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DECENTRALIZATION OF PLANNING AND
ADMINISTRATION IN ZIMBABWE
INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES AND 1980s EXPERIENCES

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CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

To many people, decentralization of government and planning is a self-evidently Good Thing. It will avoid the ills of over-centralization, such as insensitivity to local conditions, and will also bring us fuller co-ordination and participation at sub-national levels. It seems to combine the appeals of planning and of democracy. Can it live up to these hopes in reality?

In this paper I discuss various concepts and views of decentralization, and then apply the arguments to Zimbabwe, where my main emphasis is on the Communal Areas. The intention is to show the range of political, economic and organizational factors and constraints involved, and the main groups and views.

Zimbabwe is centralized politically, administratively and economically. The Harare telephone directory is larger than that for the rest of the country. Villagers buy even bread and cloth made in urban factories; and some come over two hundred kilometers to sell their fruit and vegetables in the capital. Since independence in 1980 there have been centralizing as well as decentralizing trends. For example, the Harare conurbation has had higher growth of population and employment than have other levels of settlement; and central government agencies and parastatals have grown greatly, in Harare and outside. Local Councils' growth does not look remarkable in comparison, once we exclude their agency roles in education. Even including those roles, Councils' expenditure stayed fairly steady at just 17% of total government expenditure in 1980-84; and the removal of agency roles from 1989 could leave the share lower than in a number of developing countries. Councils' own revenues fell in 1980-84 from 9% to 6% of total government revenues (Helmsing, 1989).

The limits on government decentralization include its needs for manpower and finance and the technical demands in certain activities. However the issue is more than technical. National policymakers appear at present unwilling to transfer substantial powers; and there are well established central Ministries and strong beliefs in centralized planning, including in the Local Government Ministry.

Section 2.1 introduces standard concepts of decentralization, noting other types besides the territorial decentralization of government. It then looks at the relations, and possible conflicts, between territorial decentralization and the objectives of equity, growth, coordination, participation and national integration. International experience forces us to drop sweeping claims of the general superiority of decentralization or of devolution in particular. Section 2.2 therefore tries to refine concepts. We need to go beyond the standard labels of deconcentration, devolution and delegation. Given the many varieties and dimensions of decentralization, Section 2.3 draws out the limits to broad generalizations in analysis or prescription. We need area-specific studies, though generalizations still have important roles, including in centralized decision-making. The final section in Part 2 probes

the political dimensions that have become apparent: for
decentralization is too complex for full agreement in analysis,
let alone on objectives, and concerns distribution of power
between groups who will be affected in differing ways. It may be
vital in politicking to hide those complexities and the differing
interests, behind over-general terms and technical arguments. Yet
technocratic arguments for decentralization tend to be
inconclusive, and technocrats underplay the democratic arguments
(though admittedly those too are not always clearcut).

Parts 2 and 3 can be read independently. Part 3 tries though to
apply to Zimbabwe the approach presented in Part 2: seeing
decentralization as an issue with many aspects, political as well
as technical, and many pros and cons and differing opinions. We
look at a series of views in the 1980s, and at criticisms made of
them. Roughly speaking we will work through from village level to
national level. We will mainly consider the general organization
of development planning and management; in other words, our
analysis of decentralization will have a planning slant.

In comparison to some countries, there are many useful accessible
sources in Zimbabwe. In particular, Government in the 1980s has
been more open than in much of Africa, and has contained
considerable activity and competing opinions. Official statements
will be cited then in this study not necessarily as "policy
statements" but as political statements, which sometimes reveal
divisions and confusions within and between agencies. The paper
describes the situation up to June 1989.

Section 3.1 finds a discrepancy between official and other reports
of the 1980s experiences at village and ward levels. There is an
apparent lack of realism in the officially stated goals. It is
open for debate how far this reflects lack of awareness of
experiences in other countries - not least concerning the
significance of local social differentiation - or a tacit
acceptance of them. Section 3.2 reviews the district level,
noting that besides problems of finance, posts and organization,
there are others that stem from local and national politics, and
from the skills available versus those being demanded. Section
3.3 looks at options proposed for division of powers between the
provincial and national levels, especially the call for an
overlord provincial authority. It queries some of the political
assumptions and technical rationales, including beliefs in
complete coordination. Section 3.4 then presents national-level
views, in the headquarters of the Party, the Ministries of Local
Government and Finance, in sector ministries and in Cabinet. None
at present support major new powers for independent provincial or
district level authorities; all see themselves as representing
national interests. Top-level corporatist views take
decentralization largely as a part of national integration.
Finally Section 3.5 considers non-government views. It compares
territorial decentralization with the functional alternatives, and
comments on the relation to local government of NGOs and private
and community organizations.

Part 4 is a concluding review, with some suggestions.

2. ISSUES FROM INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

2.1. Definitions and dilemmas; decentralization versus equity, growth and national integration ?

> "Just as water fills up the low places near a river, so
> within a theoretically democratic structure small tyrants
> will fill up a gap left by low political consciousness and
> apathy" (Nyerere, 1977:53).

General papers on decentralization often start with two lists.
One is of main types of decentralization. The other list is
frequently longer, and is an inventory of the proposed benefits
and advantages of decentralization. It is understandable that an
initial listing of types be kept brief; however one's analysis of
the concept may later need to become just as refined as the
listing of benefits that are supposed to be associated with it.

Readers can come across many different definitions, but the main
currently used breakdown of types is this:-
1. Deconcentration - the handing over of some administrative
authority or responsibility to lower territorial levels of central
government ministries and agencies (e.g. within the Ministry of
Local Government or Health, or President's Office). Some authors
call this "field administration" or "local administration",
depending on the extent.
2. Devolution - the creation or strengthening of sub-national
governments whose activities are in large part outside the direct
control of the central government, thanks to a legal basis for
local powers. This fits the position of states within a
federation, and of legally established and typically elected local
governments. Some authors equate devolution and "local
government"; others use the latter term more broadly.
3. Delegation - the transfer of managerial responsibility for
specifically defined functions to parastatal organizations outside
the regular bureaucratic structure (e.g. Zimbabwe's Agricultural &
Rural Development Authority or Urban Development Corporation).
Quangos are sometimes given area-wide responsibilities, e.g. the
British South Africa Company in Rhodesia until 1923.
4. Privatization - the transfer from government of
responsibility for specified functions, to NGOs, voluntary
organizations, community associations, or private enterprises.
(Rondinelli and Nellis, 1986:6-9.)
Real cases are often mixtures of the ideal types; e.g.
elected local Councils may be deeply dependent on the advice and
authority of central agencies and centrally appointed local staff.

This breakdown partly correlates with Hyden's 2x2 picture of types
of decentralization (1983):

	TERRITORIAL	FUNCTIONAL
MANAGERIAL	Deconcentration	Privatization
PARTICIPATORY	Devolution	Interest group representation

A difference is that Hyden breaks Rondinelli's "privatization" into two: transfer to NGOs etc. is called interest group representation, and only transfer to private enterprises is called privatization. "Delegation" would be another case of managerial functional decentralization.

Hyden's classification usefully puts the territorial and intra-government varieties into perspective: for there are also functional and intra-societal varieties. Our study will, as is common, focus on deconcentration and devolution, and will often just call these two "decentralization"; but we will try to keep well in mind the existence of other varieties and options.

Hyden may go beyond definitions, and on to hypotheses that some types are more participatory in reality as well as in intention. Some people, for example in India, go still further and try to restrict the term "decentralization" to just devolution, which they see as "democratic decentralization" and therefore as the only decentralization worth the name. But we should not beg the question of how democratic does formal devolution prove to be in practice. Related to this, clear thinking requires that we distinguish decentralization as a means, namely certain organizational arrangements, from decentralization as an end, in the sense of local participation or autonomy (Smith, 1979; Conyers, 1984a.) The failure to do this helps to weaken some country studies of decentralization.

Many a study runs as follows: it reviews subnational levels of government in the country concerned, and notes that they have grown, which is held to indicate decentralization; it then finds that, sadly, these levels are not working as well as expected, partly because much central control continues; and it concludes with a call for more devolution.
    The analysis is incomplete at each stage. Firstly, we often find that central government has grown equally or almost as fast as local government. Secondly, there is usually no clear baseline, other than the original high expectations, by which to judge subnational government's record:- "not working well" as compared to central government or which country or organization? (As Doreen Warriner said, those institutions reported as working smoothly are often long ago or far away.) Thirdly, devolution has major political and resource requirements and is not an option with an uncontroversial record, nor is it the only option for tackling all the problems that are mentioned. For example, many metropolitan authorities in Britain failed to impress in terms of efficiency or democracy (Conyers, 1984b; Smith, 1985; Hoggett, 1987); and many African countries after independence abandoned systems with powerful elected local councils (Mawhood ed., 1983).

Indian experience itself led some other authors to speak of "The Decentralization-Equity Dilemma" (Lele, 1981).
    "In many countries of Asia and Africa the urban elite have entertained unrealistic ideas about the spirit of harmony and cooperation prevailing in villages... That the so-called village panchayats [village councils in India] were really

only dominant caste panchayats...was totally ignored. The existence of factionalism and other forms of social conflicts [was] not mentioned. The [urban] elite saw only what it wanted to see." (Srinivas, 1988:11-12.)
Devolution to locally selected or emergent leaders can augment the power of local elites, to the detriment of poorer groups who may be denied effective participation. Structures with thousands of potential niches for "small tyrants" sometimes place excessively high demands on mass consciousness and organization. [1]

Rondinelli & Nellis (1986) and Birgegard (1988) cite evidence that devolved local authorities often lean towards investments which are of more benefit to the better-off, e.g. in local towns. Holm & Cohen record that a majority of Batswana villagers, not just the rural elite, would oppose any policies that were directed solely to poorer groups, such as those without cattle (1986:23); and there are similar examples from Zimbabwe (Brand, 1989). Devolution of powers, especially in taxation, can also favour regions with a better resource-base (Hinchliffe, 1980).
    While some of these dilemmas might apply to deconcentration, on the whole they appear to be of "Devolution versus Equity".

Such factors are cited by those who favour centrally set policies oriented to meeting centrally defined needs, and implemented through a deconcentrated field administration. This is the dominant approach in for example India and much of Africa. There are variations according to how far the general representative of government at local levels (e.g. the Governor or District Commissioner) has directive (prefectorial) powers over the other locally based officials. These deconcentrated bureaucracies are often criticized for rigidity, self-interest and eventual tendencies to associate with local elites. Prefectorial systems can bloat and become bottlenecks, and then - partly in consequence - periodically unleash campaigns centered on blueprint models (Hyden, 1983). All this leads to renewed calls for devolution. On the other hand, field bureaucracies can have a good record when dealing with simple standard tasks and with environments which are uniform or can be made so. (Curtis & Watson, 1987, and Chambers, 1988, give examples.)

One also commonly finds arguments about a "Decentralization versus Efficiency Dilemma". This claim is nonsensical, at least in the terms used, for what is "efficient" depends on what one's objectives are, which could include decentralization. The arguments often smuggle in Establishment objectives and economic growth as the criteria behind "efficiency". One should use different labels. Some possibilities are "Decentralization versus Economic Growth", "Participation versus Coordination", "Participation versus Expertise", and "Decentralization versus National Integration". We can discuss these in turn.

Both some proponents of decentralization and some of its opponents argue in terms of impacts on economic output and growth. There is evidence for example that provincial government in a small country can lead to public services with high per capita costs and to a new layer of bureaucracy facing potential investors (Rondinelli &

Nellis, 1986). "Field studies have found that the bulk of local government expenditures goes for personnel costs, and that much of the labour expenditure is unrelated to the provision of services" (Rondinelli et al, 1989:71). There is also some evidence that devolution can lead to investment being spread more widely, functionally and spatially, perhaps reducing its effectiveness (Birgegard, 1988). These are possible dilemmas of Decentralization (but especially Devolution) versus Output and Growth.

The arguments about effects on growth are usually indecisive. We find people drawing different conclusions from the same findings (e.g. some may feel that widely scattered investment favours growth). Economic growth is not something that happens in an economic laboratory, to be then explained by economists. Matters like socio-political stability, investment confidence, and technical and organizational innovativeness are as significant for growth as are the issues which economists generally model. And these matters can be affected by centralization/decentralization, but in ways which are variable and very much open to debate.

In general, the two Good Things of Participation and Coordination need not always go together. Streams in regional planning differ according to whether they put more emphasis on one or the other. Planners who stress Co-ordination tend to be the ones more single-mindedly interested in economic growth. Whether they achieve it is another matter. Increasing intra-government coordination at a subnational level might even reduce coordination more generally, since total administrative capacity is limited.

A related contrast is between two ideal-type models for social organization (Lindblom, 1977). Model 1 holds that men can fully intellectually grasp and guide the social world and identify and implement correct solutions. For each purpose there can be a single body to perform these functions and define and enforce proper coordination. Model 1 downplays disagreements on objectives and perspective, by believing in human uniformity and underlying harmony of interests. Model 2 accepts disagreement and conflict as inevitable, and values both diversity and decision-making by various forms of social interaction. Confident in the adequacy of intellect, Model 1 sees little need to protect public discussion or dispersed initiatives. Lacking that confidence, Model 2 calls for their protection. It also values for its own sake participation in initiatives and discussions, not because this is held to produce "correct" solutions; though it does also hold that these methods often give the best available guidance.

Maeda presents us with a related conflict. Decentralization contains, he claims, an "inherent conflict between the objectives of administrative efficiency and those of popular participation" (Maeda, 1986:10). For deconcentration may be more compatible with the former objective than with the latter; while under devolution local leaders are elected but may for example be poorly educated and also try to place their unqualified friends in jobs.

This clash of "Expertise versus Participation" is a genuine dilemma in some cases. We cannot conclude that decision-making power at local levels should be left with technocrats. Firstly, participation may be valued in its own right, not only as a tool towards other ends. Smith asserts though that it will be downplayed in the bureaucratic and technocratic values that government officialdom uses in its own legitimation (1985:196). Secondly, it can be open to doubt how expert are the "experts". For example, practices forced on small farmers in previous decades have often later been debunked. Thirdly, there are in any case not enough technocrats to do everything; and participation may be a necessary condition for calling forth local efforts.

We can extend this third argument into another possible dilemma: "Coordination versus Action". There is sometimes a trade-off between trying to sort out everything in advance and actually doing things. The total amount of energy available is limited, and coordination is greedy for scarce skilled manpower. In addition the amount of energy that is applied can even be reduced if people have to pass through extensive vetting before they are allowed to pursue their ideas. For these reasons, and because our advance knowledge is inevitably imperfect, the case for advance coordination must fall short of a case for total coordination.

It is becoming clear that each of the categories "devolution" and "deconcentration" could cover many possibilities:- "devolution" covers locally elected bodies which are competent and participatory, or competent and elitist, or incompetent and elitist, or participatory and provided with resources but still incompetent, and so on; "deconcentration" covers technocratic bodies which are empowered but incompetent and biassed towards better-off groups, or empowered, consultative and competent, or competent but non-participatory, and so on.

The question of "National Integration versus Decentralization" is one more where there can be genuine conflict. National integration includes "nation-building", defusing separatist tendencies and avoiding national dis-integration. The centre may have to cede some power in order to keep most of it; but it is in dispute what types of decentralization assist national integration. Devolution can raise local involvement and immediate government legitimacy but also increase inter-regional inequality; and Hyden suggests that in Africa it often provides a new outlet for factional and clan politics. How important for national unity and stability is it to have broad uniformity of conditions, e.g. comparable schools in all areas? On the other hand, how important is it for areas to feel they are involved in ruling themselves and that they maintain a distinct local identity? There is no clear universal answer on the balance of these considerations. We can note though that, in terms of volume of resources handled, territorial decentralization is less important than functional decentralization in most developing countries, probably due partly to fears over national integration.

The discussion so far is inevitably indecisive. Even Rondinelli & Nellis (1986) claim only small, if significant, improvements in some of the developing countries that have tried decentralization, and they cite none from sub-Saharan Africa. One reason for indecisiveness could be shortage of the required evidence. After an extensive literature survey, Conyers (1984a) remarked that while the lack of studies that compare the experiences in various countries is being remedied, there is also a lack of systematic, non-impressionistic evaluations. This second gap is more significant because it is less soluble. The nature of a system of decentralization is that it is so multi-faceted and widespread, and proclaims such a range of broad vague objectives and ramifying effects, that it can partly defy controlled examination and clear measurement (Conyers, 1984a; Rondinelli & Nellis, 1986). There is room left for differing interpretations.

Related to this is a further problem, about which we may be able to do more: our use of crude categories. If each of our labels actually covers many different possibilities, it is unsurprising if we cannot come to adequate generalizations.

2.2. Deepening our concepts of decentralization

The field is often weakly conceptualized because the idea of decentralization arises in reaction to a clearer concept, that of total centralization. A key weakness is the presumption that the terms "centralization" and "decentralization", used in the ways they are generally used, are opposites and mutually exclusive. But decentralization of some state roles and activities may not mean significant relocation of power. Sometimes it arguably involves "penetration", "incorporation" and overall strengthening of central power. Smith thus speaks of: "Decentralization - The Territorial Dimension of the State" (1985). To stress the combination of separation and connection one could alternatively refer to "The Territorial Articulation of the State". Similarly, it can often be less misleading to use the term "multi-level planning" rather than "decentralized planning".

A second problem is that there are more varieties of territorial decentralization than we can capture by just the two terms, "devolution" and "deconcentration". Further, different types of decentralization can be associated with different types of possible benefit (or cost). In the long lists of claimed advantages of decentralization, some of the benefits can be in competition with others, and all are subject to conditions which are far from being always satisfied.

The varieties of decentralization arise because it has many dimensions, in each of which there are many options (Smith, 1979). Conyers notes five dimensions, and shows how as a result an "enormous variety of forms of decentralization...are theoretically possible" (1986a:22). Her five questions concern:
      (i) the types of activity for which authority is shifted;
      (ii) the types of power or authority that are decentralized;

e.g. do they include control over finance ?
(iii) the level or levels to which power is decentralized;
different powers can be allocated to different levels, though this
then imposes extra demands for coordination;
(iv) the individuals or organizations to which power is
transferred; these may be elected or appointed local leaders, or
civil servants, or Party officials, or some combination;
(v) the means of transfer - e.g. by constitutional
legislation or ordinary legislation or administrative decrees or
ad hoc instructions. (Conyers, 1986a, 1986b.)
Frequently the responsibilities that are transferred to lower
levels far exceed the corresponding powers and resources. One
must examine the detailed working features of decentralization in
a country, and not just the proclaimed general intentions. [2]

At the end of a similar checklist, Moharir (1984-5) adds a key
question: what is the political context? Formal rights and powers
still have to be operated in practice. For example, provinces can
be guaranteed certain shares of government revenue or expenditure
by law, but they may not fully receive them (e.g. in India;
Gulati, ed., 1987). The centre can control information as well as
the treasury, and has ways of restricting funds (e.g. to
opposition areas) when it wishes. Even if a well-informed
province becomes aware and objects, many a technical justification
can be discovered for limiting its receipts.

One conclusion from the dimensional analyses is that
"decentralization" refers to various features of the organization
and articulation of complex systems; and therefore that one might
try to draw on the tools and themes of systems theory. I will not
attempt that analysis in any depth, but will instead emphasize two
conclusions or implications. [3]

The first is that decentralization is a vector not a scalar, for
It concerns the distribution of various powers and resources,
between various levels. As a result, international
generalizations are hard to make. We consider this further in the
next section, 2.3. It is not even always clear whether one case
is more or less decentralized than another; for not all of the
scalars in the vector of properties need move in the same
direction. [4] And as the impacts on different people will be
different, they are likely to make different overall assessments.

Suppose provincial Governors acquire greater prefectorial powers.
To a provincial regional planner, struggling to bring district
Councils, sector Ministries and NGOs into accordance with "the
whole which we regional planners are aiming at", this may be a
positive step. Since he approves of the measure, he will apply a
term that he finds positive, viz. "decentralization". Implicitly
he stresses the part of the measure that transfers authority from
the headquarters of sector Ministries. Insofar as authority is
instead being centralized, from Councils, NGOs and the provincial
offices of line Ministries, he will apply another term he finds
positive, namely "coordination". Councils, NGOs and Ministries'
provincial offices will probably take a different view. Villagers

might weigh the various changes, and for example be indifferent.
Or if they are active in NGOs and have been liaising with line
agencies that were quite responsive at local level, they could see
the change as centralization; especially if they become pressed,
as in Tanzania, into a villagization on which many are not keen.

Besides a vector of means, the previous section noted that there
is a vector of sometimes conflicting objectives. As we have just
seen, this range of objectives gives people various positive terms
to choose from when trying to justify something that benefits them
or that they otherwise support. One can combine and summarize the
conclusions of the two sections by saying that decentralization is
a family of various means to various ends.

Surely we are more interested to have summative scalar measures of
the ends than of the means. Why should people reduce the picture
of means down to a scalar measure? One reason is that if
decentralization is in fashion, with an assumption that "real"
decentralization necessarily advances participation and other good
things, then it becomes effectively viewed as an end in itself.
Secondly, a scalar measure helps to conceal disagreements and
differing interests. It becomes easier to claim that any favoured
change increases the Good Thing of decentralization. Mrs.
Thatcher has abolished elected metropolitan authorities which were
strong enough to become centres of opposition, but she still
claims that she is decentralizing power, to yet lower levels.

Clearly we need to go beyond just saying that objectives, such as
participation and coordination, can conflict, to saying also that
people and groups can conflict and can interpret and weight the
objectives differently. The second conclusion that we will
therefore emphasize is that arguments about decentralization are
likely to have strong political components. We will take that up
further in section 2.4.

2.3. Generalization and centralization

The complexity of decentralization means that not many wide
generalizations are likely to have wide validity. One finds that
the same functions are organized in many different ways around the
world, even in apparently similar countries (Smith, 1985). One
becomes cautious about claims that there is a <u>technically</u> best way
of organizing government in a given country at a given time, in
other words a way that is superior whatever one's objectives are
(or, at least, whatever they are within "the normal" range).

Generalizations are useful for organizing ideas and generating
puzzles and suggestions for research. However when data has to be
obtained by sampling, not by strict control, and concepts have a
weak relation to the events they aim to describe, as is the case
with many of the more general concepts in social science, then the
strength of attainable empirical generalizations is inevitably
limited (Ravetz, 1973). For example, one can query the
homogeneity of most of the broad concepts around which

generalizations are attempted, e.g. the standard "target groups" (Wood, 1985). De Graaf indeed criticizes the use in Zimbabwe of a vague target group approach that talks of "the rural poor", "community-groups" or "communal farmers" (de Graaf, 1987a:153). He cites the enormous variations in incomes amongst communal area households that have been reported in 1980s studies (e.g. Brand, 1986; Jackson, 1988).

Similarly when we come to prescription, many authors feel that policy/case interaction is so complex that seeking very general recommendations is mistaken. Murray (1983) and Leonard (1984) criticize on these lines the current World Bank universal advice on public sector management.

There are still useful observations one can make. Some are specific, such as that even in countries as large as India development administration can be notably centralized. A few observations are more general, such as that no country in the world seems to fit an ideal of bottom-up planning (Sharma, 1986). Another is that concern with decentralization seems to come in periodic waves of fashion that are succeeded by waves of reaction (see e.g. Davey & Glentworth, 1977). Mawhood's recent survey (1987) goes further and says that governments are more interested in decentralization when they feel politically secure yet also under economic pressure to mobilize local resources. The only other major generalization which he finds accurate is that almost without exception in Third World countries one sees a network of deconcentrated generalist officers. They represent the central State at sub-national levels, in relatively insecure or fragmented nations. In prescription he stresses that social and cultural settings vary so much that a standard model will not work.

There is a danger of over-generalizing on the lack of scope for generalization! There are also pressing practical matters to be tackled. It is no coincidence that many proferred social science generalizations are prescriptive, despite the prior sets of difficulties in positive analysis and value analysis. The need for action puts a premium on ideas and proposals of broad scope. The more cases there are needing action and the less is the capacity to mount individual analyses then the greater can be the demand for general rules. These conditions often apply in LDCs.

We have now raised the issue of the usefulness of prescriptive generalizations as working rules, as compared to the alternative of seeking to assess every case individually. The rationale we have sketched has a top-down administrative flavour, reflecting the concerns of central decision-makers, for example international donors. The counter-arguments concern the limits to transferability and the importance of participation. It may not be enough to identify a pattern that was successful in some similar cases elsewhere, if what is at stake is the possibility of grafting, i.e. introduction from the outside. Rejectionist views on generalization, held by those who emphasize the diversity of local situations and potentials, can also fit with a preference for assisting local agents to analyse their own programmes rather than for providing higher policymakers with working rules.

Uniform models for decentralization tend to be centrally produced, and can involve a centrally controlled type of decentralization. We sometimes also see the use of "models" of a second type, i.e. cases which are held up for imitation. The issue is whether decentralization becomes a path to local adaptation and diversity or to national uniformity. Many models of rural organization are in circulation, for example derived from East Asia. Those countries have themselves been careful in using foreign models or in proposing themselves as models. Mao was reported as saying that the only thing replicable from Chinese experience was its slow, painful process of experimentation. The sweeping Maoist use of models internally (notably Dazhai) is a different matter, better understood as part of domestic political struggles.

From our interest in centre/local relations, we need to consider the related issue of the unforeseen policy avalanche. Examples include collectivization/communization/villagization in the USSR in 1930, China in 1955/6 and 1958, and Tanzania in 1974/5. Programmes that were envisaged to take years raced ahead to implementation within months, i.e. in a time span that precluded serious evaluation and feedback. The vanguard centre cannot know exactly what is the situation in each locality, but it wants to lean in a certain direction at a certain time. So it holds up examples for emulation and tells local cadres and officials: "Don't fear to press ahead with policy X". It covers itself by also saying "Follow the mass line". While the vagueness in instructions is partly unavoidable, if decisions are to be made on the spot, it enables cadres to be criticized after the event for "misinterpreting" instructions and lapsing into "commandism" or "tailism" (whichever label fits the centre's convenience), or else leaves them only sharing the honour in second place to the farseeing centre, for having correctly interpreted its wise directives (Frank, 1959).

The centre pays a price too. Local cadres do not know how true or generalizable are the centre's models. Even the centre is partly guessing on generalizability. Jack Gray was careful for these reasons to call the internally brandished Chinese examples "myths". Most local cadres no doubt still give some credence to what the centre says, and anyway wish to be safe against accusations of "tailism". Cadres who have recently been decentralized (e.g. in Tanzania's 1972 reforms) also wish to use their new powers and opportunities and to improve the peasantry. The centre can receive reports from areas where conditions have proved easier for pressing ahead, plus optimistically slanted reports; decide it has underestimated mass enthusiasm, and increase its pressure. Excesses and problems are later held to have "resulted not so much from senseless directives from bureaucrats of the centre but rather from over-enthusiastic local cadres, many of whom took the prevailing rhetoric...too literally", i.e. literally (Sklair, 1977). In Zimbabwe at present the poor reputation of rushed villagization in Tanzania may be contributing to a more gradual learning-process approach; but insofar as decentralization is mainly an extension of central influence then a potential for commandist campaigns remains.

2.4. The politics of decentralization

Many of the common conceptual weaknesses and romantic idealizations in discussions of decentralization were identified long ago (e.g. Fesler, 1965). Their persistence suggests deep roots, and our earlier sections hinted at political factors. Technical analyses of activities' features take us some way towards recommendations on how far the activities should be centralized or decentralized (e.g. Rondinelli et al, 1989; Helmsing, 1989); but we are left far short of full and definite recommendations. We have seen that the complexity of the subject - the many varieties and influences, the multiple and partly conflicting objectives, the lack of controlled evidence - leaves room for disagreement, as well as for confusion, mis-generalization and mystification, whether intentional or unintentional.

Further, since decentralization involves reallocation of powers, with some groups gaining relative to others, it is likely to involve disagreement in any case. A decentralization policy of a particular type will only come about if the coalition of groups who support it outweigh-cum-outmanouver the groups who oppose it (Smith, 1985). Smith goes further and suggests that:

> "Decentralization should...be seen as part of the process by which dominant classes, including those at the local level, articulate their interests.. The 'need' for decentralization ...reflects no less than the power of different groups to promote and defend their political interests... [However] in less developed countries the emerging bourgeoisie is often dependent for its growth on national, not municipal, political power" (Smith, 1985: 25-6, 59, 194).

Rondinelli & Nellis (1986) found that most decentralization policies are undertaken for primarily political reasons; and how the policy works out in practice will depend on similar struggles (Conyers, 1986c). For example, if allocations to sub-national levels are on the basis of matching-grants or identified need, there can be controversy not just over the formulae but over the estimates of effort and need that lower levels provide. Groups and coalitions will use fine-sounding banners to advance their cause. Calls for intellectual clarity will often be ignored.

For each case one needs to look afresh at the alliances and tactics involved. There are forces both for centralization (e.g. certain political and economic stresses) and for decentralization (e.g. seeking legitimacy or new economic initiatives), and various coalitions of local and central/national interest groups can be found (Smith, 1985). There can be struggles within as well as between alliances; for if the logic of decentralization is that the centre has to cede some power in order to retain more, the new power-centres that are created must have some independent scope, in order to be willing to largely serve the centre's objectives. Decentralization cannot therefore be just a technique of implementing central objectives; and it inevitably brings tensions with central planning.

One should note that those involved include not just territorial groups or Marxian classes, but also government bureaucracies and the professions. Each occupational group has a set of ideas that emphasizes its own importance; and different groups can favour different levels of decision-making. Bureaucracies based on specialized expertise have become especially important in fields where local government was traditionally important, like public health, public works and environmental planning. Growing occupational professionalism reduces the autonomy of local governments and of generalist administrators. (Fesler, 1965; Smith, 1985; see de Valk, 1986, for the example of rural land-use planning in Zimbabwe.) Tensions between area authorities and functional specialists are perennial and have no full solution.

Gore (1984) argues that regional policies in general are used to serve purposes such as assisting private capital accumulation, or for legitimating and extending government authority - which is crucial in new countries; yet they are described as being for area development, which is at best the side effect of, and sometimes just the cover used by, other purposes. For example authors on decentralization often note that there is confusion about the allocation of responsibilities between different territorial levels, and make suggestions for reducing this. But if part of lower levels' role is as window-dressing, then the suggestions somewhat miss the point. Overloading lower levels with objectives and responsibilities is also a standard control tactic; it leaves them always open to criticism from above (Frank, 1959).

Gore's view is perhaps crude in suggesting that some forces are "real" and others are shadows. But we might restate his point. Regional policies serve multiple purposes and are stated in broad terms. A policy can therefore be presented or interpreted in different ways by different people and on different occasions. This variation in perceptions is an important element in political coalitions or compromises. In the case of decentralization policies, it is unnecessary and perhaps in its own way naive to claim that the policies are not genuinely concerned with matters of participation, coordination, etc. But it is clearly naive to believe that those are the only concerns, or that they are interpreted and ranked in the same way by all parties.

Anyang-Nyongo (1989) notes that some African governments prefer control to participation because leaders use the State to advance personal interests. "Participation" is often limited to formal approval of government actions. By limiting the demands placed upon themselves, and controlling the criteria of legitimacy that are used, governments try to reduce the risk of being found wanting. Hyden (1983) similarly suggests that trends to departicipation after independence are partly to keep factional competition manageable. He criticizes technocratic discussions of decentralization which ignores such political realities, as well as populist discussions which see bureaucratic norms - rather than their absence or decay - as the problem.

If decentralization reflects political interests and balances, then shifts are likely to be usually slow but occasionally rapid. Blair suggests that while the Indian community development and local government (Panchayati Raj) programmes of the 50s and 60s are often seen as a failure, one needs to take a longer-term view.

> "At first these elected local councils were...taken over by the traditional local elites, who used them to turn rural development programmes into patronage for themselves. But as time went on...the more numerous middle-level peasants began to...win control [via] the ballot-box...[and to] demand a larger rural development commitment from government... This whole process in turn has led to a further awakening, as sharecroppers and landless agricultural workers have begun to demand government help... gentry and kulaks struggle between themselves for power while trying simultaneously to co-opt and beat back the...challenge from below" (Blair 1985:455-6).

The Indian literature therefore contains an instructive variety of attitudes. An orthodox mainstream defends deconcentration and centrally-devised programmes for needy "target groups". An orthodox opposition defends devolution and attacks the dominance of national elites in present policies. The mainstream replies by pointing to the corruption and elite dominance at local levels. One type of radical opposition accepts both critiques, but supports devolution as hopefully providing the incentive and opportunity for poor majorities to eventually mobilize. They see devolution as a long-term path to mass political awakening.

Each country is different, but all need realistic political analysis. Part 3 will look at decentralization in Zimbabwe in the way Part 2 has proposed:- as something complicated rather than simple, and with room for differing interpretations; as having pros and cons, rather than automatically being good; and as something political, not only technical. We will proceed by territorial level, from the village up. Since there are cross-cutting issues, points that are raised when discussing a particular level sometimes also apply elsewhere.

We will deliberately not present a single interpretation, but instead examine a range of views. One continuing theme will be the competition between forms of Lindblom's "Model 1", which lean towards a belief in full explicit coordination through a single agency, whether at one or more levels, and forms of his "Model 2", which stress dispersed initiatives and multiple channels.

3. IDEAS ON DECENTRALIZATION IN ZIMBABWE IN THE 1980S

3.1. Populist hopes - local cantons?

Village and ward development committees (VIDCOs and WADCOs) were formed throughout the communal lands in 1984-85. District and provincial development committees (DDCs and PDCs) dominated by officials were formed nationwide. Provincial Governors were appointed, as were Provincial Councils derived from the elected District Councils and officialdom. The new system reflected and produced high expectations for grass-roots decision-making.

VIDCOs are directly elected and were expected not just to:
"a) identify and articulate village needs;
 b) coordinate and forward village needs to the WADCO;
 c)...link between the WADCO and the people";
but also to:
"d) coordinate and cooperate with government extension workers in
      the operations of development and planning;
 e) coordinate and supervise all activities relating to production
      and general development of the village area;
 f) organize the people to undertake projects that require a
      considerable work force", including production projects.

WADCOs are derived from VIDCOs, and were expected to be:
"a) Central planning authority linking...6 villages;
 b) An overall seer that co-ordinates development plans of the six
      villages, i.e. re-examining and prioritizing projects and
      programmes that come from the villages..."; and so on.
(Sibanda, [D.A., Beitbridge District], 1986:5-7; emphases added.)

There were calls for "each Ministry to decentralize to village level" and for a planner to be trained for every village (Ranche House College national seminar, November 1986). There are six thousand designated villages in the communal areas alone, and many Ministries are not even represented at district level yet.

A major agency at sub-District levels has been the Ministry of Community Development & Women's Affairs (MCDWA). Village health and community workers, in principle elected by their communities, now come under MCDWA and have multi-purpose duties; above them is to be a ward development worker. Part of their role is to work with the village and ward development committees. It is a mistake though to identify the community development approach with just MCDWA, for it should inform the work of other agencies, e.g. in the Ministry of Local Government, the food-for-work programme, Councils, other ministries and NGOs, as well as the village and ward committees. It is not intended that coordination of Ministries at local level be done mainly and directly by a Community Development department, but also through the local bodies which it should support. [1]

In reviewing experiences with VIDCOs and WADCOs up to late 1987, the Minister of Local Government declared: "the village level has

done well. It has been able to identify and implement projects with the help of NGOs.... The ward has complemented village efforts and provided a useful co-ordinative tool. Unfortunately, it has not been able to influence major decisions made at village level through NGOs mainly because it is unable to marshall resources to back up its decisions" (Chikowore, 1987b:2).

Most non-government reports have been less encouraging. VIDCOs and even WADCOs appear to fall far short of the capacity, skills, finance and support required to be a local corporate management agency. The poorly educated committee members had just three days training initially. There are no funds directly available to these bodies (hence their reliance on NGOs), whereas even the pre-independence Community Boards received one-for-one matching grants. Murombedzi (1986) is typical in reporting that the four VIDCOs he studied all met far less frequently than the prescribed minimum of twice a month. Meetings were usually convened only on the initiative of Government officers or the WADCOs. The VIDCOs did not seem to come up with proposals, but instead just considered - and virtually always approved - projects proposed from outside, and then mobilized labour. Their role appeared to be to receive information and directives from above, rather than be a channel for bottom-up initiative, though they allow some airing of social issues and grievances. There are reports that many VIDCOs fail to keep minutes, are subjected to directives from Party officials and often overshadowed by traditional leaders (who are being reinstated as local administrators of justice from 1988). (See e.g. Nhira, 1987, & Ranche House College national seminar, 1986.) There is in general no secret voting in village elections and meetings. It takes a bold, perhaps sometimes even a reckless, man or woman to speak and vote openly against the proposals that have just been advanced by Party, Government and VIDCO officials. One can note too that the officials are mostly men and the villagers are mostly women.

Other reports suggest declining participation in VIDCO activities (e.g. Mellors & Conyers, 1989), especially when compared to NGO and church activities and projects. In certain villages VIDCO-linked food-for-work projects seem to have been directed to the relocation of residences and the fencing of demarcated grazing areas, as required in the villagization policy, with poorer people being moved or otherwise suffering costs (e.g. when fields near a paddock entry are overrun), and with larger cattleholders (who can be Councillors or VIDCO officials) particularly benefitting.

WADCOs seem little or no more active than VIDCOs, and are again short of skills and support (Sibanda, 1986). There are complaints over their record of reporting back to VIDCOs, and over the reporting back from all higher levels to lower ones. Efforts by Community Development to "coordinate" the more strongly established technical ministries at ward level, either directly or through the new committees, do not appear to carry great weight.

The new village and ward boundaries are based on a nationwide criterion of population catchment, not on preexisting groupings;

and current administrative "villages" are several times larger
than pre-independence units (Brand, 1989). It is not surprising
if the new units lack great cohesion. Their officials lack
the trappings of leadership held by chiefs and headmen, and their
ability to represent group history and identity. Various local
committees emerged in the later stages of the liberation war and
at the time of independence; but these were subsequently largely
disbanded and not made the basis for official groupings. (There
is evidence too that in terms of personnel, the official
committees represent a "conservative restoration" of better-off
strata; see Cliffe & Stoneman, 1988.) Similarly, while there is a
notable record over the past two generations of cohesive local
action in building and maintaining village schools, these involve
catchment areas larger than the VIDCOs and may not have strong
relationships to WADCO boundaries either. Officials would like to
encourage the involvement of local school-teachers in the
committees, to provide skills. But teachers often come from other
areas, and there can be feelings of class-difference between them
and local peasants.

More generally, an NGO manager stresses that:
> "rural Zimbabwe is not homogenous... a class structure has
> penetrated... participation..is beginning to have an
> ideological function, in that leaders use it to stress
> solidarity and the unity of different sections of the
> population...[and] as a mask to cover up what is actually
> happening... It has become fashionable for some leaders, both
> in politics and NGOs, to talk and act in the name of the
> 'people'. In most cases the interaction of such leaders and
> the grassroots is most ambiguous" (Nyoni, 1987:123).

After 1980 the term povo, apparently brought in from Mozambique,
became common for referring to the masses of ordinary people. It
was soon followed, and is being outlasted, by a similarly imported
term - chef, which is used to describe the new power-brokers at
all levels. One must add that the emergent leaders are not always
affluent by wider standards, nor yet a sharply separate caste.

Some of the suggestions for strengthening VIDCOs and WADCOs - e.g.
"remove class differences", "improve communication at all levels",
"make Ministries aware of government policy" - as raised at a
Ranche House College national seminar in 1986 fail to get to the
bottom of the problems. They hope for solutions by wishing away
the constraints, of time and resources and motivation. By a 1988
Ranche House College national seminar there had been a noticeable
evolution of opinion. There were again attacks on NGOs and
extension workers for bypassing the new institutions, though the
NGOs present denied this. However the majority view now seemed to
be that village and ward levels have a consultative role, but lack
the preconditions - of staff, skills, leadership, etc. - for
"bottom-up planning".

It is true that new institutions need many years to consolidate;
but the record internationally of popular participation through
all-purpose single-channel village committees is disappointing.

(See e.g. Midgley et al, 1986; Holdcroft, 1982.) People have other commitments and interests besides meetings with long agendas. We cannot say that the intense and skilled village-level participation that was hoped for VIDCOs and WADCOs is never possible. But it has special requirements - especially if it is to be indefinitely sustained - including for a strong communal consciousness, which may be linked to relative homogeneity and self-reliance. An intense face-to-face democracy was for example found until recently in some small Swiss mountain cantons, "in which everyone knew one another and actively participated in decisions on such matters as the construction of a school or road" (Walzer, 1989:44). Even there, where it was favoured by long tradition, a strongly federal constitution, and a good base of resources and skills, it has largely died out. People are now too mobile and otherwise occupied. In poor labour-reserve communal lands in a strongly unitary state the limits may be greater.

Allen (1987) sees "Two Models of Local Government". Some countries were formed by the coming together of smaller communities for mutual support (e.g. Switzerland, the Netherlands, the U.S.A.). Relatively independent local government has been a fundamental institution in them. Other countries, such as ex-colonies, have a history of dominant central government. Local government there has less tradition and is just one optional policy instrument for the centre. Allen fails to demonstrate that countries in the second group can reinvent their history and enter the first group.

By 1989 the Minister of Local Government spoke in a less favourable key than before: "Reports reaching my ministry suggest that people at village and ward levels are not sufficiently involved or active in the village and ward development committees.... The tendency is for them to say 'leave to the <u>chefs</u> or politicians". Official proposals are still approved, but gain less legitimacy. Rather than analysing the problem, he reiterates a maximal target: "the [new] rural district councils must... effectively mobilize every man, woman and child in every village....to fully participate, not only in the planning process but also in the implementation". He then proposes a method for "encouraging" "participation":

> "..every rural district council [should] establish a ward or village register of participation in VIDCOs and WADCOs. This will encourage all to participate. Civil servants will then synthesize and perfect the plans and projects at the district development committee level" (Chikowore, 1989a:2-3.)

Attendance registers might at most suffice to restore attendance and assent at meetings. Is this enough, and for whom? The earlier discrepancy between government and non-government reports on VIDCOs and WADCOs may partly have reflected a difference over the criteria for evaluation. If the main criteria were simply attendance and non-dissent then one could conclude that there is participatory decentralization; but not if one thinks that it involves something more.

3.2. Devolutionary ideals - district republics?

For most people, the district appears a more realistic level for effective decentralization than the village or ward. New enlarged District Councils in the communal areas - one per district - were designed already in early 1980, during the transitional government, and legislated in May. These elected Councils have great symbolic significance and important legal responsibilities, including for land allocation and land-use planning and control. In practice their powers and capacity are quite limited. Their roles in education and health have lately been reduced; even community development staff remain under central government (unlike in Botswana); and until 1988/9 the Chief Executive of each Council was a centrally appointed bureaucrat, the District Administrator. District Councils cannot settle tenders by themselves; their recommendation must be approved by higher bodies. Central financial control is felt necessary to maintain Councils' probity and reputation, at least in their early years. Some claim that many Council appointments are ruled by, in Hyden's terms, "the economy of affection".

The District level as a whole, not just Councils, is rather weak in development planning. Sibanda complained that: "No single Ministry has...enough members of staff to spare for long periods of time...[and] there are no funds allocated to undertake planning" (1986:3). A set of five-year plans for Districts was prepared in 1985. Nearly all appear to have been hurriedly thrown together by District Administration staff, from the requests received from wards, Councillors and local offices of line Ministries. Preparation was drastically limited by the very tight timetable set nationally, inadequate guidelines, the shortage of previously consolidated information, lack of transport to undertake village consultations, and lack of planning skills. (See e.g. Tavaruva, 1986; Mutizwa-Mangiza, 1989a.) Coverage was erratic, and the subsequent analysis and sifting were extremely skimpy. The products have been universally described as "shopping lists" or "stocking lists". They contain little diagnosis or understanding of the rural economy. Unsurprisingly they then carried little weight at higher levels. Districts did not receive their own copies of the draft first volume of the Five Year National Plan; nor did the final version refer to the contents of District or Provincial Plans (Khabo, 1986). The belated second volume contains nods towards District and Provincial Plans (Zimbabwe, 1988); but it was already outdated on publication. District annual plans rate no better (Mellor & Conyers, 1989).

The question is whether these experiences were a useful first step and learning stage, or were disillusioning and demobilizing or even showed that bottom-up planning is not feasible. The staffing situation may have improved a bit with the availability of Deputy District Administrators part-time for ongoing development coordination, and with the appointment from 1988 of some District Rural Development Officers, who will each cover a number of districts from Provincial level. There remain several structural

problems, besides the lack of skills. These include financial
dependence and the nature of local political decision-making.

The problems of skills and of politics are seen in the food-for-
work programme, which is run through the District Administration
and in principle offers a tool for district-managed development.
Its record so far is of success as a relief measure but of failure
as a development programme. Creating sustainable small dams, road
improvements, anti-erosion measures and income-generating projects
often requires greater technical and managerial inputs than have
been available. Hasty and poorly designed projects may even have
discredited the idea of small labour-intensive activities. The
record is also of widespread expenditure overruns, inadequate
accounting, some misuse of funds, and preemptive decision-making
by local politicians. In announcing early suspension of the
1987-8 programme, the Minister identified "the worst problem [as]
the unnecessary interference by politicians... This has resulted
in the over-expenditure on wages and inadequate materials to keep
the project moving" (Chikowore, 1988:9).

Irregular or improper intervention by local and central
politicians appears common in other areas too, down to the
allocation of houses and use of equipment. Nor is there any
variation reported according to the level of professional
background of the politicians (Ranche House College seminar,
1986). Responding to calls to give district-levels more powers, a
Deputy Secretary of Local Government expressed scepticism over
what districts would do with them: "some district administrators
had turned into 'little dictators' in their areas"; on the other
hand "some field officers had been afraid to use power given to
them" ("The Herald", 27 Nov. 1986). These officers turn to higher
levels to know what to do: "I can't disagree with politician Z,
he'll get me into trouble" (Ranche House College seminar, 1986).

Several authors focus instead on other problems, notably the
strength of independent line-ministry decision-making, and the
shortage of resources for allocation by the district bodies
themselves, outside of the food-for-work programme. One study
focussed on Mwenezi District, which became well-known for its
early 1980s initiatives in villagization and grazing schemes
(Gaidzanwa et al, 1987; Gaidzanwa, 1987). A small European
Communities grant ($25,000) was given for fencing materials. Even
this active District failed to meet donor reporting requirements.
No central Ministry stepped in to replace the donor; this was a
Council and District programme, and Ministries' own programmes are
defined nation-wide. The Council and the District and Provincial
Administrations were not in a position to take over funding, even
to take a loan. For the small amounts that they need, Districts
can only approach donors via the central ministries, who can be
wary about programmes which cut across ministerial boundaries.
District requests also have to compete at the centre with larger
centrally-planned projects. In this situation NGOs may step in to
support local initiatives, but there can still be major
coordination problems with the District bodies. (See Vengai,
1987, for a case study from Mwenezi itself.) NGOs are also liable

to criticism from government planners when they are involved in similar local projects that are not for the local government system, as we will see later.

Some authors find that current district planning has improved the relevance and coordination of development activities and the local commitment to them (e.g. Mutizwa-Mangiza, 1989a). They argue though that "many of the potential benefits of decentralisation do not occur [as] there is no guarantee that the central government will take any notice" of the local planning (Conyers, 1986a). The district can seem a lowly level to central ministries. These authors call for greater local power over the officers of central ministries (e.g. by compelling their attendance at DDC meetings) and for major augmentation of district resources, e.g. by guaranteed untied grants. The belief is that "shopping list" district plans would disappear once districts have their own budgets and/or preordained shares of line Ministry budgets. In the case of elected local authorities though, we saw some international reviews that suggested they often spend in a less integrated way than do coordinated central agencies. Their accountability to local residents encourages them to spread their activities widely, both spatially and across sectors.

Reynolds (1984) called not just for district budgets (allocated according to a formula covering population, income level and local revenue-generating effort) but also for national programmes to which Districts and sub-Districts groups can send funding requests. This could reduce the chance of Mwenezi type schemes dying somewhere in the branches of government. The proposal is close to a current UK-aided programme in Midlands Province, where a pilot district is being helped to submit proposals to a provincial fund.

There are no longer big hopes for augmenting Council funds by income-generating projects. They do not generate net income (Helmsing, 1988). Business is seen to demand skills besides those in public administration. Elected Councillors can also find it harder to impose and collect charges than did chiefs or appointed officers. The 1986 Tax Commission recommended that local authorities should not be expected to raise major revenue by business enterprises. Central Government did not accept this, but the Minister of Local Government went on to say: "There is a need to widen the tax base or to work out an income sharing mechanism with Central Government. I think suggestions of self-help are worn out... at Local Authority level, we are speaking of big money, not a couple of hundreds of dollars" (Chikowore, 1987b:3). However the 1988 Rural District Councils Act did not widen the local fiscal base (Helmsing, 1989).

Mutizwa-Mangiza (1989b) sees the key problem as ideological unclarity: we need to know whether Zimbabwe is going to adopt (i) a mixed economy or a state socialist set-up, and (ii) a "dual"/ mixed model of local government (with both a District Council and a District Administration) or an "integrated" system, with just one State arm at District level. [2] These are indeed separate issues. While Zambia apparently abolished the distinctions

between party, central and local government (Chikulo, 1985), some Leninist states have been pluralist in sub-national government:- there are separate Party and State representatives (with the former often having de facto prefectorial powers) at many levels, and separate personnel establishments for Party and government (and sometimes for central government and local government). Plural set-ups allow one to redirect towards others the inevitable disappointments in situations where goals far exceed resources. Unified set-ups leave only one target.

Mutizwa-Mangiza advocates a system in which (i) all local government staff would be part of the national public service, and (ii) all government staff at local levels would fall under an elected local body, the district council. It is thought that this will overcome the gap between planning and budgeting in the present "dual" system; in other words, that transfer of people will also bring transfer of finance - which may not occur.

The first part of his model is similar to what has happened in education, with the formation of a unified teaching service. Teachers receive standardized conditions and opportunities, and a better prospective career progression. In Botswana all council staff other than manual labourers are in a national Unified Local Government Service. However, there can be resistance by central staff to a totally unified national public service, if it would make them more liable to be sent to the districts.

The second part of the model is more ambitious and problematic. If staff's career progression is in a national service, they may be oriented to national superiors more than to nominal local ones. Even if teachers are formally employed by local councils the key authority over their activities lies in the Ministry of Education. Mutizwa-Mangiza hopes to reconcile professional staff to being controlled by local politicians and administrators, by recruitment somehow of better qualified managers for every Council. But even teachers were dissatisfied with a local authority employer, and it is more likely still with engineers, agriculturalists and others. A less ambitious measure could be to at least absorb the District Administration into the District Council. There are no signs of this in Zimbabwe, and we noted earlier that it is rarely found in the developing world. Absorption in the other direction is perhaps more common. There are political implications and preconditions of central government ceding prime authority over district level staff. It is no coincidence that countries with "integrated" or "unified" systems often have centrally appointed local authorities, e.g. Governors. [3]

Mutizwa-Mangiza calls, as a second best solution, for clearer indication of the respective functions of each level of government. Again there are technical and political reasons why this is easier said than done. In addition he makes pragmatic suggestions for increasing the relevance of district plans. The dream of the five-year blueprint should be dropped; medium-term plans should instead be outlines of strategy, used to guide the preparation of annual plans/budgets.

Overall, the system of local government at district and sub-district levels has been strengthened in some ways. The 1984-5 formation of provincial through to village level development committees contributed for example to the demise of the Ministry of Lands, Resettlement and Rural Development. That had been created in 1978, by splitting off sections of the former Ministry of Internal Affairs to be a development agency for the communal lands. A separate ministry for communal lands became incompatible with the new hierarchy of coordinating committees, which was linked instead to local government and administration.

On the other hand, a hierarchy has levels, and the 1985 Act was named after the non-elected Provincial level. Similarly, ever since 1980 there has been frequent official mention of the need for graduate development officers at district level; yet they have not appeared, even after the 1984-5 rulings on institutional set-ups. In 1988 a handful of District Rural Development Officer posts were finally advertised. The contrast with the numbers of new posts created in parastatals, like the Urban Development Corporation, and in some central departments is striking.

This suggests one or more of a number of possibilities:-
(a) funds or manpower are too limited;
(b) central government puts low priority on strengthening the districts, or is in two minds about doing so, including over whether it should emphasize the District Administration or the District Councils;
(c) different professions fight over which of them should occupy any new posts, or are waiting until they have sufficient graduates available;
(d) professionals are unwilling to work at district level;
(e) people believe that there is no point in having a planner at district level unless there are legislative changes to give a single authority the powers to direct all the government (and other) agencies operating there.

There is some evidence, locally and for example from Botswana experience, that this final position could be mistaken. The growth in numbers of other professional positions suggests that resource shortages are also not a sufficient explanation. There is certainly evidence of unwillingness to work at district level, but it is hard to envisage graduates refusing district jobs if no others are available. The government also probably had the option in the 1980s of using foreign aid to obtain expatriates to support districts. The chances of doing this fall with time. Finally, professional rivalries have no doubt been present. In 1989 the Department of Physical Planning has bid for an officer per district - for itself, not for the Councils or District Administration - to coincide with the first batch of graduates from the University of Zimbabwe B.Sc. in Urban & Regional Planning. In no other country in Southern and Eastern Africa is there a serious attempt to restrict rural district planning posts to British type town-&-regional planners (Gasper, 1988b), and one can query the usefulness of the associated delay in Zimbabwe.

3.3. Professional aspirations - provincial realms?

A recent speech by the Minister of Local Government held the 1985-86 Provincial Plans to be almost as weak as the District Plans. They have certainly had almost as little influence.

> "We are presented with huge shopping list[s] of needs to central government... [with] weak sectoral analysis to the extent that the sectoral problem analysis and solution is not convincing... [Secondly] I am not convinced that there is sufficient popular participation in the plan preparation... are the priorities spelt out and agreed upon by everybody...? If there was no extensive debate...there will be no unity of purpose... the province will fall prey to the disorganising activity of outsiders...[and] there will be no unity of effort... The third observation I make involves the weak economic analysis and proposals... You need to arrive at a type of priority making where one area is brought to a take-off level before similarly concentrated investments are undertaken to other parts of the province... [Finally] the plan is silent on resource mobilisation" (Chikowore, 1988).

Of the theories that underlie this analysis, one is a belief that we require and can attain full unity of purpose and effort. Criticism of the "disorganizing activity of outsiders" has become more and more common (e.g. Mugabe, 1987; Muzenda, 1987); and we comment on it later. There is also the idea that an economic orientation implies geographical concentration of investment which will then lead to "take-off". This is the viewpoint of some rather old-fashioned regional planning.

In these discussions, at provincial level or by regional planners, we sometimes move away from emphasis on democratic reasons for decentralization, towards stresses on technical reasons and on strong coordination of the various powers allotted at subnational levels. A statement on these lines is made by two senior professionals in the Department of Physical Planning (Mlalazi & Jogi, 1987). The major problems they see in provincial planning do not concern the shortage of skills or the nature of local politics, for example in generating diffuse commitments. Instead they emphasize the lack of compulsory integration through the provincial government system; too much power remains in Harare ministries. They also warn that: "Some self-styled NGOs...have taken advantages of gaps in central government participation at village level" [i.e. have filled gaps - DG] (Mlalazi & Jogi, 1987:3). But "Government [now] requires that all such investments [including by local NGOs] be channelled through the established development planning structures in order to maximize the equitable distribution of resources throughout the country" (Chikowore, 1987a:7). Control of distribution may be placed before self-help. Mlalazi and Jogi note for example "the creation of Development Associations at Provincial and district levels. The associations are taking a keen interest on the development of their areas and this development may not necessarily create the whole which we regional planners are aiming at" (1987:14). There can however be tradeoffs between control and activity.

Calls for "more and more coordination at district level and provincial level" (Muzuva, 1986:2) are not only made by regional planners. "Coordination" is widely held to be something vital, that must and can be done fully, explicitly and in advance, and to be separate from "bureaucracy within Government [which] itself is a constraint to development" (ibid.). "Coordination" is what we do to others; they commit "bureaucracy". More coordination is by definition always good and apparently costless, and therefore not subject to questions of appropriate degree. The most persistent calls do seem to come from urban-and-regional planners: for example for "100 per cent integrated planning" (Rambanapasi, 1988). Many of them call for a provincial level authority.

Urban-and-regional planners in Zimbabwe are trying to apply and adapt a Northern-derived training to a predominantly rural and poor African country, and to respond to the opportunities for influence that arise from the central position of the Department of Physical Planning (DPP) in the Ministry of Local Government (MLGRUD). "Physical planning" arose as an extension of town planning, which in turn emerged from architecture, civil engineering and surveying. As an approach to regional planning it can sometimes overemphasize physical factors and neglect people. Coming from countries with vigorous industrial and commercial sectors, it is weaker in promotion than in control, and weaker on design and implementation of productive development than of infrastructure. In developing countries it has had to try to draw in skills from other types of planning.

Physical planning is strongly established in Zimbabwe. The 1933 and 1945 Town Planning Acts were extended in 1976 to cover some regional planning, and in 1982 to cover District Council areas. The Department of Physical Planning's wide powers reflect the British system, where urban-and-regional planning has considerable scope given the absence of much national development planning. In 1984-5 DPP became the secretariat for provincial planning, including supervising the district plans. Its role was furthered by the demise of the Ministry of Lands, Resettlement & Rural Development; by the initial reputations in 1980 of the communal area Councils and District Administration, which therefore had to undergo reorganization; and by the weakness of the national planning section that was created in 1980.

Yet DPP is partly at a loss in trying to guide the whole of subnational development. In reviewing the experience with Provincial Plans, Mlalazi & Jogi start with a quotation: "'Regional Planning has become a necessity in most countries. But nobody seems to know quite what it is, and no nation seems to know how to do it'... We would like to believe that Zimbabwe is no exception to this statement" (1987:1).

Various responses to regional planning puzzlement are possible, such as the following. Some of them could be combined.
    (a) DPP should concentrate on urban issues, or on strictly physical planning.

(b) In contrast to proposal (a): physical planners should be trained to also handle many other aspects (Rambanapasi, 1988; Mutizwa-Mangiza, 1989a).

This may be unfeasible (Gasper, 1988b); and instead many groups need to be trained for regional planning, including on how to work together, argue Carlberg & Oscarsson (1989). Amos (1981) proposed that DPP be expanded to adequately handle regional planning by including several other professions.

(c) A local government agency should acquire statutory power over other agencies at subnational levels. The DPP section in an official review of the years 1980-85 called for legislation to give District and Provincial Plans statutory force (ZANU PF, 1985; also Wekwete, 1989a).

Having seen the poor quality of District and Provincial Plans - partly due to inevitable problems of information, communication, analysis, prediction and assessment - others instead suggest changing the 1976 Act precisely in order to remove the possibility of giving such plans a legal force (e.g. Underwood, 1986).

(d) In a centralized partner to proposal (c), the Ministry of Local Government (MLGRUD)'s Central Planning Unit (including representatives of relevant Local Government departments) would coordinate and assess the Provincial Plans before forwarding them to the Ministry of Finance (MFEPD) for action (Nzuwa, 1986).

(e) An extension of this proposal is that: "It is the responsibility of the...Minister [of Finance] to ensure that each Provincial Plan receives the approval of Cabinet and thereafter is funded in accordance with the priorities therein and depending upon the availability of funds" (Chikowore, 1986a:6). This reflects a fear that MFEPD is dominated by its Finance section and should have less discretion. But it may go further than the 1984 Prime Minister's directive, which does not limit what Cabinet can do to the Provincial Plans (or after them), and simply requires that "MFEPD shall evaluate each Ministry's bids for funds against the framework of approved provincial development plans" (not against only that), and "shall incorporate programmes drawn from the provincial development plans" (Mugabe, 1984).

(f) A less ambitious position is the hope that the arrival of economic planners at provincial level, from the new National Planning Agency (NPA), will provide the missing ingredient. [4] There have inevitably been disputes over the powers of these officers, how they would report to the Provincial Administrator and to the centre, and their relation to the DPP planners.

(g) Less ambitious still is an acceptance that regional planning (as opposed to strictly physical planning) should be placed in an enlarged NPA. This brings us back to proposal (a).

We can see in these proposals various degrees and forms of decentralization. Some will be examined in the following section on central government positions. Here we should examine versions of position (c) calling for an overlord Provincial authority. This would most likely be a prefectorial deconcentration, especially as the district is already an elected level.

The first common argument for a Provincial authority is that effective planning and implementation are not possible in present

conditions. Horror stories are told of clinics built without
water supplies, of duplicated facilities, and so on. It is hard
to measure these claims; and one can receive a different picture
from other ministries than from DPP.

Secondly, it is argued that the present system is also not
participatory: it merely makes "centrally determined projects look
locally planned" (Wekwete, 1989b). For the centre, this addition
of a local look can however be greatly valued. Further, one needs
to examine how far local inputs do affect project selection and
design, e.g. where government facilities are located; and on which
issues a local input is itself relevant, e.g. in location of a
borehole, but perhaps not in design of a dam.

Thirdly, it is held that a coordinating provincial authority will
give better results, i.e. expenditures that are coordinated,
synergistic, and locally relevant. It will not waste people's
time, nor display intra- or inter-regional chauvinism. One can
ask how far the record of existing city councils - who have an
easier task - supports this claim, and if there are the political
and logistical preconditions for such councils at province level.
One may also consider the record in other countries of regional
authorities with overlord powers. Sometimes having multiple
channels might be more effective than a single channel.

Fourthly, it is held that the provincial authority will bring a
streamlining of government, not just extra layers. Local
government reorganization in Britain, Tanzania and elsewhere is
not very encouraging on this belief (Hoggett, 1987). The new
authority would need the staff already at provincial level, plus
new positions, plus have to devote great attention to relations
with central bodies, given an integrated economy, unitary State
and a single dominant Party.

Finally, it is proposed that the alternative of improving informal
coordination can have only marginal impact. For even if one
obtains local agreement, the central decisions on budgets may not
be affected; and central government is too large for informal
coordination. International experience suggests though that, in
open and unpredictable environments, obtaining wider skills and
improving team-work might still offer more hope than having legal
powers over other Ministries. (Carlberg & Oscarsson, 1988.)

It may yet be argued that the key lies in financial powers, not
just planning powers and skills. Here it is worth noting
Birgegard (1988)'s review of Integrated Rural Development Projects
(IRDPs) which had their own budgets. IRDPs placed exceptional
demands on managers, for they faced multiple, vague, and often
unrealistic objectives, plus operating environments with high
uncertainty and unpredictability (e.g unreliable input supply),
and complex micro-political settings including multiple groups who
were affected or interested. This is in fact the setting for most
sub-national planning. The required type of management was not
well met by conventional government bureaucracies. Autonomous
foreign-supported project organizations (the "by-pass" option)

avoided the problems of working through the existing bureaucracy, but could not be sustained when handed-over, nor replicated on a large-scale; and no other organizational option has yet been very satisfactory. Not all problems have full solutions.

The record of IRDPs is thus that coordination is widely reported as a serious weakness. But most failings in implementation concern factors outside the control of the project managers (e.g. macro-economic, climatic, supply bottlenecks, limits of the technologies used, &c.). On the other hand, more participatory approaches appear even less compatible with high integration of activities. Local perceptions of needs frequently differ from what planners approve of, and also tend to favour infrastructure and services. Finally, there is little evidence that IRDPs have done better in reaching the poorest, which was a stated target.

Much current thinking therefore holds that one should stick to simpler, more manageable approaches. One could establish area authorities with their separate budgets and with a brief to inform, liaise between and influence the other agencies working in the area; this is quite different though from giving them wide veto powers, let alone seeking to settle all activities in advance in the form of a binding comprehensive medium-term plan for the area. One can pursue integrated planning without attempting integrated control and implementation: by using a broad approach in analysis when designing sectoral programmes, but without across-the-board investment and without management via a single agency (Birgegard, 1988.)

There have been attempts to prepare integrated rural regional plans in Zimbabwe. The early 80s work in Victoria/Masvingo Province produced a fixed provincial investment programme rather than "just" a provincial strategy, and assumed that national financial conditions were predictable and favourable, and would allow central government to commit large amounts of resources for several years in advance. The assumption proved misplaced. The Provincial Plans prepared after 1984 had similar problems. In addition they involved consultation of actors but little integration of ideas. All sectors appeared as priorities.

Currently the German-aided work in Masvingo is well reported. It stresses team-work, not one-man planners or "coordination" by committees or direction by overlords. The aim is an integration of ideas and concentration of effort, but only after study of the possibilities and needs of an area, rather than through a fixed original idea of where the problems lie in every district (e.g. in settlement structure). The programme teams are composed of temporary members from provincial and district institutions responsible for the various projects. The teams work through the existing institutions and their field staff. There remain problems of centre-peripheral rivalry and communication; and a tendency for the Ministry of Agriculture in particular to go its own way. [5] "But... The alternative [to strengthening team-work] would only be to backpedal to the...committee approach which does

not address sufficiently the ecological problem which [has] to be solved by a coordinated approach" (Weyl, 1987).

As we turn to look at national-level views, we will find overlaps with positions that we have already encountered. This partly reflects the nature of a Ministry of Local Government, which is both central and local. That in turn means though that it can speak with various voices. When it talks of provincial budgets or authorities, many parts of it do not interpret this as meaning devolution. Is the province only advanced as a more logistically realistic level, or also due to its non-elected nature?

3.4. Central establishments - national integration?

A number of Ministry papers on multi-level planning circulated in 1983, each with its own Ministry to the fore, and each marked by faith in myriads of committees. The Local Government paper on "Proposed Decentralization of Administration" envisaged that all civil servants in a province would be responsible to a centrally appointed Governor. The Province would have its own budget. Civil servants would have to send major communications with the centre by way of the Governor or at least copy them to him.

Central government as a whole found this proposal too radical. Provincial Councils were not given executive functions. Reasons that have been mentioned by officials include manpower shortages, and fears of stifling the District level and of increasing spending/mis-spending (Otzen, 1984; J. Moyo, 1988). The 1984 Prime Ministerial Directive required only that Ministries cooperate in the provincial coordinating bodies. Government officials predominate in the Provincial and District Development Committees. It was made clear that the role of Governors, Provincial Councils and provincial plans was to be advisory and not directive.

Later the Prime Minister himself stated at a workshop for provincial governors that: "With respect to the management and supervision of public servants, especially at district and provincial levels, it has also been brought to my attention that there is considerable interference by some politicians in the deployment or supervision of such public servants." He reminded Governors in particular that their functions include neither deployment nor supervision; nor should they seek a role in competition with the Provincial leaders of the Party (Mugabe, 1987:4-5). The Party has a "democratic centralist" structure and procedure. The system of executive Presidency instituted nationally in 1988 similarly concentrates power. [6]

By 1986, the Secretary of Local Government when calling for "fully co-ordinated approaches" envisaged that, rather than provinces having their own budgets, his Central Planning Unit would process the provinces' proposals and identify possible sources of funds (Nzuwa, 1986). His Ministry might then outrank Finance & Economic Planning in some ways. "Decentralization" here has attributes of

re-centralization around another ministry, and is called "full coordination", which implies a national level. [7]

"People's planning" (Nzuwa, 1986) too seems to require a firm guiding hand from the Ministry of Local Government. E.g.:-
- "No [Local] Government or local authority official can issue a statement to the press or grant an interview without prior approval of the Minister of Local Government and Town Planning, a circular has advised" ("The Chronicle", 25 July 1984).
- In late 1987 the Government dissolved all six district councils in Matabeleland North province, and dismissed their 104 councillors with immediate effect.
- The 1986 Urban Councils Amendment Act provided similar powers of dissolution over urban councils, plus other central controls. In November 1987 for example the Mayor of Harare was forbidden from even commenting on proposed wage increases for municipal employees and allowances for municipal executives. [8]

Mararike (1988) argues that: "local government is currently battling with central government's attempts to abrogate the substantial local autonomy they once enjoyed. Statutory corporations [such as the Urban Development Corporation] have been formed to take over powers and functions of local authorities." He cites a number of other amendments to legislation, as well as the 1988 Rural District Councils Act, that give greater powers to central government. Thus even Urban Councils, with their own tax-bases and professional staffs, do not have the powers that some regional planners propose for provincial authorities.

We have come – here at the centre of government – to a view of decentralization as clearly subordinate to other purposes, even if sometimes instrumental towards them, and as subject to strong political limits. Those limits are currently live in at least four of Zimbabwe's eight provinces where the ruling party fears the potential strength of opposition from within or outside its ranks (J.N. Moyo, 1989). [9] Decentralization is seen as an aspect of "national integration" and of "integrated planning", which is inevitably somewhat centralized. So the strongly unitary state, not least in centre/communal-areas relations, that was inherited in 1980 continues. A relatively small cohesive country can also be more easily run from the centre than can many others.

In corporatist views, integration and decentralization are virtually the same. The body politic is seen as similar to a human body: integral and basically harmonious. Decentralization here simply means letting each part of the polity fulfil its proper and natural role. There is only one head. [10] Corporatism is sometimes happier with appointed local authorities and with parastatals (whose boards are centrally selected) than with elected local authorities which have independent legitimacy.

This organic analogy is often considered to hold good for the quintessential African village and almost equally so for the modern African state. Village "Gemeinschaft" is held to exist, and will not be lost in the interaction of 6000 or 10000

communities; Gemeinschaft plus Gemeinschaft equals more Gemeinschaft. [11] But the "plus" in this claimed equation is not just an arithmetic operation: it covers institutions of a quite different type. The idea that an intimate style of operation can be preserved, for scales and contexts far greater than the village, is helped by the relative smallness of government and of the circle of African decision-makers in newly independent countries. This supports a belief that everything can be co-ordinated and directed; which comes into conflict with the reality of shortages of capacity and of trained and experienced manpower.

One justification offered for corporatist views in Zimbabwe is that "When my Party ZANU (PF) successfully fought the war of liberation from 1963 to 1980, it mobilised the people.. Every man, woman and child played a significant role and made sacrifices. It is only logical that in the second war of liberation - the war of development - we equally harness the efforts of every Zimbabwean" (Chikowore, 1986a:6). The proposition is that "the people" are one, were one and not divided during the war, and need a wartime degree of unity, organization and "harnessing" after the war too.

The local government officers at the 1986 seminar on "Co-ordination and Development" were almost unanimous in believing that "'What we have now is mere lip-service to decentralisation and more and more centralisation', [as] one delegate said amid applause from the estimated 80 representatives of various sectors involved in rural work" ("The Herald", 27 Nov.1986). Some felt that this was because the PM's Directive was being "sabotaged"; but others thought there was no deep commitment to devolution in general. Senior ministry staff who were present hinted that the local officers had expectations that were currently unrealistic.

Speaking at the 1989 Urban Councils Association meeting, the Minister of Local Government rejected:
> "claims at your previous conferences and other fora that Central Government have tended to centralise power instead of decentralising... much of your contention arises from the 1986 amendment to the Urban Councils Act which gives the minister the power to approve the appointment and discharge of senior officials.. This was done... [after] serious problems regarding staff harassment by mayors or councillors who were...wanting to get rid of officials whose faces they dislike or those who do not come from where they come from" (Chikowore, 1989b:3-4).

The Minister and his advisers think they will judge better. [12]

We come next to other central ministry views, which may or may not be corporatist but do try to justify themselves as taking a national approach. Not surprisingly, the attempts by the Ministry of Local Government, Rural and Urban Development to "appear as a 'super ministry' [are] resulting in resentment by representatives of the other ministries involved in rural development" [13]. Technical ministries anyway dislike political interventions, delays due to "coordination", and having to justify their actions

to generalists. Few if any support Local Government's views on
what is current or desirable policy.

National agencies claim that they reflect national not sectional
needs, and in some cases that they also channel help to poorer
areas and groups. Detailing their expenditure programmes involves
various mixtures of top-down and bottom-up planning. For example,
the Ministry of Health has to decide where to build the facilities
for which it is given funds. According to Herbst (1987) it does
this in a relatively top-down, technocratic and impartial way.
The provincial budgets are set nationally, which limits
application of pressure from the provinces, as local-central Party
links are weak. Locations of clinics are then decided by
Provincial Medical Directors, who do not usually come from the
provinces where they work and are reasonably sheltered from
national politicians. They sift the requests from below by
applying nationally-set criteria concerning catchment areas,
walking distances, road access and water supply, and apparently
stay immune from any pressures for priority treatment that come
from politicians and local groups. They would need in any case to
obtain the agreement of both the Ministries of Transport and Water
- not just a single overlord authority - for any locations that
are presently without adequate roads and water.

The Ministry of Economic Planning and Development (EPD), which
later merged with the Ministry of Finance (as FEPD), deserves
special attention. It started life in 1980 with a vision of
planning as something omniscient and relatively straightforward,
and became caught up with management of government's capital
budget, failing to fully get to grips with the recurrent budget
(left to Finance) or some areas of economic policy. There is
little regional economic analysis or planning. The data base for
that barely exists.

In the mid 80s FEPD accepted the idea of a National Planning
Agency (NPA). The Ministry of Local Government amongst others
pressed for the Agency to be above FEPD. After much debate it was
retained as a special section of FEPD, thus hopefully easing the
vital connection to budget management. The aim is to technically
and politically upgrade the former EPD section: to make it more
multi-disciplinary, have enhanced monitoring and evaluation
capacity, and have regional planners at the centre and economic
planners in the provinces. It will act as secretariat of a
supposedly politically influential National Planning Commission,
though this has not yet appeared (and could partly overlap with
the Development Sub-Committee of Cabinet). [14] The Minister for
FEPD rose at the start of 1988 to Senior Minister status, unlike
the Minister of Local Government. The NPA took shape in 1988-9.

In a 1988 Senate debate several senators (including Governors)
called for budgets for provincial governors. The Senior Minister
rejected this, following the Cabinet line set from 1983-4.
"Introducing several other independent budgets would make
accountability more difficult if not impossible... It is in this
view that my ministry finds decentralisation of the Budget easier

said than done", replied Dr. Chidzero ("The Herald", 22 Sept.
1988). The financial discipline of local government is reportedly
poor, and we have also seen likely political considerations. In a
series of 1988-9 workshops, Governors, MPs and others continued to
campaign on the "need for decentralising the budgetary system...
[and for] more funds to be poured into the decentralisation
programme" ("The Herald", 27 June 1989). On the same day that
their final workshop was reported in the national press, the
President's speech to the new Parliament lacked such commitments.

Zimbabwe is under major fiscal stress. The government budget
deficit is around 10% of national income. Capital budget carry-
overs have been stopped. There are no easy candidates for budget
termination or transfer, to release funds for provincial budgets.
The 1984-6 Tax Commission did not favour the sharing of revenue-
raising powers; sub-national powers of taxation could make local
expenditure hard to control, in both volume and content. MFEPD is
struggling to restrain civil and social service expenditures, and
does not look kindly on calls for new subnational establishments,
especially when it doubts their ability to generate production,
employment or foreign exchange. It queries whether regional
planners have effective substantive strategies that are not
already being tried (e.g. villagization and "growth points"
policy). Decentralizers' case can instead be for a procedural
strategy where decisions should be left to lower levels. This
could be proposed as a means to development or as a policy end in
itself, an extension of democracy. At present the effectiveness
and feasibility of the means are in dispute, as are the political
implications of the end.

3.5. Perceptions from other vantage points

We can round off section 3 by looking at the positions of some
other important groups. We need too to review the relation of
local government to the non-government actors in the polity.

Business groups in Zimbabwe might be in favour of increased
pluralism in government and more powers for local government.
However, some of the biggest businesses could prefer to deal with
familiar faces in Harare, and it is perhaps not a matter which on
balance is of great concern to them. Small business could be more
interested, perhaps linking up here with the larger peasant
farmers. Arguably some other peasants may increasingly prefer a
pluralism that encourages their own associations and NGOs and
centrally directed programmes for egalitarian development, rather
than a monolithic local government structure which can be
dominated by emergent local elites.

While much of the regional planning literature ignores politics,
much of the political economy literature ignores regional issues.
The self-consciously Left intelligentsia have said little on
territorial decentralization. Most are preoccupied with direct
capture of the "commanding heights". There are a few calls for
Maoist style rural organization; but they have little steam behind

them, given the current concerns of the Zimbabwean peasantry and developments in China. [15]

At another workshop Shopo invoked Engels' attack on "municipal socialism". Much of the concern with "local issues" is narrowly "non-political and technical...and can only divert the national effort for development into an unco-ordinated series of petty and regionally chauvinistic projects for municipal socialism" (1986:5). Shopo believes though that there is a "new informal administrative logic of consultation and participation with the local community" (p.22). The procedures have yet to be formalised into rule books, but together with the structures of the ten-cell households, VIDCOs etc. they already give a sufficient basis for mass consultation in a one-party democracy. Party, People and State will be melded by the fires of national enthusiasm.

Shopo's "African radical and militant materialism" (p.6) has little room for watchdog bodies and division of powers. To him they would merely institutionalize suspicion and rumour-mongering (p.28). He calls though for both a Leninist Party and the open publication of reports. The comment seems partly prescient but also outdated in view of later trends in the State and Party, such as the President's commissioning, acceptance and publication of special committee reports on problems and irregularities in major parastatals and in vehicle distribution.

Shopo might fit a category of "Molten Marxism" more than the "Frozen Marxism" which Raftopoulos (1988) criticizes, following John Saul. The latter variety rigidifies some 19th and early 20th century European analyses into final truths. Great ingenuity is expended in fitting experience into the honoured formats, which are always confirmed by experience. Less ingenuity may be applied to devising workable steps forward, or to examining in detail mundane matters such as government decentralization. Both Molten and Frozen Marxism are prone to dichotomies of Adventist optimism, which some people felt in 1980-1, and defeatist pessimism.

Mandaza (1986) and Raftopoulos provide a somewhat more refined view. They see a "post-white-settler state", which is limited by the legacy of settler colonialism and the strength of foreign capital. This State provides opportunities for African petty-bourgeois accumulation inside and outside the State. It:
> "has also been forced to respond to the popular demands of the electorate, for example by policies for participation. This contradiction within the state has...resulted in a series of contradictory policies... It is no surprise that... Tandon [refers] to the post-colonial state in general as a 'schizophrenic state'" (Raftopoulos, 1988:47).
The model here is still too mechanical. Many current policies were not forced on an unwilling government by popular demand; and sometimes the policies were even ahead of the demands.

"Thawing Marxists" have lost some faith in the State. While Mandaza as Chairman of the new watchdog Parastatals Commission is overseeing the State's functionally decentralized arms, Tandon and

Raftopoulos and others of a Gramscian turn are concerned with the extension of "civil society" and the role of popular organizations outside the State. NGOs themselves avoid much political comment or advocacy of an expanded role, and prefer deeds to words.

NGOs in Zimbabwe are well developed compared to most of Africa, though not if compared to for example Kenya or India. They seem to work in a relatively fragmented way, with the umbrella body VOICE being weak (de Graaf, 1987b). The division of labour between them and government and quasi-government bodies remains ambiguous, including their relationship to VIDCOs and WADCOs. The position of the Provincial Development Associations is especially unclear, given their Party links, though all of them were set up as voluntary associations ("The Herald", April 17, 1987).

The Minister of Local Government has stated that, while "we all want the work of NGOs to increase", some NGOs ignore the local government machinery.
> "[They act] as if they were unguided missiles... could it be that they have sinister motives to distort our development process? Could it be that their actions are an effort to impose a different development philosophy other than that chosen by our people through their party and government? Or could it be that they just do not wish to work in harmony with government?" (Chikowore, 1986b).

Some civil servants warn of anarchy. A Deputy Secretary for Community Development is reported as saying that "only [the VIDCO &c.] structures can ultimately ensure that there is total development.. at many times NGOs' efforts competed and ultimately weakened these mass structures to the eventual detriment of the mass of the people" (Mubi, 1988:55). Bratton (1989) says rather that the district and sub-district planning structures are so weak that they provide little input to NGO plans. [16] In addition, since NGOs often operate with small groups, on a basis of member commitment, it remains to be proven that their work is less beneficial than are single-channels which can be dominated by local chefs. Internationally, a seven-country study concluded that in order to avoid exploitation the rural poor should have their own groups and representation (Gow & Morss, 1979). How far that is necessary or feasible in Zimbabwe is open to dispute.

The conference which the Deputy Secretary was addressing recommended that NGOs should be used wherever possible but must be kept in line with Government policy. One of the discussion groups also recommended a public relations office for the new Planning Commission, to collect and solicit opinions. It noted that many people have little chance to speak in VIDCOs, or feel intimidated; and that some NGO channels become similarly mute, to maintain relations with the government. In dependent decentralized structures, where disagreement or reports of policy failure are liable to be penalized by the centre, people often say only what they think the levels above will like to hear. One response in the plenary session was that no channels should be provided for "deviants". (Ranche House College, 1988:56-63; 1986.)

De Graaf (1987a) notes a danger of single-channel committees becoming politicized and inert, if each issue is handled in terms of its implications for coalitions and debts inherited from earlier politicking. He suggests that more freshness and activity is likely in sector-specific groups. This is in line with much recent institutional analysis (e.g. Esman & Uphoff, 1984). Development has so many aspects that a single community organization cannot effectively handle everything. Putting all one's eggs in one basket is also a high-risk strategy, and there are dangers of certain majorities or minorities constantly enforcing their views on others. Conversely there are advantages of having various overlapping groupings and forms of cooperation.

This school of thought argues that there are roles for two types of local organization: (1) general public authorities / development committees - the building blocks of local government; (2) mutual interest groupings - the building blocks of the cooperative and NGO sectors (Bratton, 1984).

VIDCO, WADCO, and District Council areas are examples of type (1). Formal membership is automatic. These local general bodies will only work well if they have definite, significant and yet feasible functions. They are more suited to administer communal property, to enforce regulations, and to provide some broad planning, social services and basic infrastructure. Those are areas where mandatory cooperation is generally more acceptable, and is often necessary to avoid "free-rider" problems. The strength and weakness of type (1) bodies is that they involve everyone.

In comparison, mutual interest groupings have selective and voluntary membership, and do not need to consult everyone. They have specific purposes, use private rather than community resources, and are suited to production tasks and managing private property. Being more homogenous in terms of members' situations and interests, they may be a better level for providing advice, and for mobilizing resources for investment (certainly in non-collectivized economies). They offer less scope for interfering in matters which might be said not to concern them. Examples are the many thousands of farmer groups, savings groups, church groups and womens' groups found in Zimbabwe, which have a significant record of achievement. These groups have limitations though in providing basic social services, since their coverage will be relatively uneven geographically and socially.

The possible strengths of formal NGOs - in flexibility, lesser bureaucracy, greater participation, commitment and so on - have been much spoken of in the 80s (Hyden, 1983; Gordon Drabek (ed.), 1987). We are also talking here of LLOs, limited local organizations, which may even exist only temporarily for a specific purpose. In both cases the history of such groups indicates that government can aid and influence them, but runs the risk of undermining them if it seeks control.

These types of independent organization can be seen as cases of "functional" decentralization from government. So can the private

sector. In De Graaf's opinion, discussions sometimes overlook Zimbabwe's active commercial sector: "And so one can observe utterly wasteful duplication by development agencies of such services as transport, supply and trade, repairs, wholesaling and experimenting" (1987a:162). The private sector is perhaps being less forgotten as hopes for Council brigades and income-generating projects have declined. Policies for "emergent businessmen" at "growth points" have been central in government strategy in the 1980s (Gasper, 1988a). There still remain many issues on the respective roles of local government and private and community agencies, such as in building and maintenance of infrastructure.

4. CONCLUSION - DECENTRALIZATION IN ZIMBABWE?

We argued in Part 2 that territorial decentralization should be treated as a possible means, not as a preset end whose efficacy or virtue are taken as given. Unpacking the concept revealed a whole family of means, and also a range of partly competing objectives. Simple classifications, generalizations and prescriptions must therefore be treated with caution. The issue's complexity and political aspects conduce to both disagreement and mystification. Its proponents sometimes switch according to convenience between appeals to coordination and to democracy. We need country-specific analyses of these issues and arguments.

Part 3 has surveyed some of the issues and views arising in Zimbabwe, trying to apply the perspectives introduced in Part 2. We identified the current official approaches to decentralization in Zimbabwe as being largely corporatist and marked by excessive expectations concerning the levels of ex ante "coordination" on paper that are attainable or worthwhile. This concluding section offers a few suggestions. They might be rejected by readers who yet find the frameworks given in Parts 2 and 3 to be useful. Some could be adopted within the current policy approach; others could require its modification. One should say though that the ambiguities in policy statement and practice are unlikely to disappear soon. In the near future the government is, for example, neither likely to collectivize the economy - which could direct local government much more to production - nor to reject many commitments, symbols and threats in state socialist ideology. Current ambiguity reflects deep political tensions and differences over social philosophy, within as well as between individuals.

The hierarchy of development committees that was set up in 1984 provides some channels for popular expression, interchange and local resource management. Expectations for bottom-up planning were pitched extremely high, and planning was partly confused with the production of paper lists. We can distinguish between territorial levels - village, ward, district, province, nation - in terms of whether their roles include (i) information supply, (ii) implementation, (iii) delegated planning, (iv) independent planning, and (v) policy-making and -review. For many activities these could be too many levels for all of them to be significant

planning agencies. There may not even be enough time, let alone skilled manpower etc., to fit all levels into a common budgetary cycle in a way that is more than ritual.

Sometimes it would be better for lower levels to have certain funds for independent allocation, rather than hustle them into an annual mockery of bottom-up planning during which overcongested upper levels inevitably ignore and fail to respond to many of the hasty proposals from below. Some observers predicted from 1985 that planning without funds in these conditions would lead to disillusion (e.g. Sibanda, 1985). Guidelines on ceilings for the submissions from below would also help to reduce futile work and to place more real choices at lower levels. It is assumed that lower levels want to have these difficult choices.

It is perhaps surprising that high expectations were held for mass participation and bottom-up planning through multi-purpose single-channel local committees. There was well-documented experience available from Tanzania, Zambia and elsewhere. Bratton (1980) found that of the Zambian Village Productivity Committees which he studied over 90% were inactive within five years of creation. They were at best a new forum for existing advantaged groups. Around half of the Ward Development Committees remained active, depending on their Councillor's access to national resources, but those were largely then distributed amongst local elites. Such umbrella committees may help to absorb dissent, control "deviants", and obscure class conflicts.

These committee hierarchies are part of a corporatist approach, in a post-independence stage of national integration, nation-building and attempted centralized control of surpluses. The pre-existing and fast-growing black economic differentiation in Zimbabwe lead one to expect that at present the approach particularly favours emergent elites, but the weakness of black socio-political differentiation has meant the issue lies largely dormant. One hope is that in the longrun the committees will provide channels and incentives for fuller mass involvement.

It now seems widely held that village and ward are mainly consultation and implementation levels, whereas most of the serious sub-national planning is for district, provincial and national levels. (This is not to say those are not also major consultation and implementation levels.) Whether this view is sound is another matter. Village and ward levels could be particularly important in land-use planning and management. Doubts are being expressed over the village land-use plans now coming from the Ministry of Agriculture, sometimes just taken off the shelves left from the earlier technocratic push of the 1950s. By omitting local social realities and close local involvement they could meet the same fate as the 1950s plans.

The three higher levels are partly in competition, as we saw. The ideal of integrated planning in these cases runs up against severe practical limits. Required connections and comparisons rise exponentially fast with the scale of work, and higher levels can be choked with relatively small matters from below. Ever more

"coordination" is not a full solution, e.g. trying to tie local officers of central ministries to follow local plans that are hurriedly produced and in any case soon outdated. Rondinelli & Nellis' survey of developing countries (1986) concludes that there is no hope for very complex decentralized planning set-ups. There is a case instead for some block allocations to lower levels: to allow not just the complementing of other expenditure, through drawing on local knowledge, but to allow a direct attention to local concerns and interests. Even the pre-1980 Provincial Councils in Zimbabwe had small untied budgets. We noted though the possible current fiscal and political constraints; central government is understandably wary of encouraging provincial profiles and expectations. At district level too we cannot expect to soon see district councils as the predominant institution.

Overall, there is a case for a plurality of institutions and channels at each level:- for community groups as well as official committees, for deconcentration as well as devolution, block grants as well as central programmes, and in general for multiple policy tools. The multiplicity both of objectives (which often partly conflict) and of constraints implies the need to use multiple tools - as well as to have modest expectations.

One illustration is Botswana, where the presence of four institutions at district and sub-district levels - linked but separate, and each formally and firmly established - may have contributed to the relative stability of its local administration (Tordoff, 1988; see also Gasper, 1989). The four are the District Council, District Administration, Land Board, and Tribal Administration. The last of these is the system of chiefs and headmen, now with much diminished powers, but some of whose traditional status and roles have been made use of by the new State. The contentious issue of land is removed to a mixed administrative body, with representatives of each of the other three agencies as well as central appointees. Spreading of functions may reduce the danger of central government perceiving a threat from sub-national level. The four bodies also exercise some influence and supervision over each other. If one channel becomes blocked by problems or conflicts, there are other institutions which can partly step in.

One can take this argument on multiple instruments some steps further. Decentralization can never simply be instituted by a set of legal or administrative decrees. It requires many measures of information dissemination, demonstration, incentives, training, discussion, mobilization, and ongoing informal coordination (Rondinelli et al, 1989; de Graaf (ed.), 1987). Experience and credibility need to be built up step-by-step.

Finally, territorial decentralization is only one set of policy instruments, not an all-purpose tool. It must not divert us from key macro-, functional and political issues.

Notes to Part 2
    [1]   "Moscow is reasserting control over the Southern
republics...   And many of the local inhabitants will find central
rule relatively benign, though less 'democratic' from the point of
view of the Republican elites", Marxism Today, March 1989:7.
    [2] Maetz & Quieti (1987) provide examples of such analysis,
using their own checklists of dimensions of decentralization.
    [3]   One must at least remember that an army-style hierarchy
is only one possible type of organizational system, and one of the
simplest. Everything converges up to a single peak, as in a
pyramid, and communication between different branches is limited
and subject to instructions from higher levels. Armies are a
classic case of top-down operation. Bottom-up operation is
sometimes conceptualized as the inverse of top-down, in which case
the system diagram might be just an inversion. This compatibility
between top-down and unconsidered bottom-up may be paralleled by
claims by centralized authoritarian regimes to have been strongly
bottom-up: for did not every proposal of the centre receive formal
approval by lower levels, and therefore represent their will? A
truer opposite of top-down might be found in horizontal
communications, rather than in vertical communications which can
be simulated and manipulated.
    Systems theory is able to model many such possibilities and
combinations. It shows the danger of "box" thinking: the belief
that everything can or should be tidied into non-overlapping
boxes. For example, a village cannot be sensibly analysed in
isolation, leading to delineation of required grazing acreage and
designation as being overstocked by x%, without referring to
patterns of grazing in which the villages's cattle may be moved
during the dry season to another area far away. There are dangers
too in crude systems theorizing and in extrapolating from simple
systems. One danger is if in talking of "a" system, it is
presumed to be basically integral and corporate; another is that
if a system is less rather than more unified, then it is taken to
need unifying reforms. This is questionable for social "systems",
which contain many partly separate groups with differing interests
and cannot be analysed or prescribed for in the same ways as
single organisms. Similarly, systems theorists sometimes talk of
a "law of hierarchy": hierarchies are held to arise because of
virtually universal conditions. But this is not the only "law"
at work, and it cannot justify army-style pyramids for all
organizations.

[4]   (a) Even when we characterize one case in isolation, we have some "base case" in mind, against which we implicitly compare, and which in effect gives the zeros for our measurement scales. Different people may use different base cases / scales and so give different characterizations of the degree of decentralization.   (b) Even if decentralization concerned the allocation of just one type of power or resource, the fact that this is allocated between more than two levels means that one case can be both more centralized in some respect(s) and more decentralized in other respect(s) than is the second case.

Notes to Part 3
     [1]   The Ministry of Community Development has pressed for Village Development Centres and Ward Development Centres (VIDECs and WADECs). At the official opening of the first VIDEC the Prime Minister stated that: "My Government...will actively promote the establishment of videcs and wadecs in all rural communities as an essential component of institution building" ("The Herald", 12 Dec. 1987.) This first VIDEC includes a hall, a pre-school hall, a health post, an adult literacy classroom, a library, a courtroom, VIDCO offices, a cooperative market and shops, a hall for the women's club, and ZANU-PF Party offices (ibid.). It was built with a grant of over Z$ 800,000 from Italy. If other VIDECs are on the same pattern, and if "a total of 6,000 centres will be constructed" (ZANU PF, 1985:253) then the programme could cost Z$5,000 million (US$2,500 m.), which is more than two years of current total national investment. Even if such elaborate centres are built only at ward level it could cost almost Z$1,000 million. "Decentralization" on this pattern cannot go far or fast.
     [2]   The term "unified" might be used instead. "Integrated" is used for systems where both central government staff and local government staff report to a local authority (Moharir, 1984-5).
     [3]   Even for physical construction and maintenance, it is unclear whether the enlarged Rural District Councils (to be formed after 1988 by including the commercial farm lands) could be self-sufficient just by absorbing existing equipment pools. Equipment is scarce and some is "lumpy", so there may be a need for cross-District pooling, as is done now by the centrally run District Development Fund.
     [4]   In the words of the Minister of Local Government: "..we have all enjoyed the Department of Physical Planning services in the assembly of plans, the layout of towns and growth points, the layout of villages... we now want to tie these efforts to an investment climate [sic]. We believe this tie will come in with the arrival of economic planning in the province" (Chikowore, 1988:5).
     [5]   Holdcroft's review of 1950s and 1960s Community Development programme experiences in many countries provides a warning as to how standard this pattern is. There was "widespread internal conflict and animosity between... community development [i.e. generalist] and technical services personnel, particularly agriculturalists... Usually, these conflicts were resolved in favour of technical services personnel who were bureaucratically more established and less abstract in their perception of the development process... In country after country, attempts were made to bring different departments working in the rural areas

under unified control. The department of agriculture... tenaciously resisted any kind of merger" (Holdcroft, 1982: 218, 222).

[6] In March 1988 there was an exceptional episode during the committee stage on legislation for the long awaited amalgamation of Rural and District Councils, which had been promised since the early 80s. The Bill preserved a distinct identity for the commercial farming areas, excluded their farmworkers from the local franchise, and gave the Minister of Local Government the power to appoint up to a fifth of the councillors and an even higher proportion on key committees. Half of the members of the House of Assembly are ministers and are thus irregular in attendance but so numerous as to make the outcome of votes a virtually foregone conclusion. However when a backbencher called for a quorum, it could not be satisfied for this flagship bill even after the specified ten minutes. According to regulations the bill was thrown out. The following week, the Minister of Local Government successfully moved that the Bill be restored to the agenda at the stage of discussion that had previously been reached. ("The Herald", 12 & 18 March, 1988).

[7] His comments were made at a seminar organized by Local Government on "Coordination and development: the case for integrated rural development planning". Participants from outside Local Government - i.e. from most of the agencies to be coordinated - appeared outnumbered by those from within. Perhaps this reflected suspicions on their part as to who was intending to integrate whom. In view of this seminar the Ministry of Local Government (HQ and DPP) had not sent representatives to the earlier seminar at the University of Zimbabwe whose proceedings are being published as de Valk & Wekwete (eds., 1989).

[8] "A most important function of the Ministry [of Local Government] is to ensure the correct implementation of Government policy as it affects councils and their compliance with Government policy. This is affected in various ways" (ZANU PF, 1985:148). E.g.: "6. The appointment of district council staff is monitored by the Ministry to minimise the chances of councils employing people with a previous record that might be detrimental to Council interests. 7... a District Administrator... [is] to supervise and co-ordinate all council activities..".

[9] The four are Manicaland, Masvingo, Matabeleland North and Matabeleland South. In the latter two even a now nominally absorbed ZAPU party is not fully trusted. With the spurt of Ministerial scandals and the collapse in by-election turnouts in the second half of 1989, the ruling ZANU (PF) party now seems to feel insecure even in Midlands and Mashonaland West, and in Harare (which for some purposes is counted as a ninth province).

[10] The ruling party's secretary for the commissariat and culture in 1984 was reported as saying of "the common people" that: "They can only analyse their situation in order to draw conclusions that support the party programme"; "The Herald", 23 Oct. 1984, in a piece entitled "Povo urged to help plan the future".

[11] "Gemeinschaft" is German for "community". In English it refers to social groups united by common beliefs, family ties, etc. It is contrasted with "Gesellschaft", which means "society",

and refers to a social group held together simply by formal and impersonal relationships and functional practical concerns.

[12] At the same meeting the Bulawayo Town Clerk attacked actual Ministry practice as producing intolerable delays in appointment and sometimes involving the forwarding of their own candidates. ("The City Observer" (Harare), July 1989.)

One long-running dispute between the Ministry and the Harare City Council concerns an up-market riverside leisure complex, deemed by the Minister to suit a national capital. "...the future of the Mukuvisi River development project looks doubtful with the City Council saying it has shelved the idea while the Minister of Local Government.., Cde Enos Chikowore, insists that the project is still on... Plans to develop the first phase were abandoned by the City Council two weeks ago after [the] Ministry.. had demanded that the council pay $124,000 to consultants the council never commissioned." ("The Sunday Mail", Dec.4, 1988.)

[13] Report in "The Herald", 27 November 1986, on Ranche House College national seminar.

[14] In the FEPD presentation to the March 1988 Ranche House College seminar, Sweden was cited as a model.

[15] One District Administrator at the 1986 Ranche House College national seminar described VIDCOs and WADCOs as the placatory tactics of the international and national bourgeoisies, aimed to confuse the masses. Some of his colleagues objected.

[16] Bratton (1989) has Zimbabwean examples of the politics of Government-NGO relations, and of methods for cooperation.

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(ii) "The 1986 UZ workshop" refers to the Workshop on the Planning System in Zimbabwe, DRUP, UZ, 4-7 February, 1986.
(iii) The Herald, The Chronicle and The Sunday Mail are newspapers published in Zimbabwe.
(iv) Press Statements cited are from Dept. of Information, Harare.

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