# Recentralisation?

**Interrogating the state of local democracy, good governance and development in Tanzania**

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# Acknowledgements

# Abstract[1]

This report presents fieldwork data from four case studies carried out between May 2013 and December 2015 on to the extent to which Tanzanian Local Government Reform Programme has brought about more democratic decision-making processes. The main findings point to several positive changes. Good governance reforms, aiming to restructure central and local governments, decentralise, improve capacity and good — and democratic — governance at all levels, have been undertaken and implemented. Parliament and the councils have been strengthened, as well as civil society organisations and media, and they are better able to participate in policy formulation and decision-making. The local government now has well elaborated structures for governance and democratic participation from the sub-village level to the district level. However, the outcomes of the government reforms on democratic processes at the local level have been limited. This study examines the extent to which various actors at different levels can exercise horizontal and vertical accountability. Our findings indicate that the reforms have not adequately changed existing power relations, the interests of the political elite, or the dominant ideology of political actors. Real power still lies in the hands of the ruling party elites at the national and district level and constrains power sharing at the local government authority level and at the ward, village, and sub-village level. Making it difficult for the op- position parties to establish themselves as a viable democratic force at local level. The Local Government Reform Programme has not provided adequate mechanisms, processes, and incentives to hold political elites and the duty bearers to account, neither vertically nor horizontally, at the different levels of local government. Power distribution has remained top-down with increasing conflict of interest between political and economic elites and citizens, which have not been adequately addressed by local governance. In addition, mediating competing claims over resources remains a challenge, as the reforms have failed to sufficiently strengthen the governance system at the local levels. A key constraint to improved governance is the lack of awareness, knowledge, and capacity to process information by citizens and elected members of the political structures. The village and the sub-village structures have a huge and underestimated potential, both as entry points into the political system, and as effective mechanisms for democratic governance. However, the opportunity the local government reform programmes had to make a "local turn" – and that briefly did so – appears rather to have turned back to recentralisation.

# Preface

The mandate of the Swedish International Centre for Local Democracy (ICLD) is to contribute to poverty reduction by promoting local democracy in low and middle-income countries. To fulfil this mandate, we offer decentralised cooperation through our municipal partnership programme, capacity building programmes through our international training programmes, and exchange of knowledge through our knowledge centre. ICLD documents and publishes key lessons learned from our ongoing activities, initiates and funds relevant research, engages in scholarly networks, and organizes conferences and workshops. We also maintain a publications series.

This report presents results from research investigating the extent to which Tanzania's Local Government Reform Programme has led to more democratic decision-making processes. While the results show that there have been several positive changes, the authors argue that the reforms failed to provide adequate mechanisms, processes and incentives to hold political elites and duty bearers to account. A general assessment of democratisation in Tanzania on the local level indicates that significant progress has been made but that a lot of work remains to be done. Power distribution has remained top-down with increasing conflicts of interest between the political elite and the citizens. However, overall political awareness and citizen engagement at both the local government level and the national level have increased, and resulted in the voting out of inefficient councillors, and members of parliament. This is hopeful for the future of democratisation.

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Johan Lilja
Secretary General, ICLD

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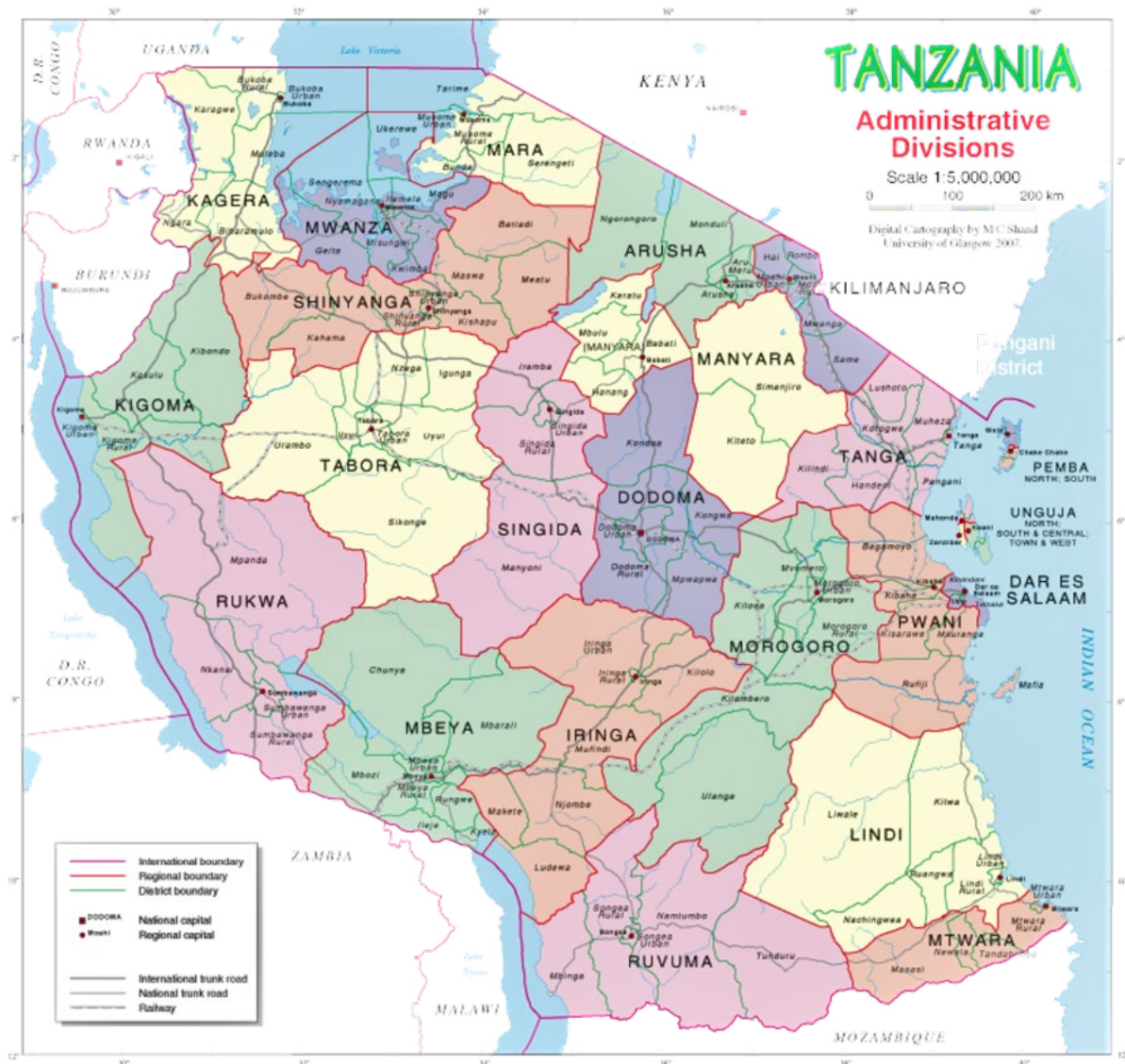
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# Map of Tanzania and the four sites of the field work



Source: Michael Sand, 2007

# List of Acronyms

| | |
|---|---|
| BAKWATA | Baraza la Kuwawakilisha Waislamu Tanzania |
| CAG | Controller and Auditor General |
| CCM | Chama cha Mapinduzi (Party of the revolution) |
| CCPJ | Catholic Commission for Peace and Justice |
| CCT | Christian Council of Tanzania |
| CHADEMA | Chama Cha Demokrasia na Maendeleo (Party for Democracy and Progress) |
| CHF | Community Health Fund |
| CHRAGG | Commission for Human Rights and Good Governance |
| CDO | Community Development Officer |
| CHF | Community Health Fund |
| CSO | Civil Society Organisation |
| CUF | Civic United Front |
| DAS | District Administrative Secretary |
| DC | District Commissioner |
| DED | District Executive Director |
| DPLO | District Planning Officer |
| BRN | Big Results Now |
| FBOs | Faith-Based Organisations |
| FYDP | Five Year Plan |
| IPTL | Independent Power Tanzania Ltd |
| KI | Key Informant Interview |
| LAAC | Local Authorities Accounts Committee |
| LGRs | Local Government Reforms |
| LGA | Local Government Authority |
| LSRP | Legal Sector Reform Program |
| MDAs | Ministries, Departments and Agencies |
| MKUKUTA | Mkakati wa Kukuza Uchumi na Kuondoa Umaskini Tanzania |

| | |
|---|---|
| NACSAP | National Anti-Corruption Strategy Plan |
| NCCR-Mageuzi | National Convention for Construction and Reform-Mageuzi |
| NGOs | Non-Governmental Organisations |
| PAC | Public Accountability Committee |
| PCT | Pentecostals Council of Tanzania |
| PFMRP | Public Finance Management Reform Program |
| PI | Personal Interview |
| PMORALGs | Prime Minister's Office Regional Administration and Local Governments |
| POAC | Parastatal Organisations Accounts Committee |
| PS | Permanent Secretary |
| PSRPs | Public Sector Reform Programmes |
| RAS | Regional Administrative Secretary |
| RC | Regional Commissioner |
| TACOSODE | Tanzania Council for Social Development |
| TANGO | Tanzania Association of NGOs |
| TLP | Tanzania Labour Party |
| TCF | Tanzania Christian Forum |
| TEC | Tanzania Episcopal Conference |
| TUCTA | Trade Union Congress of Tanzania |
| URT | United Republic of Tanzania |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| VC | Village Chairman |
| VEO | Village Executive Officer |
| WDC | Ward Development Committee |
| WEO | Ward Executive Officer |

# Introduction

Democracy, decentralisation, local government reforms, good governance, and poverty reduction have been among the most used concepts in the development discourse since the late 1980s. "Democracy" is regarded as both having value in itself, and, since the mid-nineties, as the best mechanism for achieving good governance, development, and poverty reduction, particularly at the local level (Crook & Booth, 2011; Grindle, 2007; Menocal, 2014; Öjendal & Dellnäs, 2013). This project aims to explore the relationship between neoliberal administrative reforms, and the democratisation process at the local level, in four districts in Tanzania. This research was inspired by the ongoing debate between proponents of liberal democracy and substantive democracy, as well as the long-discussed question of whether political rights or social and economic rights are the most fundamental. That is, whether it is the form or the substance and outcome of the democratic process that defines whether a country is democratic. This discussion has also been central in the post-colonial development debate in Africa. This research focuses on the challenges for the post-independence democratisation process within the political sphere by exploring challenges specific to the consolidation of substantive democratisation through examining processes in Tanzania at the local level as perceived by various stakeholders in the period up to the end of 2015.

In Tanzania, a centralised state developed after independence, wherein party and government structures were conflated. The executive controlled the parliament, the judiciary, the civil society, and the media. The combination of highly centralised executive power with a strong political party in control of the state, has been one of the major challenges for the democratisation process in Tanzania. Good governance reforms have been undertaken and implemented, aiming to restructure the central and local governments, decentralise, and improve capacity and good — and democratic — governance at all levels.

Though the capacity of the state to implement policies has been weak, several important changes that strengthen local governments and councils have taken place. Power, responsibilities, and resources have been transferred from the central and regional levels to the local level. The parliament and the councils have been strengthened, as well as civil society organisations and media, so they are more able to participate in policy formulation and decision-making. Several new economic activities have developed, meaning growth in the incomes of the elite and a small middle class in urban and some rural areas. Basic needs poverty reduced from 34.4% to 28% between 2006 and 2012, but the number of people below the poverty line increased in absolute terms, because of continued high population growth, with limited reduction in poverty everywhere except in Dar es Salaam and a few other larger cities (World Bank, 2015). In the period 2010 to 2015 multidimensional poverty is reported to have gone down from 64% of the population to 47,4%, again mainly in the Dar es Salaam, Arusha, Kilimanjaro regions. The high population growth rate of 2,7% remains a large challenge both for national and local governments. The population is estimated to reach 67 million in 2025 and 89.2 million by 2035 (ESRF, 2018).

# Decentralisation and administrative reforms in Tanzania – good management rather than democracy?

Tanzania's first post-independence government was led by Julius Nyerere who introduced the *Ujamaa* ideology in an attempt to foster administrative accountability after independence and in order to promote rapid rural development (Omari, 1984). This ideology required the country to have a one-party system and central planning, in which development was pursued under a decentralised system that was nevertheless centrally controlled by the ruling party. The process involved the enactment of the Government Administration (Interim Provisions) Act of 1972 to implement the administrative reorganisation policies. Under this reorganisation, central government ministries became represented by sector departments established at the regional and district levels. The outcome of this decentralisation was:

1.  Increased top-down administrative bureaucracy and reduced efficiency in the provision of public goods and services to citizens.
2.  The reorganisation of government administration to conform to the *Ujamaa* socialism principles.

The accountability process was also intended to (i) abolish the local government system, (ii) establish larger district development councils and regional development councils, (iii) remove local representative councils and increase the ruling party's power by providing overriding power to the then ruling party's leadership and government bureaucrats. Administrative decentralisation was not accompanied by fiscal decentralisation. This resulted in shortages of goods and services, and thus rampant rent seeking and corruption in every area of public service.

The period of decentralisation that accompanied local government reforms in the 1990s was largely driven by donor aid politics and focused on enhancing efficiency, effectiveness, and citizen participation in the development process. The intention was to establish and strengthen a neoliberal culture of democratic governance that allowed for wider participation of citizens in the planning and implementation of development initiatives, and to create channels to hold both politicians and administrative bureaucrats to account. To succeed, such reforms should focus on making the

parliament, opposition, and civil society organisations strong enough to monitor the work of civil servants and the presidency, including access to information and openness (Abrahamsen, 2000; 2005; Kelsall & Mercer, 2003).

Since the introduction of the multi-party system in 1992, reforms have been undertaken to make the state and local government administration more effective and accountable.  The most recent periods of local government reforms – consisting of the Local Government Reform Programme (LGRP) (2000-2008) and LGRP II (2009-2014) – were theoretically based on the idea of decentralisation by devolution and involved five main areas of decentralisation: 1) fiscal; 2) administrative; 3) political; 4) service delivery; and 5) changed central-local relations (Ngware, 2005; URT, 1998, 2005, 2010a). The Opportunities and Obstacles to Development process was initiated in 2002 with the intention of encouraging people to plan, implement, and own their community plans, with the overall aim of shifting community planning from top-down to bottom-up (URT, 2005).

This process was embedded within the LGRP II framework and was meant to promote citizen participation in local development as well as accountable and transparent local governance, through the championing of participatory planning and budgeting. The reforms were intended to empower local government authorities through the promotion of fiscal decentralisation, legal harmonisation, and human resources autonomy. The second phase of the programme was entitled LGRP II D-by-D (2009-2014). Having D by D directly in its name was supposed to highlight the cornerstone of the programme – decentralisation by devolution – and its promise to strengthen the capacities of local governments to be strategic leaders and coordinators of local socio-economic development who also ensure accountable and transparent services to people for the betterment of their livelihoods (URT, 2010a, 2012b).[2]

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2. LGRP II (D by D) was geared to further entrench decentralisation by development across all levels of government. The aim was to empower people through their local government authorities, by enabling them to make and implement decisions in line with locally determined priorities using financial, human and other resources which should be under their control. Local autonomy was therefore the focus during the programme period, 2009-2014 (URT 2010).

Implementation involved the establishment of the ministry that became responsible for regional and local administration at the national level, the Prime Minister's Office for Regional Administration and Local Governments, responsible for putting in place governance systems, capacity building, monitoring and evaluation of service delivery, and facilitating resource mobilisation and local law enforcement.

The local government authorities on the other hand were responsible for providing services, such as local roads, solid waste collection and storm water drainage. Social services provided by local government authorities included primary and secondary schools, health centres, dispensaries and the maintenance of peace and security. Local authorities were also responsible for facilitating urban planning and land management.[3] In principle, local government authorities were mandated to provide all social services. However, in practice they lacked the financial power and capacity to make financial decisions, as the reforms did not actually result in the devolution of that power. Lack of financial autonomy at the local government authority level constrained their capacity to deliver public services according to the priorities indicated by citizens through the collective decision-making mechanisms established by the decentralisation by devolution processes. The result was that local governments were not accorded adequate space for the planning, implementation, and financing of said priorities.

Reforms in the public sector at different levels were strongly influenced by the New Public Management Approach and aimed at establishing a small, accountable, transparent, efficient, and less corrupt public sector (Bangura, 2000; Brett, 2009; Nederveen Pieterse, 2010; Therkildsen, 2001). Building this kind of public sector no doubt constituted an important step towards a more efficient state apparatus that could facilitate economic growth and democratisation. An efficient, transparent civil service is a corner stone in the building of a democratic society. However, in the context of the elitist attitudes of public servants, the hierarchic and centralistic structure of the public administration, and the focus on managerial reforms rather than accountability, the administrative reforms may have

the effect of undermining the democratising aspect of the well-intended reforms. The weak resource base of the parliament, the opposition, and NGOs prevented them from developing their capacity at the same pace as the public administration. There was also a need for changing the mind-set of public servants to be more accommodating to the public's demands (Mwapachu, 2005).

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3. Economic and social policies and development frameworks identified provision of public services as fundamental in facilitating equitable economic and social development. The decentralisation by devolution process provided the institutional and organisational arrangement for the provision of social services by the government. Expenditure on the provision of public services is determined through budget guidelines prepared at the central government level and are not subject to the collective decision-making process by the legislative organs at the national and local levels. However, service provision is determined by availability of funds from the treasury.

# Implementation of the local government reforms

A study evaluating the Local Government Reform Programme for the period 1998-2008 concluded that the reforms brought about notable improvements (Tidemand & Msami, 2010). This was visible in all the districts we studied. Financial resources at the local level increased overall, mainly because of increased transfers from the central government. The budgets of local government authorities more than doubled between 2003 and 2007, even if the proportion of money allocated to local governments as a share of total public expenditure remained almost the same at around 18%. There were improvements in human resource allocations and capacity. The proportion of public sector staff employed directly by local governments increased from 59% in 1999 to 67% in 2006. Capacity building efforts had measurable impact on planning, budgeting, and financial management. In the second phase of the reform programme, the share of public expenditure of local government authorities increased to 25-30%, and around 75% of all public servants in Tanzania were employed by the local authorities (Tidemand, 2015, 2016).

However, despite these positive results, control over staff at the local level remained limited because of a dual level of authority that allowed central government to overrule local government in terms of staff allocation and management. In addition, laws governing local governments and defining their roles and responsibilities were spread over several – occasionally contradictory – pieces of legislation, which assigned the same roles to different levels of government and allocated key decision-making roles to the central government. Human resource management was, to a large degree, re-centralised (Tidemand et al., 2014). Most local government budgets were composed of transfers from the central government and earmarked for recurrent expenditures, mainly salaries. And since the tax base of most local governments was very limited, there were few resources for development expenditures (Tidemand, 2015, 2016).

Implementation of the reforms was slower than planned, due to several institutional and administrative factors that challenged the overall effectiveness of the implementation of the reforms, such as the lack of

coordination between different reforms, and the lack of capacity at the local government authorities, both in terms of staff, training and experience. Additionally, that the central government was ruled by directive, undermined downward accountability as well as the local government authorities' own planning. The inefficiency of the implementation of the reforms, and conflicting views and expectations, led to tensions between donors and government (URT, 2012a). Donor support of the reforms came to a sudden halt in 2012. The main reason given was that the donors believed that the government should take greater responsibility and ownership of the programme, including by reorganising the Prime Minister's Office for Regional Administration and Local Governments so the reforms could be more effectively implemented and financed. Further, the donors argued that despite several years of discussion about the need for these changes, no action had been taken. Another challenge was that a parallel structure, the local government reform team, was set up to implement the local government reform programme. This created tensions and overlaps and lacked effective coordination. The government perceived that donors had unrealistic expectations on how fast an ambitious programme like the LGRP could be implemented, and that the donors shifted their methodology from output to results-based monitoring without due attention to the government's own development plan and insufficient time to adjust to the new aid policy. The programme did not reach its full potential nor were its goals achieved, and in January 2015 it was reported to be under revision.

Our research points to key challenges that compromised the overall success of the programme. Firstly, it demanded a change in the mindset of politicians and officials to support a  fundamentally new way for the government to conduct its business, as Ngware (2005) pointed out. Secondly, the reform programme, like many others in Tanzania, was strongly supported and framed by donors, and was perceived to have great potential for economic, social and democratic development. It has been said that the necessary institutional set-up that the implementation of the reforms required may not have existed in Tanzania (Hydén, 2006; 2008; 2016) and lacked the necessary analysis of the underlying political power structures and political settlement (Booth and Cammack, 2013). Moreover, the capacity and capability of staff at local government authorities to interpret policies and plans and implement them on the ground also presented a challenge.

The reforms strengthened the executive and managerial functions of the government, on both central and local levels, compared with the representative function (Ewald, 2013). This observation is supported by the evaluation of the budget support 1999-2004 (URT, 2006), two studies on the patterns of accountability in Tanzania (Kelsall et al., 2005; Mmari, Sundeet, Selbervik, & Shah, 2005), and an assessment of Tanzania's Poverty Reduction Strategy (Gould & Ojanen, 2005). Yet, members of parliament, political parties, and NGOs who were interviewed for this study said it was difficult for them to be part of the reform process, not least because they had not been involved from the onset. A similar phenomenon was also true for the extensive local government reforms, according to the findings from the field studies. The better-educated "technocrats" in the local administration were empowered through the reforms at the expense of the democratically elected district councillors, but most of the councillors outside the few large cities – peasants with seven years of primary education at most – felt ill-equipped to monitor the administration.

# Aim and research questions

The aim of this research is to study the extent to which the ongoing reforms have brought about more substantive democratic and decentralised decision-making processes at the local level in Tanzania.

Research questions

1. In what way have horizontal accountability structures developed at the national level and in the districts studied since 2000?
2. How have vertical accountability mechanisms developed?
3. What economic development has taken place at the national level and in the districts studied since 2000?
4. Have the economic reforms contributed to citizens' trust in the political processes and democracy?
5. Has the combination of decentralisation reforms and political reforms created a more substantive democracy at the local level in Tanzania?

# Theoretical framework

## Definitions of democracy – substantive democracy

Within the theories that underlie neoliberal reform programmes, democratisation, market-institutional reforms, liberalisation, and good governance were assumed to be mutually reinforcing (World Bank, 1994, 1997, 1999, 2000, 2017). Democratic governance is supposed to lead to a lean, effective, and accountable state. Since the publication of the 1989 World Bank report *Sub Saharan Africa from crisis to sustained growth*, good governance has been recognised as one of the cornerstones for development in Africa. The question arises however, whether the processes of democratisation, economic reforms, and public sector reforms are unproblematically mutually reinforcing. What does the interface between these processes look like at the national and local levels? (Craig & Porter, 2006; Grindle, 2007; World Bank, 1989). The assumed mutuality between democracy and economic growth needs to be critically assessed and not taken for granted (Abrahamsen, 2000; Amin, 2006; Ayers, 2006; Leftwich, 2000; Olukoshi, 1998; World Bank, 2017).

Poverty reduction has been at the centre of development thinking and polices for several decades, as expressed within the UN's Millennial Development Goals and now with the Sustainable Development Goals. Economic growth and development are perceived to be essential for reducing political instability, insecurity, and conflict in developing economies, and for deepening economic and political ties between countries (World Bank, 2011). But democratisation also remains a policy priority, not only for moral reasons, but also because of the now widely accepted thesis that consolidated democracies are more stable and less likely to engage in conflict with each other. The problem, however, is that whatever the merits or limitations of these goals may be, there are also very complicated and potentially compromising structural tensions between the institutions required for stable and consolidated democracy and those required for rapid, effective, and sustained growth and development (Leftwich, 2000; 2005; 2010).

The examples of Rwanda, Kenya and the Democratic Republic of Congo highlight the challenge of pursuing democratisation in the context of deep poverty, accompanied by high expectations and weak institutions. Economic reforms may lead to integration and increased incomes for a few but also to the exclusion and marginalisation of others. In combination with rising expectations, real or relative deprivation can create a platform for widespread discontent. These qualities also often occur in combination with a ruling elite that clings to power rather than respects democratic processes, and uses the state to build up personal wealth and clientelist networks – and which, in times of crisis, mobilises support from the masses by resorting to identity politics (Abrahamsson, Hettne, & Nilsson, 2001; Bratton & van de Walle, 1997; Chabal & Daloz, 1999; 2006; Gyimah-Boadi, 2004; Hydén, 1967; 2013; Nilsson, 1999). These examples illustrate some of the complexities between economic development and the consolidation of democracy, and the need for democratic consolidation for sustainable economic development.

A broader definition of democracy is concerned not only with the procedures of democracy but with the quality of democracy, in terms of participation and outcomes, in line with the argument of Beetham (2004). The substantive theories suggest that power structures within and between elites are not considered sufficiently in the liberal theory model. If a small elite holds real power in the representative body, liberal democracy can give a veil of legitimacy to an oligarchy, rather than create a popular democracy. Issues of redistribution and empowerment of the poor and other non-elites are not incorporated into the theory. The substantive theoretical approach wishes to broaden the concept of democracy to look more to the actual outcomes in terms of participation and poverty alleviation, rather than limit democracy to its minimalist and formalist side (Mkandawire, 2006). In particular, substantive democracy theorists allude to the need to analyse the relationship between economic reforms and political development (Leftwich, 2002), a relationship largely taken for granted and insufficiently problematised in the mainstream literature (Lumumba-Kasongo, 2006) or entirely excluded from analysis (Sørensen, 2008).

Democratisation is the process in which democracy is established. This process is never ending and in continuous development, both in well and newly established democracies (Sklar & Falola, 2001). It demands patient renewals and a continuous search for the balance between conflicting social interest groups and priorities. Consolidation of democracy is the process in which both the elite and the masses embrace democratic principles in attitude and behaviour according to (Diamond, 1999). The overall research question will be analysed in a broad sense, in line with a substantive rather than a minimalistic definition of democratisation. Here, democracy is understood as a complex system and a process of institutions, actors, culture, and ideas.

## Horizontal, vertical, and social accountability, decentralisation and good governance

In democratic theory, the concept of accountability has come to be understood as one of the cornerstones of a well-functioning democratic system. Political accountability exists when political leaders are obliged to answer to the public for their actions and decisions. Political accountability serves the dual purpose of checking the power of political leaders and preventing them from ruling in an arbitrary or abusive manner and helping to ensure that governments operate effectively and efficiently. In representative democracies, the level of accountability of elected representatives to their constituents is regarded as a key indicator of the quality of democracy actually enjoyed by a society (Diamond & Morlino, 2005; O'Donnell, 2004). In the literature on democratisation, an analytical distinction is made between vertical and horizontal dimensions of political accountability. Vertical accountability refers to power relations between the state and its citizens, and horizontal accountability refers to institutional oversight and checks and balances within the state, for instance between the different branches of government. Horizontal accountability includes the administrative agencies (ministries, departments, boards, etc.) that are answerable to the government and the legislature through various mechanisms and institutions like regulatory bodies, auditors, commissions, and ombudsmen. Horizontal accountability is not limited to the relations within the state at the national level; it also includes the relations between various institutions on regional and local government levels. Horizontal political accountability as a concept is used at times interchangeably with administrative accountability, which is misleading, as the latter is another form of accountability (Smith, 2007). Administrative accountability is the internal rules, norms, and mechanisms that hold civil servants within the administration of government accountable. The behaviour of departments or ministries is constrained by rules and regulations; civil servants are subordinates in a hierarchy and accountable to superiors. Strengthening administrative accountability is thus not necessarily the same as strengthening political accountability and could even undermine political accountability.

Good governance is necessary to improve the capacity of the state and executive, and to improve accountability. An important theoretical distinction to note is that good governance, democratic governance, and quality of democracy are not the same things, although the three concepts tend to be also used interchangeably. It is not a given that good governance and democracy are mutually reinforcing, according to the substantive tradition. The relationship between good governance and democracy is complex and can be, to some extent, oppositional. Good governance aims to strengthen the governing capability of the state and local governments, which in turn increases the power and capacity of the executive and state/local government institutions. Democracy and democratisation aim to diffuse power, increase the participation of citizens in decision-making and their capacity to hold the government accountable (Gaventa, 2006; Goetz & Jenkins, 2005; Rakner, Menocal, & Fritz, 2007). Hence, strengthening state capacity might undermine democracy, and vice-versa: a strengthening of democracy might undermine state capacity.

To be able to participate in the political process, access to information is crucial for political parties, organisations, media, and citizens. The free flow of information is central to the realisation of democracy, which empowers citizens as active agents in decisions that affect their individual and collective well-being (Englund & Nyamnjoh, 2004; Kelsall, 2003; Kelsall & Mercer, 2003b). Thus, we will also interrogate the way in which access to information is viewed by political parties, the media, and NGOs.

## Decentralisation

In the theoretical discourse on democracy, good governance, and development, a common point of view is that decentralisation will not only bring about better governance, but also deepen democracy and bring about poverty reduction and development (Craig & Porter, 2006; Grindle, 2007). Decentralisation is supposed to bring government closer to the governed both spatially and institutionally and hence, according to the theory, make the government more knowledgeable about and responsive to the needs of the people. Decentralised government opens political arenas for new actors and is supposed to generate greater participation and empowerment. Greater political participation by ordinary citizens increases their voice and it is hoped, the relevance and effectiveness of government's policy. A core belief is that decentralisation will promote democratisation and enhancement of participation at the community level, meaning that it will make governments more responsive to the needs of the poor and more likely to conceive and implement pro-poor policies (Cornwall & Brock, 2005; Gaventa, 2006; Gaventa & McGee, 2010; Goetz, Gaventa, & Cornwall, 2001; IDEA, 2014; Smith, 2007).

Because much of the population in developing countries is both poor and excluded from elite politics, any scheme that appears to offer greater political participation to ordinary citizens seems likely to increase their 'voice' and hopefully, the relevance and effectiveness of government policy. Crook & Manor (1998), Crook & Sverrisson (2001) and Abrahamsson et al. (2001) argue that the degree of responsiveness to the poor and the extent to which there is any impact on poverty are determined primarily by the politics of local–central relations and the general regime context, particularly the commitment of the central political authorities to poverty reduction.

Today there is broad agreement on the idea that decentralisation and devolution of power have the potential to bring about democratic development, but only if certain conditions are met  (Grindle, 2007; Manor, 2013; Öjendal & Dellnäs, 2013). For liberal and neoliberal theorists, decentralisation is a means to reduce the negative influence of a too large, centralised, and neo-patrimonial state (Bratton & van de Walle, 1997).

For radical theorists and activists, decentralisation is a means of bringing power closer to the grassroots, and away from the elites that control the state, and to pave the way for another kind of development (Friedmann, 1992). Decentralisation and empowerment are viewed as steps towards a more localised development, rather  than depending on globalisation (Hines, 2001). The importance of strengthened local governance is also considered by the international development community to be a key issue for development and for realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals (see UNDP (2016) for example).

However, social accountability and decentralisation do not necessarily bring about more inclusive forms of governance – or substantive democracy in the form of improved service delivery. Some argue the opposite – that it appears that it is a combination of developmental neo-patrimonial structures and certain vertical accountability mechanisms that have been most successful, with Rwanda as a case in point (Booth, 2011; Booth & Cammack, 2013; Booth, Cooksey, Golooba-Mutebi & Kanyinga, 2014; Booth & Golooba-Mutebi, 2011; Kelsall & Booth, 2013). These authors argue that the right pre-conditions are not in place in most African countries to satisfy the assumptions that underlie the theory behind the largely donor driven decentralisations reforms that have been undertaken in Sub-Saharan Africa. They contend that the decentralisation that has occurred has neglected the existing socio-economic, institutional and political setting and has not delivered expected results (Booth, 2015; Hydén, 2016)

Liquid waste management and storm water drainage is a huge challenge in rapidly growing urban settlements – creating unhealthy environments, waterborne diseases and malaria, Tandale. Photo: Jonas Ewald.

## Economic development and democracy

Economic development and poverty reduction are also important for the legitimacy of the democratisation process (Andreasson, 2010). If poverty is not reduced for much of the population by popularly elected governments, it might not only undermine the legitimacy of the democratisation process as such, but also lead to voter apathy and frustration, which could be politicised by non-democratic political forces. In the same vein, economic development for a few and increasing gaps between the haves and have-nots are likely to further undermine the democratisation process.

Thus, though the focus of the research is on political development, inclusive economic development is an important part of the analytical framework of this paper. Economic development and poverty reduction are also understood along the lines of the argumentation above, as important for the legitimacy and sustainability of the democratisation process. The key challenge is then, as Edigheji (2010) puts it, "how to construct a democratic development state in Africa". In liberal democratic theory, democratisation and economic reforms are considered to be mutually reinforcing.

According to the theory, market reforms create the foundation for an entrepreneurial middle-class that creates economic growth and demands democracy, paving the way for poorer segments of the population.

It appears to us, however, that the understanding generated from a substantive democratic theory approach is more fruitful. It is not certain that market reforms create the foundation for an emergent democratising middle class. As has been pointed out by Gainsborough (2010) in his study on neoliberal economic reforms in Vietnam, another single-party state in transition, the economic reforms did not create a new economic elite, it was rather the old elite that transformed itself and maintained control. Mentan (2009) conducted a similar analysis of the predicaments for the democratisation process in Africa. If focus remains on the formal, rather than the substantive outcomes of the democratisation process, the elites in control of the state and the economy will continue to be in power and "reconfigure a predatory autocracy" (Mentan 2009). This points to the need to include the political elites in the analysis of the democratisation process. Economic power is a fundamental asset in the political processes.

# Methodology

We approached answering our research questions using qualitative data gathered from a combination of semi-structured key informant interviews, stakeholder interviews, and focus group discussions. The field study was carried-out in four districts/regions that were selected purposefully because of their different socio-economic and cultural contexts. Kinondoni municipality is one of three municipalities in Tanzania's largest city and economic capital Dar es Salaam. Pangani district is the smallest in terms of population and is one of the poorest and least diversified districts in Tanzania. It is a traditional coastal community with a predominantly Muslim population and is regarded as one of the least developed districts in Tanzania. The opposition party the Civic United Front (CUF) is relatively strong in Pangani, even though Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM)[4] has much of the district vote. Rombo district, on the other hand, is situated in one of the most fertile areas in Tanzania, on the slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro. As with most communities on the mountain, the population is among the most well educated in the country. Within Tanzania, this community is regarded as one of the most entrepreneurial. It is a predominantly Christian community. The opposition party Chama Cha Demokrasia na Maendeleo (CHADEMA, translated to the Party for Democracy and Progress) has one of its strongholds in the district. Twenty years ago, Geita district was one of Tanzania's poorest and smallest districts in term of population. Small- and large-scale gold extraction has led to the rapid growth of Geita district, both in population and income. It has now been upgraded to a region and is one of the better off rural regions.

The fieldwork was carried out by the two primary researchers and two research assistants. In each district, three to four different locations were selected through purposeful stratified sampling to represent the district centre and the district periphery to collect input from various socioeconomic settings. This included the district centre, which usually meant two wards – one better off and one poor; and in the periphery, one poor ward and one better off. In each case study we interviewed between five and ten key district executives.[5] Available secondary material, such as district development plans, budgets, and reports from various departments, was also collected and analysed. From the representative branch of the local governments, the chairman and deputy chairman of the council, between five and six councillors from various parties and members of Parliament (if available) were interviewed.

In addition, we interviewed party officials and representatives at the district level from the major parties, civil society organisations, and representatives from the media. At the ward level, we interviewed different officials, the councillor for the ward, party officials at the ward level, and conducted either key informant interviews or focus group discussions with secondary school headmasters and teachers. At the village/street level we undertook key informant interviews with the village executive officer, the village chairman, and conducted focus group discussions with the village government, including the Vitongoji leaders at the grassroots level. Key informant interviews were conducted with leaders of the opposition and ruling parties, including the youth and women's branches. Focus group discussions were held with the teachers in the village primary schools and with the health staff at dispensaries and health centres. Citizens were interviewed through focus group discussions, of which we held three in each village/street. The citizen focus groups were put together with the village secretary, with the aim of representing different income strata, age, and gender.[6]

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6. There is of course a risk for biases in the selection process. We tried to minimise selection bias by following this procedure: two of the team members contacted and travelled to meet the VEO in advance. The aim of the study was carefully explained, as was the procedure for setting up focus groups. The VEO set up the focus group at a decided date. This worked out well most of the time, and not so well in certain cases.

# Results

In this chapter, we present our main findings on accountability at the local level. The structure of the chapter addresses our research questions and is thus thematically divided along those lines. The first section addresses administrative, horizontal, and vertical accountability. We go on to try and answer whether economic reforms have contributed to citizens' trust in the political processes and democracy. Then, whether poverty has decreased and citizens' ability to participate in political processes has been strengthened. We conclude the section by addressing our overarching question: has the combination of decentralisation reforms and political reforms created a more substantive local democracy in Tanzania?

## Administrative and horizontal accountability

Though the central government's commitment to poverty alleviation is well-enshrined in policies and development frameworks, the commitment to support the accumulation of the necessary assets for development at the local level – e.g. human capital, physical capital, and foreign exchange – is still weak. Evidence from the sample districts shows that investment in education and health is taking place but at a slower pace compared to the growing demand. Local governments are still dependent on the central government for – often irregular and insufficient – disbursements in education and health.

*The primary education department received only a single financial disbursement for the period 20014/15 instead of four. The disbursement was far below the annual financial requirement. In Geita for instance, the district was supposed to receive 25,000 shillings per child but received only 800 shillings per child.[7]*
Key informant interview, 2015.

Decentralised provision of these services to the local government authorities, within a centralised funding system, has hindered their capacity to deliver according to their mandated roles. Throughout the study period (2000 to 2015), for example, the number of children in primary school classes in Geita remained high, up

to 200 children per room. Schools were characterised by a marked lack of resources in each of the sample districts and inadequate space for school expansion or the construction of new schools in Kinondoni; a combined result of rapid urbanisation and unplanned settlements as well as limited funding. In addition to inadequate toilets and water, which constrained the girl child from regular attendance to school throughout the month, schools lacked feeding programmes, a contributing factor for irregular school attendance and drop out among children.

The decentralised healthcare system provided health facilities almost up to the village level, but funding problems restricted the delivery of quality health services as commodities were always in short supply at the facility level:

*In the three districts Rombo, Pangani and Geita, the health facilities did not receive the quarterly disbursements as planned. Consequently, fuel for running the kerosene refrigerators was not available. Immunisation drugs had to be transported from the facilities in the rural areas to the district hospitals for refrigeration, which interrupted the immunisation process.*
Key informant interview, 2015.

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7. Equivalent to approximately 4 USD cents at time of writing

Furthermore, a weak link was observed between decentralisation and investments in physical infrastructure. Where central government investments were absent or unequal, physical infrastructural developments were weak. For example, there were improved roads in all the sample districts where the central government had taken initiative but poor roads where such investments had not taken place.



Busy and newly paved smaller streets in Tandale, Kinondoni. Photo: Jonas Ewald.

Residents had access to energy through rural electrification, a central government initiative, but the waste management infrastructure was weak, a responsibility entirely left to the local level. In all the sample districts, only 25 to 40 percent of solid waste was collected, and liquid waste management was entirely managed by households, making this a major public health challenge in all four sample districts.

The hoped-for democratisation through decentralisation neither resulted in strengthened social movements nor civic action through civic associations. Collective action taken up through the political representative channels, like the LGA councils, was still poor due to little incentives for commitment and the lack of capacity of citizens to demand accountability from representatives. Theoretically the institutional reforms should have provided space for such action and movements, but in practice citizen engagement was not improving at the local level. One explanation is that the local government reforms were not enough to transform existing mindsets on either the demand side (citizens' civic action) or the central government

side (tolerance to such movements) (key informant interviews, 2015). Citizens had low expectations of what local governments could deliver, government officials did not prioritise responding to local needs and priorities, and the culture of citizens engaging with local government remained weak:

*(...) the relationship among the councillors is relatively good. However, the relationship between councillors and other council staff is not very good. Technical staff perceive councillors as interfering their work although in many cases are not motivated to work for the interests of the majority. Councillors are the representative of the people and always asking questions on behalf of their electorates. Technocrats do not want to be asked.*

Key informant interview, 2015.

Though horizontal accountability had been strengthened over the past few years, challenges remained. The presidency continues to be strong in Tanzania, even if the balance between the three different branches of government has become slightly more even. Reforms and support to parliament led to considerable improvements in the legislative and oversight functions of the latter. Overall, however, the parliament still lacks the capacity and authority to fulfil its role to hold the executive accountable. The constitution provides the following unchecked power to the president of Tanzania (URT 1997 Constitution, Chapter Two, Part 1):

- The power to constitute and to abolish any office in the service of the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania.
- Authority to appoint, promote, remove, dismiss, and to discipline.[8]

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7. This includes for instance appointment of some members in the legislative organs such as the national parliament and the constitutional parliament

This creates an environment that inhibits horizontal accountability, for as one respondent pointed out:

*(…) the president appoints ministers; secretaries of ministries; district commissioners; all directors including the local government executive directors; the director of public operations; the director of public organisations; judges; ambassadors; heads of anti-corruption institutions; security organs; public universities; heads of intelligence; the president almost appoints everybody. Now if the president has such long tentacles, in other words, the presidency can influence policies from all angles because whoever proposes the policy is a presidential appointee for that matter. So, this again is one of the reasons why the presidency in Tanzania has very great power of influence.*

Key informant interview, 2015.

### Institutional oversight within the four local government authorities

At the local government level, it is a challenge for the councillors to hold the executive accountable. Firstly, the councillors in general, even councillors from the ruling party Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM), stated that it was often difficult to get enough information in good enough time to digest it before council meetings, or to organise meetings with villages/constituencies or within political parties, a common issue across the study districts. Another challenge was that the councillors in rural areas tended to be educated at much lower levels than the local officials and sometimes had difficulty managing their role of monitoring the officials, who were often well-educated, some with master's degrees, sometimes from a foreign university.

For the few opposition councillors, the challenges were even greater. In addition to difficulties accessing information and dealing with the attitude from officials, they found it difficult to have an influence on the decisions made in the council. Most of the time, the CCM councillors had already discussed the agenda at their branch meeting and agreed on the

party line to be pursued prior to the council meeting. As such, important exchanges of ideas between the CCM councillors and the district administration took place at these meetings, leaving little room for debate within the council itself. The president, who was also the chairman of the ruling party, nominated the key actors for the institutionalised political position at the regional and district levels (the regional and district commissioners). The intertwining of the state and party structure was illustrated for example by the fact that the district commissioner was appointed by the ruling party, was the central government representative in the local government, and was a member of the CCM branch.

*You can't have elections at the ward, constituency, district, and at the national levels to be under supervision of the district directors who are under the prime minister office and are appointed by the president, and the ward executive officers who are supervising at the ward level while and also the village executive officer who appointed from the district executive officer and these people are those who are supposed to supervise the election. So, in the situation like that you can't say that the electoral commission will conduct the free and fair election… this assures the ruling party CCM to win in the elections and power in decisions making once elected.*

Key informant interview, 2013.

## Vertical accountability mechanisms

Centralised public authority in Tanzania, which has predominated since the early period of independence, particularly following the adoption of the *Ujamaa* socialist ideology in the 1960s, shaped the accountability structure towards the centre despite the post-1980s reforms. The local government reform programme aimed to contribute to the transformation of institutional and organisational arrangements for vertical accountability by reducing information asymmetry and via the establishment of a more participatory collective decision-making organisational structure linking lower and upper levels of local government authorities. Further, the central government was expected to strengthen accountability mechanisms and responsiveness to citizens.

Meetings were one of the prerequisites of local governance at the village and vitongoji[9] levels. Citizen involvement in regularly scheduled meetings had a significant impact in improving government planned projects, as well as improving village plans and deliberations on the implementation modalities. The meetings were meant to ensure that citizens have the power and capacity to demand accountability of both district and village leaders. However, in several of the visited villages in Pangani, the statutory meetings at the village and vitongoji level were not held regularly, as expressed during one of the focus group discussions:

*Meetings are not regularly held. Two weeks ago, the village executive officer asked to be transferred because of his failure to issue income and expenditure reports. The level of transparency and accountability is low. Citizens' power in decision-making is limited as they are most of the time not given opportunity to decide. The level of transparency has been low. For instance, the village government sold land to an investor who is planning to open sugarcane plantation without involving the citizens. The village executive officer did not give room to citizens to debate on the matter.*

FGD Kigurusimba, Pangani with citizens, 2015

Meetings were frequently postponed because of too few attendees, as village meetings (internal and open) by law require that more than half of the legible members must be present to reach quorum. Among the reasons given for the low participation was that citizens felt discouraged by unfulfilled promises from the political leadership and did not feel like their priorities were reflected in the decisions made. Another contributing factor to low participation in the village meetings was that citizens feared being asked to contribute with financial resources or labour to the community planned projects, as many donor-supported projects required partnership. One argument was that government staff benefitted more from these projects since they were paid salaries. Moreover, even the internal meetings also faced challenges, as some of the elected leaders did not regularly attend the planned meetings. During focus group discussions, respondents related that the elected leaders had limited possibilities to participate in decision making as they had little insight in the process and lacked information.

*The attendance of people in general assemblies has been very low. Out of 400 villagers not more than 50 attend those meetings. Citizens' volunteering has also gone down. People are discouraged by lack of actions from respective authorities that could help them improve their wellbeing. Although people have power in decision making, leaders have more influence. Even the village and hamlet leadership are also less powerful as most of the decisions they implement are imposed from above (from the District Council).*

FGD with Sange Villagers, Pangani, 2015.

9. In rural areas, the local government authorities are comprised of five levels: district, division, ward, village and sub-village (vitongoji). In urban areas, the corresponding names are urban authorities, ward, and streets (mtaa).

Low participation meant that citizens did not get information on various government programmes and planned projects. Accountability of village governments to citizen demands was very limited, including in matters related to the lack of accomplishment of planned activities or a given leader's inabilities. Low citizen engagement also meant that village leadership could decide on matters which required the approval or decision of the village assembly, increasing distrust and conflicts between the citizens and their leadership. Widespread alcoholism was also identified as an important factor behind low participation, particularly among young men.

In Rombo the situation was slightly different. Accountability and responsiveness were strengthened through elections and the election period was characterised by more participation and more regularly-held meetings. However, there were concerns that the overall level of citizen participation in community affairs was declining as compared to previous years. Similarly, as the Pangani case, citizens felt discouraged by unfulfilled promises from the political leadership. Projects and plans were delayed or not implemented at all, as in the case of a water project in Mahorosha Village, which led to an acute shortage of drinking water. Citizens were also discouraged by economic hardship, as many of them spent much of their time looking for casual labour in neighbouring Kenya, which affected their participation in the management of community affairs within their areas. And as in Pangani, some of the elected leaders did not regularly attend planned meetings because of the reasons mentioned above.

In Geita, meetings were held regularly and were characterised by a high degree of engagement and participation from citizens and elected representatives. The timing of the fieldwork could account for this difference, as the field work in Pangani, Rombo and Kinondoni was done in 2014 (the last year of the tenure of those elected in 2010), while the field work in Geita was done in 2015, the year after the new election. The opposition won a substantial number of village and street chairs, as well as posts as members in village councils in the local elections in 2014. The ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi party won almost all

council seats in the 2015 election, in what was a highly controversial election. This created a politically charged environment, which might explain the higher degree of participation. On the other hand, it also created some tensions in the vertical link between villages, where the opposition held most of the seats and the chair.

Taken together it appears that the structures for vertical accountability were empty shells. Citizen participation in decision-making in the local government structures was limited to a consultative role at best. Decisions were made via a top-down approach rather than the bottom-up approach envisioned in the reform programme, as illustrated by this quote from a focus group discussion in Rombo:

*In most cases decisions are made at the headquarters of the district council without much involvement of the village and hamlet governments and the people. Decisions related to environmental conservation as well as town planning have not been participatory, they are in most cases imposed on the citizens by the leadership of the district council.'*
Focus group discussion, Kelamfua village 2015.

One reason that might explain this position is that decentralisation of government organisational structure as outlined in the LGRP blueprint had taken place, but devolution of political and administrative power had yet to take place. At the political level, interviewees believed political power was still centred in the ruling party, while executive power still lies in the president's office. This is because the current Tanzanian constitution vests significant power on the presidency. In addition, the constitution gives limited power to the parliament (which is the citizens' representative organ), as pointed out by one of the respondents:

*"Let me take the Finance Bill as an example and the budget as well. Our constitution says the parliament cannot, for example, increase the taxes by own parliamentary initiatives unless the matter is brought and discussed in the House by the president through the Minister of Finance. Therefore, this constitutional article means parliament cannot discuss the finance bill that increases the taxes and this is in article 99. So, the parliament is allowed only to reduce the taxes but not to increase the taxes. This is as far as what the constitution says. The constitution also says that the parliament cannot pass any bill that will instruct to withdraw money from the consolidated fund. This is as far as what the constitution is saying. This is in article 99 again. So, in other words, a parliament cannot make a budget by its own initiative unless a proposal is brought forward by the president through the Ministry of Finance and the constitution goes on saying; if the government brings the budget and the parliament rejects the budget; then the parliament is automatically dissolved" You see! The parliament is dissolved but the president remains! With this constitutional strict gadget; the parliament becomes so weak as far as legislative role is concerned when it comes to financial issues; taxation issues and budget issues."*

This asymmetric power structure in decision-making over resource mobilisation from strategic sources of revenue such as mining ¬was identified to be one of the major constraints for financing local development. This is the argument that was voiced strongly in all interviews in Geita, where respondents felt that natural resources were not leveraged for local development but rather for benefitting foreign investors. We did not find strong evidence to suggest existence of changes in the *principal* (citizens) and agent (politicians) relationship in the study districts. The structures and systems for enforcement of politicians' accountability to the citizens were generally unchanged from those in existence prior to the reforms. Politicians were perceived to be

self-interested, partisan to the central level political leadership relative to the citizens, and unengaged in the transformation required to improve the welfare of the people in their constituency, save for some isolated cases like Sinza street (Kinondoni municipality) where the councillors united to provide a central sewerage system in the area by mobilising their citizens to contribute resources.

We found a different pattern in Rombo. The elections enabled citizens to vote out representatives who were not responsive to their collective interests. This included, for instance, the voting out of the member of parliament in the 2010 elections. A young and energetic opposition MP won the local elections that year, defeating a former finance minister supported by the ruling party, who tried to use financial incentives to get votes. The young MP was described as often visiting his constituency in Rombo and bringing up issues of concern to citizens, both in the local government and parliament. So, the potential to hold MPs accountable is there – but it relies to a large extent on the will of the MP to be held accountable and the specific political culture. It was stated in several interviews that in Rombo bribery does not work, rather people elect the person they believe has the best capacity to bring about change.

Rapid urbanisation, high population pressure on meagre administrative and infrastructural resources – a challenge for local governments to manage, Tandale. Photo: Jonas Ewald.

Institutions have not provided stable and sustainable models for interaction between the technocratic and political actors, or between citizens and local governments. Respondents believed most people who seek political positions did so to gain political power to facilitate easy access to opportunities for financial gains rather than out of any interest to represent the people in collective decision-making, such as the example of MP in Pangani who interviewees said they had not seen since he had been elected four years earlier. He saw himself as free from obligation to them since he had paid for his election by buying or purchasing their votes. However, he was subsequently not nominated to stand for a new term in 2015, indicating that members of political parties may have exercised some vertical accountability within the party. It could of course also be that the leaders of the party judged him to be unpopular and with little chance to win given the competitive climate in Pangani, and thus appointed a candidate with better chances.

Respondents cited a lack of trust in the multiparty electoral process, which they argued lacked integrity and transparency; was full of corruption, rigging, stealing, and buying of votes; and which was unable to ensure a free and democratic election due to the use of state power against the opposition parties. The president, who is also the chairman of the ruling party, appoints the head of the electoral commission. It was clear from the interviews that the electoral commission's allegiance was towards the president, and often acted unfavourably to the opposition parties. At the local government authority level, election of the president, members of parliament, councillors, and village and hamlet chairpersons is done under the supervision of the city, municipal, and district development directors, who are also appointees of the president. Citizens in the four case studies were of the view that these directors and their subordinates at the ward, village, and Mtaa levels act in favour of the ruling party candidates and unfavourably towards the opposition parties' candidates during the elections. Consequently, this reduced citizens' trust in the whole electoral process and the elected politicians, particularly those from the ruling party.

# Discussion

## Economic development and trust

Positive changes had occurred in all the areas we visited. Infrastructure had been built or was under construction: like new roads to Rombo and Geita, a new road in progress to Pangani, a new ferry in Pangani; connections to the electricity grid in Pangani and Geita, and improved streets in Kinondoni. New opportunities for economic participation and access to information had emerged for citizens, as evidenced by the construction of shops and houses, new small and middle-sized production facilities (small scale tourism, sisal and sugar cane plantations and a dairy in Pagani; carpentry and wood industry in Rombo; mining related activities and all types of services in Geita), buses, motorcycles, the transport of taking goods, traders, and migrants to the bigger cities, and money and goods were making their way back to the smaller towns and villages. Mobile telephones provided market information, strengthened networks, and enabled money transfers, increasing the circulation of money in remote areas.



Well-supplied *dukas*, Manzese, Kinondoni. Photo: Jonas Ewald.

But, for many respondents from lower- and middle-income groups in Pangani, Rombo, and Kinondoni, there was a strong feeling that the situation had not improved or had even become worse, and that the rift between the haves and have-nots had increased. Whether this perception was due to increased absolute or relative poverty, could be discussed. But poverty

in many parts of municipal areas like Manseze and Tandale in Kinondoni, rural areas in Pangani (like Kigurusimba or Sange) or Geita, or on the plains in Rombo, was widespread. Both in Geita and Rombo we found villages where situations had become worse, but for different reasons. In villages like Mahorosha in Rombo it was a combination of increasing population, land scarcity, and decreasing fertility of the soil and drought. In villages like Bugogo in Geita, it was because of the reduced incomes from informal mining activities, because large-scale investment in commercial extraction had crowded out small-scale and informal mining. Many of the positive changes on the local level were not directly related to the local government reforms or performance of the local governments, but rather an effect of policies and programmes initiated and implemented from various central government ministries, for example, the only operational healthcare schemes were those that were financed nationally; those that were locally administered failed.

Whether these changes contributed to increased citizens' trust in the political processes and democracy in Tanzania is still debatable. Our findings from our four case studies were mixed. In Kinondoni District, the largest district in the country both in terms of population and GDP share, informants perceived reforms to have positively impacted the economic situation at the local government level via increased revenues and at the household level through an increase in income earning opportunities. At the same time, they felt that at the community level, the observed economic growth was not inclusive as the neoliberal reform measures had failed to transform the economy into one that provided equitable access to decent jobs and employment opportunities.

The economic growth taking place in Tanzania at the time was occurring in sectors that did not provide significant job opportunities, neither for residents in rural communities nor for those migrating to rapidly growing cities. Consequently, the informal sector rapidly expanded. This argument was supported by data from population-based surveys.

The 2011/12 household budget survey published in 2015, revealed that 83.6% of businesses in Dar es Salaam were not at the time registered, implying that the informal sector[10] was a significant source of jobs and employment opportunities, and a contributing factor to lowered tax revenues for local authorities (URT, 2014).



Rural, small-scale industrial production, blacksmiths in Ikulwa village, Geita. Photo: Jonas Ewald.

The proportion of households with informal activities increased from 56.5% (529,175) in 2006 to 64.6% (814,619) in 2014. Elementary occupations accounted for the highest proportion of total employment (30.4%) in Dar es Salaam (URT, 2016). These changes in economic development mentioned above were generally attributed to increased investments, including foreign direct investments, in the services industry, which included real estate, mobile phone companies, hotels, restaurants, and financial services. In Rombo and Pangani, considerable economic changes also took place in terms of increased local investments in income-generating activities (Rombo) and foreign investments in tourism and hotels (Pangani) according to interviewees. However, in Pangani these changes were attributed to economic reforms and not to increased investor trust in the political processes and democracy. Our findings revealed little evidence, if any at all, to suggest that economic reforms had led to increased citizens' trust in the political processes and democracy. Almost all interviewed respondents believed the political process to be untrustworthy and undemocratic.

## Did reforms transform political and technocratic leadership and coordination at the local level?

Given the competing interests and claims over resources in the national development agenda, effective implementation of the local government reforms necessitated mediation between central and local government. However, the reforms neither resulted in a new political power structure nor the right institutional transformation to allow for substantive collective decision-making to take place within local government authorities. Mediation of these competing interests between the central and local authorities, and decisions on the mobilisation and utilisation of public resources including management and extraction of natural resources remained centralised. At the political leadership level, the local government reform processes did not politically strengthen the local government authorities to strategically pursue the local development agenda. Our four cases studies clearly indicated that the principal-agent relationship between the central government and the local authorities remains unchanged. This is line with the argument put forward by Hydén (2016), that a decentralisation of power without resources will not lead to any substantive decentralisation.

Fostering inclusive and sustainable social development and economic growth by decentralising the provision of public services was one key aspect of local government reforms. From a technical perspective, the success of achieving the goals of the reform programme required the local government authorities to take leadership on planning local development priorities, connecting and coordinating said priorities to ensure coherence in the delivery of public goods and services, as well as prioritising financing to ensure funds from the local government are efficiently used to facilitate inclusive economic growth for human development and poverty alleviation.

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10. Informal employment refers to employed persons who by law or in practice hold jobs that are not protected by labour legislation, not subject to income tax, or entitled to social protection and employment benefits. Informal employment can be found in the informal sector, formal sector. and within the household.

In its first phase, the reform programme was implemented through a central secretariat. The first phase did not bring about the desired transformation of the local government authorities to provide the required technical leadership at the local government level. Some of the challenges in the first phase were: (i) weak development of the technical human resource capacity in terms of quantity and quality, particularly in the education and health sectors; (ii) inadequate transformation and strengthening of the vertical and horizontal accountability mechanisms within the local government authorities that constrained service delivery efficiency; and (iii) implementation of the reforms at the local level concurrently with the sector reforms. This prevented the sourcing of resources from international development partners, harmonisation, and prioritisation of the reform processes.

In its second phase, implementation of local government reforms was coordinated through the central government. These dual approaches meant that implementation of the reforms was fragmented. The withdrawal of support from development partners in the 2014/15 financial year further impeded the reform programme. The conclusion we have come to is that the reform programme did not actually lead to the transformation of the political and technocratic leadership or the institutional capacity strengthening of local government authorities. Political and technocratic leadership, as well as institutional capacity, remains weak. From this we concluded that the substantive conditions necessary for the success of the reforms did not exist.

The centralisation of the financing of public services was partly due to the parallel implementation of financial reforms in the public sector aimed at controlling fund leakages and diversion (this goes back to the key problem of uncoordinated reforms). In addition, the country's economic constraints compelled the central government to control the allocation of funding and distribute it to priority areas first. Furthermore, inadequate financial foresight at the local government level contributed to the need to have centralised control of public funds. The inadequacies noted within this study included payments to ghost workers, overvalued contracts with vendors, and various forms of corruption.

On paper, the local government had a well-elaborated structure for governance and democratic participation from the sub-village/street to the district level – both for horizontal and vertical accountability. Citizens were supposed to be included in the vertical accountability process through elections and engaging with their elected representatives, and by holding officials accountable through participation in the various committees at the village level. The committee for social welfare, for example, was to be a forum for holding health and education facilities accountable, together with school committees. Each village was supposed to hold annual general meetings with all citizens in the area. The village council should, through the chairman, be able to hold the ward councillor accountable through ward council meetings – where all village chairmen/street leaders are members. The councillors were elected at the ward level and were to be the voice of each ward in the full council that in turn should hold the local government authority to account. So, theoretically, a well-defined bottom-up structure had been established.

However, in practice, it seemed to have worked more in the opposite direction, where the citizens, village chairmen, and councillors who, having been told from the respective levels above how to carry out various directives and mobilise lower levels in activities decided by the LGA, perceived that they continued to be directed by the central level. We also observed that a re-centralisation process had begun to appear in several sectors. The power to hire and fire staff at the local government level and budget control was moved back to central level. The central government argument for this was that it was necessary to strengthen oversight mechanisms to avoid misuse of funds, and the capacity to do so at local level was inadequate. The autonomy of the local governments was rather weak. The tax base in most local governments was very small, which meant the local governments depended on transfers from the central government that largely determined local budget priorities. In addition, to access central government funds the local government authorities must fulfil several conditions aimed at reinforcing good governance.

The council must have an approved annual plan and budget; submit final accounts for audit on time; have no adverse opinion on its audit certificate awarded to latest accounts of the council; and submit quarterly financial reports. Such requirements are considered 'minimum safeguards' for handling funds and aim to entrench accountability on the part of the staff and leaders of the councils. Effective administrative accountability at the local level, however, could only be achieved if funds are available for delivering the expected public goods and services. Fiscal decentralisation to increase the availability of funds at the local level has remained a problem for Tanzania since independence. Except for property tax and land rent, the main sources[11] of revenue collection for the local government authorities has always been in areas that are traditionally the most difficult to collect, produce low or irregular yields or are not cost-effective to collect.



Challenges for quality of social service: dispensary maternity bed, Kigurusimba village. Photo: Jonas Ewald.

Local government authorities were dependent on central government remittances for most of their budget, which were unpredictable in both the amount and timing of disbursements. This key problem hindered the efficient and effective provision of public goods and services by local authorities, and consequently also compromised inclusive access to such services. Consequently, residents, particularly the poor, had limited access to essential health care and medicines, and felt themselves to be excluded (focus group discussions, September 2013; April, May and August 2014). The division of fiscal responsibilities across the central and local authority levels did not change with

the reforms. There was an overlap between central government planning in line ministries, like health, education, and agriculture, and the power that was supposedly devolved to the local government authorities. This resulted in frequent clashes between political and administrative powers within the local governments due to weak fiscal arrangements to support local development strategies and processes at different levels of government. These clashes occurred between both the central and local governments, and between the local government and lower levels and individual facilities (e.g. particular schools and health care facilities).

This finding suggests that administrative accountability measures failed to change the dynamics around the availability of public goods and services; indeed, the fiscal difficulties experienced by local government authorities mirror those in the earlier phases of decentralisation in the 1970s and 1980s. Another challenge for local governance was addressing competing interests, such as those between personal and public wellbeing, party versus collective, local versus national etc. The local level remained disempowered vis-à-vis the central government in relation to competing claims over resources, including through the tax base, natural resources, and tourism. Additionally, central government officials and some donors were perceived as finding it difficult to "let go" and give local governments real decision-making power, a view stated by both councillors and local government officials.

Several respondents claimed that the mechanisms to hold local government authorities accountable to the community were largely ineffective: formal democratic procedures were undermined by the limited capacity of elected representatives and the lack of realistic choice. This strengthens the argument for using a substantive democracy theory approach, rather than the more limited focus on the formal democratic institutions in liberal democratic theory, as argued by for instance (Törnquist, 2006).

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11. These sources include property tax; service levies; royalties on mining and minerals (sand, gravel and quarries), and business licenses.

It appears from our study that though efforts were made to strengthen the accountability function of the full council vis-à-vis the local government administration, the representative full council was unable to exercise its role to hold the administration accountable. On the other hand, district officials from the opposition pointed to how much effort they made to reach the citizens and the council members. The challenge from their perspective was that the councillors did not always understand how local (and central) government works, nor their role as councillor.

A common statement from the technocrats was that it was difficult to find the councillors fully engaged in their assignment, and that they appeared to be more interested in seeking allowances than dedicated to working to develop their community. Several local government staff pointed out that they tried to involve lower levels and the council in planning and budgeting – but that they then received directives from the central government/line ministries that forced them to prioritise other activities than those that were planned and prioritised by the council and lower levels. This tended to make both the officials and the council/lower levels frustrated, resulting in the council/lower levels criticising the technocrats for not following the agreed plan and priorities.

Our findings suggested that the mechanisms for enforcing accountability of these political actors from below were weak, as the platform for such engagement had not substantially improved with decentralisation. However, a gradual increase in resistance against the ruling party dominance, had taken place, particularly in the areas with a significant middle class e.g. Sinza in Kinondoni District, and where the civil society organisations were active in capacity strengthening interventions like in Rombo. Our observation in the four case studies revealed that the council, the legislative organ at the local governments with elected representatives, had no control over the actions of the regional and district commissioners, or over who held and controlled the state power in their areas of jurisdictions.

### Does civil society play a role in vertical accountability in the selected communities?

Civil society organisations play an important role at the national level, but at the local level civil society engagement is generally very weak, particularly in rural areas. In all four field areas, we met engaged individual activists working, often under very difficult circumstances, to engage citizens in policy-making by strengthening their capacity to voice concern. In some cases, alliances were formed with other local, regional, or national NGOs to offer capacity building programmes to both politicians and the citizens in Rombo. These measures strengthened social accountability, but not enough that they significantly improved vertical accountability. Kinondoni, located in the middle of Dar es Salaam, has, of course, stronger civil society organisations, but surprisingly few considering the vast number of inhabitants. Geita has a very weak civil society, even if it is a regional centre. Civil society organisations based in Dar es Salaam or larger regional centres often travel out to support various types of capacity building among citizens, community-based organisations or political parties, and in that way play a small but important role by enhancing citizen's capacities to demand accountability through public education and awareness raising campaigns. Still, the capacity of citizens to voice concerns at the local government, ward, or village level is limited.

We found inadequate evidence to suggest any significant change in the status of horizontal accountability in the case districts, even though accountability structures had been put in place through decentralisation and the local government reforms. The decisive factors for this problem cited in the interviews included:

- Low level of education of the councillors and inadequate availability and weak flow of relevant information to the councillors and citizens
- Councillors were not fully aware about their role and how local government functions and lacked capacity. There was a need for a programme to develop and enhance their capacities
- Agencies at the local level lacked the capacity to deal with corruption. For these reasons, the councillors were unable to hold the executives accountable.

This suggests that practical transformations of the power structures in the political landscape that would create decentralised and democratic political space for competitive politics and accountability systems, were not in place, and the decentralisation reforms had failed to lead to the expected strengthening of horizontal accountability at the district level. Central government dominance under the ruling party control continued to be as hegemonic as it was before the reforms. Ward/village and street/sub-village committees were much more active than we had anticipated but varied strongly between different localities and over time. Generally, it seemed more difficult to mobilise and keep people mobilised in urban settings like Kinondoni or Geita. But there were also differences between and within the rural districts, where it appeared that Pangani was the district where horizontal accountability at the village/ward level was the weakest. At the lower level of the local government authority there was an even greater lack of education and training amongst the elected, and even less knowledge about the political process than at the council level. This reduced the democratic potential of grassroot democratic structures in most of the districts we visited.

Following the implementation of the second phase of the reform programme, the ward executive secretary and the village executive secretary were part of the executive structure and salaried. This strengthened the capacity and outreach of the local government to lower levels. But since the capacity of the elected has not been strengthened to the same extent, horizontal accountability at lower levels has not improved. Between 2005 and 2015 there was an overall stronger awareness of political issues and a more open political space, but how this space was used varied strongly between the different districts. Generally, we found a stronger engagement in Rombo and Geita than in Pangani. This might be attributed to the higher education level and the history of being a more developed district in Rombo, and Geita being a rapidly expanding mining city.

## Does the media play a role in vertical accountability in the selected communities?

The media in Tanzania is relatively well developed and free[12]. Radio has broad coverage but has yet to match the agenda-setting power of the printed press. The capacity of the media to play a role in democratising is limited by their dependence on revenues from advertisements from the same actors they are supposed to hold to account, which leads to self-censorship. Most journalists work on freelance contracts, meaning their low- and uncertain- income also makes them susceptible to self-censorship and corruption. Outside of Dar es Salaam, there are very few permanent media representatives or media outlets that play a substantive role within the districts at the local level.

In Pangani and Geita, the most important media are the national and regional radio stations and, for those few who could afford it, national/regional and satellite TV. In Pangani a local FM Radio station (Uzikwaza), has been operating since 2008, though its ability to support the participation of citizens in decision-making is limited. In Rombo, very few of the Tanzanian TV and radio stations are accessible in large parts of the district, as it is situated in a "radio shadow", on the North Eastern part of Mount Kilimanjaro. A branch of the Mwanza based Star-TV station covers the Geita region. Newspapers from the national or regional levels arrive in the late afternoon, or one or two days later, depending on the season and the conditions of the roads. Very few people, apart from a limited number of people with higher education, read the papers. Journalists based in the regional centres travel to the districts to cover council meetings or other events and, in that way, provide some vertical accountability functions.

Thus, the media have a limited vertical accountability function within the districts but do play a fundamental role in keeping people updated and informed about national politics. Mobile telephones are most likely the most important tool used to spread information. Access to the internet is too expensive for most people, but does play an important role for activists, both within civil society and the political sphere.

12. The New Media Law decided upon in November 2016 is criticised for having the potential to infringe on the freedom of the media.

These findings suggest that the local government reform programme inadequately achieved transformation of institutional and organisational arrangements for substantive citizen engagement and participation. The space for vertical engagement in the decisions over public resources was still weak in the three local government authorities studied. Planning and decision-making processes were central government-led, particularly in resource allocation. The selection of committee members through a voting process was also difficult because service beneficiaries were not necessarily those living close to the facilities. Consequently, collective bargaining power, in this case, could only be achieved through elected representatives in the Mtaa governments and in the council, which were also subject to party politics. Representatives from both the ruling party and the opposition parties were of the view that areas where representatives were mainly from the opposition parties received relatively little resources for public investments compared to areas with the ruling party majority.

We observed power imbalances between the donor community and policy makers, and between the politicians at the national level and local government level as one of the contributing factors hindering substantive decentralisation through the reform programme. Practitioners at the national and local government level tended to be influenced by political decisions, which often contradicted the reform blueprint. Implementation of the election manifesto for instance took precedence over all other matters in the decision-making process. The relationship between the central and local levels was an asymmetrical one, characterised by the centralisation of political power. Capacity for contestation of public policy remained weak due to low capability and awareness of local government representatives and citizens in general to understand political processes and how to use existing platforms to voice and hold higher levels accountable. The citizens were limited by a lack of awareness of their rights and knowledge around how the system worked, how to act collectively for change, as well as an unwillingness to participate based on previous experiences. Demand-side capacity to demand accountability is weak, as in the case of the MP of Pangani who was elected but blatantly refused

to be accountable to his constituents, meaning that citizens had no right to demand his accountability. This suggests that citizens' relationship and engagement with the state through legislative institutions remains weak or inadequately transformed by the implementation of the local government reforms informed by decentralisation by dissolution.

Despite the challenges, the village and the sub-village structures might have under-realised potential, both as an entry point into the political system and as a potentially effective mechanism for democratic governance at the grassroots level. The people living in the street or in a village know what the major problems are. But to address these problems they also need capacity and resources. There has been an increase in individual freedoms such as those of speech, assembly, and association. As a result, supporters of opposition parties have been openly critical of the government, and the situation in the country is more open. But, a major constraint is the continued lack of awareness, information, and capacity to process information, both by citizens and elected members of the political structures, and poor accountability. Whether this trend towards improvement in political freedoms continues remains to be seen.

# Conclusion

The policies, institutions, and legal frameworks that are necessary for democratic governance are in place. However, the capacity, and maybe the political will, to implement these frameworks are still weak. While the institutions of the executive, the representatives, and the judiciary are all established, the executive branch is considerably stronger than the other two branches of government, both at the national and the local level. There is a clear division between the executive, the parliament, and the judiciary. The challenge is, however, that the capacity of the parliament and the judiciary still trails behind that of the executive. Thus, both the parliament and judiciary need to be further empowered to be able to exercise their democratic mandate.

Tensions exist between good governance reforms and democracy, as pointed out by (Abrahamsen, 2000; Craig & Porter, 2006) for instance. On the one hand, well-intentioned administrative reforms have strengthened the central and local governments' technocratic capabilities. On the other hand, the reforms did not build the capacity of the parliament, the council and other accountability mechanisms to exert influence over the executive to the same extent. At the local level, the same pattern prevails: the technocrats dominate the elected councillors. For the opposition, the media, and civil society organisations, it is even more difficult to get the information and access needed to be able to hold the government accountable and participate in policy formulation.

It appears from our study that public sector reforms strengthened the executive functions both at the national and local levels relatively more than the political reforms strengthened the representative side. In a context that (Mkandawire, 2001) termed "choiceless democracies", the donor, the presidency, and the ministry of finance formed an "iron triangle" around the political process, which made it very difficult for parliamentarians, NGOs, the media, or the public to fully engage in the political process. A similar phenomenon occurred at the local level, where the elected councillors in the local government council had difficulty influencing local policy.

Key local political posts are appointed by the President. As CCM is the ruling party and the President its chairman, the persons appointed are firmly established within CCM, and are thus both the central government representatives and part of the ruling party, in the local community; and are part of the decision-making bodies of the party at various levels. This intertwining of party and state structure continues to be a great challenge for the opposition parties and the democratisation process.

All in all, though there have been positive developments at the local level, few of the ambitious objectives in the Local Government Reform Programme II: Decentralisation by Devolution have been realised. The reforms did not provide adequate mechanisms, processes and incentives to hold political elites and the duty bearers to account, neither vertically nor horizontally, at the different levels of local government. Political and executive power in planning and policy implementation has remained top-down, leading to increasing conflicts of interest between the political elite and the citizens. The reform programme that aimed to drive a "local turn" of development in Tanzania, did so briefly, but has now largely turned to recentralisation. Consequently, the ability of citizens to leverage collective action decision mechanisms using the representative organs like parliament and councils, is limited.

A general assessment of democratisation in Tanzania on the local level indicates that significant progress has been made but that a lot of work remains to be done. The October 2015 elections at both the local government level and the national level showed that overall political awareness and citizen engagement have increased, and resulted in the voting out of inefficient councillors, and members of parliament. This is hopeful for the future of democratisation.

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# Appendix 1: local government & central government relations

## Local government reforms in Tanzania

Debates on and various forms of decentralisation, de-concentration, and local government reforms have a long history in Tanzania (Cooksey & Kikula, 2005; Hydén, 1980, 2016; Kessy, 2011; Liviga, 2009; Max, 1991; Mollel & Tollenaar, 2013; Ngware, 2005; RE-DET, 2009; Swantz, 1998; Tidemand & Msami, 2010; Warioba, 1999). Local government reforms in Tanzania can be divided in six phases:

During the *German and British Colonial period* when the aim of decentralisation was to give artificial power to native chiefs to control their localities. The process involved enactment of the Native Authority Ordinance (Cap 72) of 1926. Political agency remained directed towards serving the interest of the colonialists with little political engagement with the local chiefs as representatives of the citizens' interests at the local communities.

*Pre-1961 Independence (British Colonial)* with the purpose of giving political legitimacy to the local leaders by introducing local elections. The process involved enactment of the Local Government Ordinance (Cap 333) of 1953, which provided for 38 local authorities and replaced the Native Authority Ordinance (Cap 72) of 1926. Political agency remained unchanged, with top-down execution of political power and little engagement with the lower level political leaders in making decisions.

*1962- Post-independence - 1ˢᵗ Phase Government of Tanzania*, the purpose of which was to maintain the local government structure but integrating the local government system into the central government and its ruling party, and thus undermining political competition between the central and local governments, and within the local constituents at the lower levels. This involved revising the Local Authority Ordnance in 1962 and repealing the sections that established the Native Authorities. Repealing the African Chiefs' Ordinance of 1953 completely abolished the chiefs' roles and functions and left them powerless.

*1965 to 1969: power consolidation through centralisation of power following the Arusha Declaration in 1967,* which required centralisation of political power into one political party, nationalisation of private property and central planning of economic and social development. This period of reforms included in 1965, enactment of the Local Government Election Act No. 50 of 1965, which decreed that all councillors had to be members of the then ruling party, the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU); and the introduction of further reforms in 1969 in two areas: (1) establishment of ward development committees to replace the village development committees, and (2) replacing the division executive officers with the ruling party TANU-division secretaries, to act as party and government heads in their areas.

*1982-1998: 2ⁿᵈ Phase Government: Re-configuring of the local government system* to conform with the politics of aid, which demanded reforms in local governance as a pre-condition for receiving aid from development partners. The implementation included enactment of several Local Government Acts in April 1982:

- Local Government (District Authorities) Act No. 7 of 1982
- Local Government (Urban Authorities) Act No. 8 of 1982
- Local Government Finances Act No. 9 of 1982
- Local Government Services Act No. 10 of 1982
- Local Government Negotiating Machinery Act No. 11 of 1982
- Decentralisation of Government Administration (Interim Provisions) (Amendment) Act No. 12 of 1982

*1999/2000-2008 LGRP I, June 2009-July 2014 LGRP II.*
The Local Government Reform Programme LGRP
I was initiated in 1996, ran from 1999-2008, and the
delayed LGRP II, which started in 2009 and continued
up to 2014, aimed to be one of the major reforms
for enhancing accountability and creating structures
that strengthen an inclusive democratic development
(URT, 1998, 2002, 2005, 2010a, 2010b). The LGRP
was an integral part of a broader structural reform
package, where the objective was to transfer a number
of responsibilities from the central government and
regions to the local government authorities, with the
aim of enhancing governance and accountability and
creating structures that strengthen democratic devel-
opment (URT, 2002, 2008, 2009). It was supposed to
be a "decentralisation by devolution policy" aiming
at fiscal, administrative and political decentralisation
of service delivery and changed central-local relations.
The objective was to ensure that citizens at the grass-
roots level are involved in the planning and imple-
mentation of development programmes in their local
areas. It was envisaged that through participatory
planning and budgeting, Opportunity and Obstacles
for Development (O&OD) policies relevant to local
needs should be developed and create a sense of
ownership (URT, 2007). The reform objectives were
bold and to a large extent donor-driven, with limited
domestic political support and anchorage among the
national political elites (Tidemand, 2015). There was
a fear that the local government authorities would not
have the capacity or information about the "big national
picture" to perform effectively (Semboja, 2015). The
central government reserved powers for intervention
in case powers were perceived to be misused at local
government authorities with the catch phrase *"hands
off, eyes on within arm's reach"*.

## The local government structures

The sub-national level of administration in Tanzania
is divided in two, and to a certain extent overlapping
and conflicting structures, namely the central govern-
ment structure, and local government authorities. In
the mainland of Tanzania, there are three levels of
central government administrative levels: regions,
districts, and divisions. A regional commissioner,

appointed by the President, heads the Region and
the regional administrative secretary is the head of
the civil service. At the district level, the central
government structure includes the district commis-
sioner who is the principal assistant to the regional
commissioner at that level; and the district adminis-
trative secretary who is the head of the civil service.[13]
In addition to the line from the central to the local
government through the regional and the district
commissioner, the ministries at the central level retain
control over corresponding departments at the local
government level. The local government authorities
considered that the Ministries of Health, Education
and Agriculture should retain a close relationship to
corresponding departments at the district/local gov-
ernment level.

The level under the district is called the lower level of
local government authorities, or grassroots level. The
village, district, and urban authorities are responsible
for planning, financing, and implementing development
programmes within their areas of jurisdiction. Each
authority must suppress crime, maintain peace, good
order and protect public and private property; promote
the social welfare and economic well-being of persons
within its area of jurisdiction; control and improve
agriculture, trade and industry; further and enhance
health, education and social life of the people; and fight
poverty, disease and ignorance. The local government
authorities have the legislative power to make by-laws,
which are applicable in their areas of jurisdiction
(URT, 2011). On paper the role and powers of the
local governments are substantive.

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13. Until recently, the central government structure included a divisional secretary
that headed the division, a sub-district level, which was also a political post
and a tenet of the central administration within the local community. The DS
was supposed to have been transformed into a civil service post in the second
reform phase.

If we look at the democratic structure of the local governments at the lowest level, the Vitongojis (sub-villages) in rural areas, and the Mtaa's (street assemblies) in urban areas, elections are held every five years to elect the Vitongoji and Mtaa chairmen, one year before the general election. There is a slight difference between rural and urban areas in how the council at the lowest level is established. The Vitongoji chairman appoints five Vitongoji council members, while in urban areas the Mtaa council is elected at the same time as the chairman is elected and is directly under the ward level. This grassroots structure is supposed to manage local development issues like security, waste management etc. in the neighbourhoods, mitigate minor conflicts, and provide input to the planning process. Financing of activities, as well as provision of labour, must be done through voluntary contributions. There can be sizeable differences between Vitongojis and Mtaa's in terms of number of households, social composition, level of education and distance to ward and district headquarters. There is similarly, difference in capacity, both in terms of human resources and ability to mobilise financial resources. However, these structures have democratic potential under the radar of the actors at the national level, we named them in this study as the forgotten level, in line with how S. Ngware and Haule (1993) perceived the village level.

At the village level, an element of direct democracy is practised, at least in theory. The structure is comprised of a village assembly consisting of all persons aged 18 and above, who should meet at least once a year to discuss common matters and elect members of various bodies. The corporate entity of a registered village is the village council comprising a chairperson elected by the village assembly, sub-village chairpersons, and some villagers. The council is subdivided in village committees for planning, finance, economic affairs, social services, security, forest protection, and water resources. Until 2002, no person was formally employed at the village level. The village executive secretary was paid from the revenues that were collected in the village.

However, with more executive functions, as well as funds, being delegated to the villages under the second phase of the local government reform programme, and difficulties in recruiting enough competent staff, the village executive secretary has become a formal employee of the local government authority. The village council's functions and roles include planning and coordinating activities, giving assistance and advice to the villagers engaged in agriculture, forestry, horticultural, industrial or any other activity, and encouraging village residents to undertake and participate in communal enterprises. The village assembly can adopt by-laws, but the by-laws must be submitted to the district council for approval. Women must account for 25% of the council members.

Ward is the administrative subdivision between the village and the districts. The ward reviews the village council's proposed projects in its jurisdiction and approves them for passage up the line to the district development committee. The administration at ward level is headed by a ward executive secretary, and includes officers for education, health, community affairs and agriculture. The ward is steered by a ward development committee comprised of a councillor representing the ward in the district development council and chairpersons of all village councils within the ward. The ward development committee also includes members of the district council, who ordinarily reside in the ward; officials and invitees from, for instance NGOs and other civic groups involved in the promotion of development in the ward. However, the invitees have no right to vote in the meetings. The ward development committee is responsible for producing general development plans for the ward and managing disasters and environment related activities within its ward.

The district level is the main site for local government administration in rural areas. The executive structure is headed by the district executive director, coordinating the various departments including personnel and administration; planning and finance; engineering or works; education and culture; trade and economic affairs; urban planning; health and social welfare; co-operative, agriculture and livestock development; and community development.

The district executive director is appointed by the president and the heads of department by the responsible minister. With decentralisation, the councils now have the mandate to
"hire and fire" technical staff and teachers. Heads of departments and key technical staff – the technocrats – are usually well-educated, often with university education and often a master's degree, and are perceived, and perceive themselves, as the catalyst of development in the rural areas. The representative organ is the district council composed of members elected from each ward, the councillors; members of parliament representing constituencies within the area of the district council; three members appointed by the minister responsible for local government and one member representing the constituent village councils on a rotational basis. The number of women appointed to the council must be not less than one-third of ward representatives and the MPs combined.

District councils, through the district development committee supervise the implementation of all plans for economic, commercial, industrial, and social development in their respective areas. In addition, the council approves by-laws made by the village councils and co-ordinates plans, projects, and programmes for the villages within its area of jurisdiction. Apart from the district development committee, there are committees for finance, administration and planning; education, health and water; economic affairs, community development and the environment. The district and municipal councils are empowered to pass by-laws applicable for the whole district. The council must give public notice to the local inhabitants of the district of its intention and provide a comment period to the inhabitants before passing the by-laws. After commenting, the by-laws are submitted to the regional officer who will comment and then submit the draft by-laws to the minister of local government affairs for his approval.

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