. According to an analysis of the last 2016 Uwezo report, 60 per cent of P.3–P.7[1] pupils attending private schools could read and understand a P.2 English story and P.2 maths division while 49 per cent of P.3–P.7 pupils attending government schools could read and understand the same work (Nassaka 2016: 17). All six reports Uwezo have released so far indicate that the quality of education within the UPE framework, which is the direct provision option, is something the government needs to be concerned about, with persistent low learning outcomes. The same report indicates that the performance based on districts reflects regional inequalities. All the ten best performing

districts were from central and south-west Uganda while all the ten worst performing districts were from the East, North and West Nile regions (Uwezo Uganda 2016). Despite this gloomy outlook, rankings such as these of Uwezo, based on primary education, and ACODE, based on performance of local government in various social service delivery areas, indicate that there are variations in outcomes, with some performing well and others dismally. What is also crucial is that some of these variations fit within regional inequalities identified previously.

3 Research design: comparative case study method

This study is based in the West Nile region of Uganda. Largely rural, among the poorest in the country, and with literacy rates below national averages, this region's limited access to government services – due to its remoteness, a history of war, and a continuing lack of community voice – makes for an interesting case (AFARD 2011: 4). The West Nile's level of relative deprivation in comparison to other regions of Uganda means that if we can find pockets of better performance here, we may be able to identify the factors that can work to raise the quality of service delivery.

The West Nile today consists of eight district local governments, with Arua and Nebbi districts lying in the North-Western corner of Uganda. Both partly border the Democratic Republic of Congo and Arua also borders South Sudan. Both cases were selected primarily because they were the only two of West Nile's eight districts that were assessed as part of the most recent round of the Local Government Councils Scorecard Assessment (LGCSCA) 2013/14 (ACODE 2014). They make an interesting pair for comparison because they are similar in many ways. They are contiguous districts that share a common history – together they formed the West Nile district before independence (Karibwije 2005) – which allows us to hold most social and cultural practices constant. They also received full district status at the same time in 1980, and have similar local government powers.

Yet, though they lie close together, they have had divergent outcomes in social service delivery. The local government performance in service delivery is measured by three indicators, namely primary education (including both private and public schools), primary health services, and water and sanitation services. The performance of primary education is also measured by three indicators, namely the net enrolment ratio, completion rate and the Primary Leaving Examination Performance Index.[2] Nebbi was among the worst performing districts in primary education delivery, ranking 6th from the bottom out of a total of 30 districts, while Arua ranked 12th from the bottom. While exploring Arua's performance allows us to look into an 'island of effectiveness' (Crook 2010), Nebbi allows us to look into complexities of local government service delivery.

I used the comparative method of difference to study these two districts, based on the fact that they are similar in many ways that matter for the delivery of primary education – such as the power and functions

of district governments, revenues transferred to them by the central government, capacity for revenue mobilisation to complement service delivery, quality of school teachers, shared history of deprivation, formerly a single local government unit and school infrastructure – but which have different outcomes, with Arua performing better than Nebbi in the delivery of primary education. I use local government performance in service delivery because they present the divergence in outcome between the districts relevant for interrogating issues of variation in outcome. This design allows us to explore both cases in detail to see what might be causing the difference in performance.

I made use of secondary data and media reports to establish the nature of allocation to education and to examine local government role in primary education in both districts, including on primary education performance in Nebbi and Arua. I strengthened this with carefully selected interviews in both districts. I conducted in-depth interviews with 12 purposively selected key players, people who worked in the education department, council and office of the chief administrative officer. At the district level, I interviewed senior staff at the education office, chief administrative offices, and local councils. The choice of these key informants is based on their role in the district, specifically in planning and management of education services.

4 Local government capacity in primary education delivery in the West Nile region

Local governments, and in particular district councils, have the power to deliver primary education services in Uganda with 'overall control over the expenditure on services for which they were responsible' (Golooba-Mutebi 2004). Their roles include inspection of schools, funding, management of teachers, school administration and planning, and school construction (Saito 2003). However, transfer of responsibility is not synonymous with capacity. As Widmalm (2008: 44) reminds us, '[T]he fact that responsibilities are given to a certain institution does not mean that the institution in question has the capacity to fulfil them… [nor] any possibility of influencing the method of implementation of the duties for which it is made responsible'. Capacity, be it human, financial and infrastructural, is crucial. The lack of capacity to deliver has raised questions about the effectiveness of decentralisation in Uganda. For instance, a respondent in Nebbi[3] who coordinates a local non-governmental organisation (NGO) argued:

> *What I don't agree with most is the word decentralisation… It is only the word itself, but there is no practice called decentralisation in Uganda. They say power belongs to the people, that now they have transferred every responsibility to people to make their plans. If you go to the school and look at their plans, you will see that their plans are excellent, but now the funds are not controlled by the school, the funds are controlled by the centre at the district level… You cannot decentralise power when there is no money. There should be money and also power to plan.*

For others, such as a member of the local government in Nebbi, the problem is more to do with how decentralisation has evolved:

> *Decentralisation would have added value if every stakeholder was playing their role, because I think decentralisation says manage your own issues. Where you think the classrooms are not enough, put them there… but you know now there are some things that stakeholders have to do themselves to better this education. If it is not being done, we are not going to blame decentralisation.*

Particular to the case of primary education, local governments are directly responsible not only for the delivery of primary education within the UPE framework, but also for the supervision of both public and private schools. Although private schools do not receive financial aid from the government, they still write the same exams and their performance contributes to the ranking of local government performance in a particular district. While schools depend on the district, local governments depend on the central government for funds. The UPE programme funds come with an expenditure formula for every district. Most of the education expenditure is earmarked for teacher salaries. District councils are mandated to mobilise local resources to supplement the regular flow of funds from the central government in order to support other activities. However, in both Nebbi and Arua districts local government contributes under 5 per cent of the total budget. The responsibility for providing development funds remains with central government and other stakeholders.

Also, the role of district councils in ensuring improved performance in service delivery appears to be quite limited in both districts. In Arua, district officials try to do so by organising community meetings to discuss issues related to the delivery of primary education (which, according to some respondents in Arua's education department, is improving the quality of education through parents' commitment to education), while in Nebbi the district meets the challenge of having few inspectors by hiring former head teachers as assessors and inspectors. Finally, both districts have developed education bylaws, but they seem to have little role in ensuring the implementation and quality of primary education in the public schools studied here.

An interesting indicator of the poor quality of primary education in public schools managed by local governments is the fact that the children of district government staff and even public school teachers attend private schools. A respondent in Arua local government echoed the views of many when he explained, 'Our children are not in government schools. We sell the wrong thing to the people. There are many children of the poor who are brighter than our children but are condemned to this [UPE school] education'. There is a sense of regret among government officials that they are aware UPE is not working well, and yet, they have to continue to present it as a great policy to enable all children access to education. A respondent from the civil society sector in Nebbi expressed a similar sentiment when he shared,

'Teachers in UPE schools send their children to private schools. They are better off having their children taught by private schools. They are sure their children will pass'.

According to various respondents in the two districts, public schools perform poorly in both districts due to a wide range of factors, which include lack of teaching materials, late arrival of government funds, head teachers seldom being in school to supervise teaching, late arrival and early departure of teachers, and infrastructure challenges ranging from lack of classrooms and desks to pit latrines. Although the availability of UPE has provided poor children with access to education, it has also created marked disparities between the educational quality that poor children in these schools receive, and that offered in private schools that are attended by the children of families with higher incomes (Uwezo Uganda 2016).

These facts illustrate the current poor quality of public education and the failure of local government officials to fix the broken school system. Interviews provided strong evidence of the fact that most stakeholders shifted responsibility in terms of where the blame for poor delivery lies. Teachers face most of the blame from other stakeholders, while teachers in turn blame local government limited capacity and parents' lack of commitment to the education of their children. Yet, Arua District has a comfortable lead on Nebbi on primary education outcomes, as per the 2013/14 scorecard assessment rankings (ACODE 2014), despite the many similarities identified here. What explains Arua's better performance? I use evidence from my interviews to identify the main features that can help explain this.

5 Variations in education performance: the nature of partnerships

A comparative analysis of Arua and Nebbi local government performance is a useful exercise to reveal how despite most local governments facing similar challenges and having similar powers and mandates (including local governments that share geography and history), varied outcomes are possible largely due to external factors such as donor interventions, and other partnerships. While in both Nebbi and Arua, local government state schools performed almost similarly, I argue that the role of donors and the nature of public–private partnerships significantly account for variations in overall educational outcomes. The level of involvement by donors and private sector investment is crucial for success.

5.1 How central government dependency accounts for variations at the district level

At the district level, the degree of dependence on central government is crucial for investment in education. It is also important to note that the capacity to deliver implies that funds directly transferred from central government are likely to achieve their aim. This comparison starts with the understanding of the financial situation in both local governments as seen in Table 1.

Table 1 **Revenue sources and education allocation for Nebbi and Arua districts for the financial years 2012/13–2014/15 (Shillings 000)**

Revenue source	Total revenue (Nebbi)	Percentage of total	Total revenue (Arua)	Percentage of total
Central government	73,017,274	95.7	133,880,657	91.9
Local revenue	998,758	1.3	1,302,488	0.9
Donor funding	2,309,702	3.0	10,485,589	7.2
Total annual budget	**76,325,734**	**100.0**	**145,668,734**	**100.0**
Education allocation	38,940,425	51	78,162,787	53.7

Source Local government budget estimates, MoFPED.[4]

By observation of the two local governments, we can see that Arua has many business enterprises, and thus greater revenue mobilisation but its share of local revenue is less than 1 per cent. This, local government officials argue, is because the Uganda Revenue Authority collects most of the revenue. The little that is collected within the local governments goes to support council activities rather than services like education, which therefore remain dependent on central government transfers. In Arua, a senior local government official expressed his dilemma:

> *Most of the lucrative sources of revenue are taken up by the central government, they are collected by the Uganda Revenue Authority* [URA]. *Most of the taxes are collected by it. What is left for the local government is very hard to collect. At some times we even said, now since URA is specialised in revenue collection, why don't they collect 100 per cent?*

Studies have in the past indicated the erosion of local government autonomy with the abolition of graduated tax (Golooba-Mutebi 2006). Although local governments had the mandate to levy tax, central government abolished graduated tax, draining districts of the most reliable source of revenue. In addition to market dues, other sources include trading licences (largely collected by the urban councils), licensing which is more of a regulatory service, and thus limited as a source of funds. Fees for a limited number of billboard advertisements are another potential source, but if they fall under road reserve, Uganda National Roads Authority collects it. The local service tax is a more reliable source but very small. Another revenue source is council court fees, but these provide revenue for the court system in most cases. In short, multiple state agencies collect revenue from districts.

Local governments are thus vessels through which resources from central government flow for specific activities, rather than units with power. The real question is whether local governments have any liberty to plan for activities. In the case of primary education, most of the

grants are conditional and allow little flexibility. Central government controls, even though there may be good reasons for such controls, impact negatively on service delivery. The dysfunctional nature of decentralisation is demonstrable through the practice of recruitment of teachers or making capital expenditures – for a district to recruit teachers or buy a vehicle, they need clearance from the central government. This is in line with what ACODE (2014) found, that dependence on the central government and inability to generate local revenues are highlighted by 75 per cent of the districts.

5.2 How donor involvement accounts for variations at the district level

Currently, local governments are overly dependent on the central government for resources, particularly conditional grants. One main reason is that the central government and the donors are not fully convinced that local governments are capable of managing large amounts of funds (Saito 2003: 145).

Although Nebbi has a larger contribution of local revenue (1.3 per cent), Arua's dependence on central government is lower due to contribution from donors (7.2 per cent) while that of Nebbi stands at 3 per cent (see Table 1). Whereas the difference appears small as a percentage of a district's total budget allocation to education, it is substantial in absolute terms. Donor criteria for more involvement in Arua is not explicit, but may be connected to the fact that it is a regional centre, and as such, has more NGOs and thus more capacity to deliver on funds outside the local government structure.

Donor contribution differentials, as seen in Table 1, boosted the capacity of Arua local government through budget support but also through direct investment in schools. Arua local government department of education, as a result, has developed higher capacity in terms of human capital and infrastructure. This is not the case in Nebbi, which has continued to face both human resource and infrastructural challenges for several years. This was corroborated by staff in the education department in Nebbi, who lamented, '[A]ll our vehicles are now grounded in the garage. We have no means of transport for supervision and inspection'. This is attributed to a ban on departments purchasing vehicles. Sitting at the Arua District local government headquarters, I observed at least three vehicles for the education sector, procured through non-state funds, and none of the interviews in Arua identified such challenges.

The quality of administrative staff accounts for differences in performance and creation of effective organisational culture, and this too was connected to the role of donors and a regular flow of funds by respondents. Arua District has experienced a considerable level of continuity and consistency in political and administrative leadership. Most members of council had been there for over a decade and understood the problems of their area well. On the other hand, Nebbi faced staff shortages, but was unable to recruit new staff due to a pending wage bill. Within Nebbi's district council, respondents

suggested that these administrative problems were not helped by limited donor intervention. For instance, two members argued:

> *The problem with Nebbi is that we have limited NGOs, limited stakeholders to support Nebbi. We have only the NGO Forum and now we have UNICEF. The major one is UNICEF. And UNICEF mainly supports us with sports.*

> *UNICEF cannot do it alone, not even the government, not even the councillors. At least I would suggest that if other NGOs or donors could come around, it would be fairer. It is becoming too big for UNICEF alone to handle it.*

These revelations, by a male and female member of council, all underscore the important role of donors in improving capacity of the district to better deliver educational outcomes. This is also acknowledged in the literature. For instance, Boko notes:

> The contribution of international donor agencies to the development of local communities in Africa must not be underestimated. For though they have gained the political power for self-determination, the vast majority of local communities in Africa lack the financial resources to assert that power, making financial and technical support from international development organisations a very important source of development action (2002: 61).

In the case of district performance, given the current dependence on central government for funding of programmes, re-centralisation of functions, compounded by creation of districts that are not viable, suggest that indeed contributions of international donor agencies cannot be underestimated. Donor support fills capacity and budgetary gaps, especially when channelled through districts in specific areas of need.

5.3 How private sector involvement accounts for variations at the district level
Arua also performs better overall because of the extent of private sector investment in education. Arua has several private schools, which contribute to the better performance and ranking of the district. Nebbi has far fewer private schools that can contribute in a similar way. As one respondent in Nebbi put it:

> *If you are talking about government-aided schools, I don't think Arua is doing any better. The difference is, Arua has so many private schools. So when they say Arua has got so many first grades, nobody says government schools has got this, private schools has got this. It's just like Zombo [neighbouring district] here. Zombo gets more first grades than Nebbi because of one private school. But if you are talking about government schools, then it's all the same. People don't look at which schools are private schools and which schools are public.*

Respondents in Arua District local government agreed with this position. A recent analysis that deals with the country as a whole, the 2016 Uwezo report, also suggests that the role of the private sector in a district's performance in education cannot be ignored considering that district rankings take into account private schools as well. It reveals that:

… for P.3 to P.7 pupils, attending private schools boosts their competence over their government school peers 17 percentage points in English, 10 percentage points in mathematics and six percentage points in local languages (Nassaka 2016: 16).

There are, therefore, large attainment inequalities between pupils attending private schools and those enrolled in schools run by local government.

6 Local government and primary education delivery: implications for policy

Our two cases show that contrary to claims that local governments have power as per the legal frameworks, districts still largely depend on central government for the delivery of primary education under their mandate. Local government contribution in terms of local revenue is non-existent due to the limited collection of local revenue, despite the existence of taxable private businesses in these districts. And although there is an argument that decades of reform efforts, capacity building and huge donor spending appear to have brought little improvement in service delivery, where direct donor involvement in schools is available, primary education performance is significantly better. The larger donor contribution to Arua's local government – as compared to Nebbi – gives it an added advantage in improving performance, not only by building local level capacity, but also by reducing its degree of dependence on central government.

The *ad hoc* nature of partnerships between local governments and other stakeholders has benefited some local governments at the expense of others. Both private sector investment and donor monies flow to certain districts, often the same ones because of capacity issues, and not to others. This calls for greater coordination among central government, local government, the private sector and donors in defining where donors and other partners are most needed depending on existing challenges, and so that available funds can be distributed more evenly across districts. Results of the 2016 Uwezo survey show that the ten best performing districts are all located in central and south-western Uganda while the ten worst performing districts are all located in the East, North and West Nile regions. If this continues, not only will inequalities increase between poorer and less poor children attending public and private schools respectively, but also regional inequalities are bound to become worse. There is a need for a comprehensive review of the powers of local governments and the services they can realistically deliver in line with the resources they can mobilise. While many of their powers remain as stipulated in the constitution, the context has greatly changed in the face of liberalisation, privatisation and government re-centralisation of some functions.

The promise of decentralisation was to create an effective system of service delivery, where local governments would bring services closer to the people and infuse local populations with the power of popular participation. But this does not seem to have happened

in Uganda. Based on the analysis presented in this article, I draw three broad conclusions, which manifest the difference between decentralisation rhetoric and reality. First, that there is a disconnect between decentralisation as policy and as practice, as demonstrated by local government delivery of primary education. Second, with central government controlling at least 95 per cent of the financing of districts, development priorities are still decided by central government, through pre-determined indicative figures to guide budgeting. Local governments have little power and freedom to decide what their priorities might be and even if they do, even less power to act upon them. Third, because local governments fail to achieve meaningful local revenue collection, the quality of the delivery of public services suffers, as central government disbursements are, by themselves, inadequate and local governments have minimal capacity to contribute. The case of West Nile suggests that the performance of districts in delivering services such as education has much to do with donor presence and the extent of involvement by the private sector. Local governments that succeed do so through the strength of partnerships with donors and the private sector.

Notes

1 The Ugandan Primary Education cycle runs from Primary One (P.1) to Primary Seven (P.7) when pupils write the national primary leaving examination from which they join secondary education, which runs for six years.
2 Net Enrolment Ratio (number of primary school children aged six–twelve years to the number of children of the same age range in the population); completion rate (ratio of total number of pupils who successfully complete the last year of primary education); and Primary Leaving Examination (PLE) Performance Index (number of candidates that sat for PLE examination multiplied by the weight of the highest grade) (MoES 2013).
3 All interviews took place in May 2016, either in Nebbi or in Arua.
4 Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, www.finance.go.ug.

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Glossary

AACA Addis Ababa City Administration
AACG Addis Ababa City Government
AAEPA Addis Ababa Environmental Protection Authority
ACLED Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project
ACODE Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment [Uganda]
ADLG Arua District Local Government [Uganda]
AFARD Agency for Accelerated Rural Development [Uganda]
AM Assembly Member
AMPATH Academic Model Providing Access to Healthcare
APC All Progressive Congress
CCMS Centre for Communication, Media and Society [University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa]
CDD-Ghana Ghana Center for Democratic Development
CDR Committees for the Defence of the Revolution [Ghana]
CSA Central Statistical Authority [Ethiopia]
CWS Church World Service
DA District Assembly
DACF District Assemblies Common Fund
DCC/MCC District/Municipal/Metropolitan Coordinating Council
DCE District Chief Executive
DCU District Coordinating Unit
DDF District Development Fund
DFID Department for International Development
DLT District League Table
DMTDP District Medium Term Development Plan
dRPC Development Research and Projects Center [Nigeria]
ELLA Evidence and Lessons from Latin America
ENDA Environmental Development Action [Ethiopia]
FDRE Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
FeMSEDA Federal Micro and Small Enterprise Development Agency
GHS Ghanaian cedi
GIZ Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit [German Corporation for International Cooperation]
HIPC Highly Indebted Poor Countries
HIT Health Information Technology
HOA Horn of Africa
IDEP African Institute for Economic Development and Planning
IIAG Ibrahim Index of African Governance
ICT information and communications technology
IFPRI International Food Policy Research Institute
ILO International Labour Organization
IMCC Inter-Ministerial Coordinating Committee [Ghana]
ISEAS Institute of Southeast Asian Studies
KNHCR Kenya National Commission on Human Rights
LGA local government area

LGCSCA Local Government Councils Scorecard Assessment
MoES Ministry of Education and Sports [Uganda]
MoH Ministry of Health
MOUD Ministry of Urban Development [Ethiopia]
MSSE micro- and small-scale enterprise
NDC National Democratic Congress [Ghana]
NICU Nursing Intensive Care Unit.
NGO non-governmental organisation
NPP New Patriotic Party
NRM National Resistance Movement [Uganda]
NSCDC Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps
ODI Overseas Development Institute
OECD Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PASGR Partnership for African Social and Governance Research
PBL problem-based learning
PCRC Police-Community Relations Committee
PLE Primary Leaving Examination
PPP public–private partnership
PSM public service motivation
RCC Regional Coordinating Council
SBPDA Sanitation, Beautification and Park Development Agency
SSS State Security Service
UNDP United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF United Nations Children's Fund
UNN University of Nigeria, Nsukka
UNODC United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UPE Universal Primary Education
URA Uganda Revenue Authority
USAID United States Agency for International Development
WCC World Council of Churches
WENDI West Nile Development Initiative

IDS Institute of Development Studies

IDSBulletin

Transforming Development Knowledge

IDS Institute of Development Studies

IDSBulletin

Transforming Development Knowledge

'This volume interrogates the extent to which decentralisation has affected change at the local level – in terms of democratisation, participation, and service delivery – and identifies the factors that may allow decentralisation efforts to have greater impact through future reforms.'