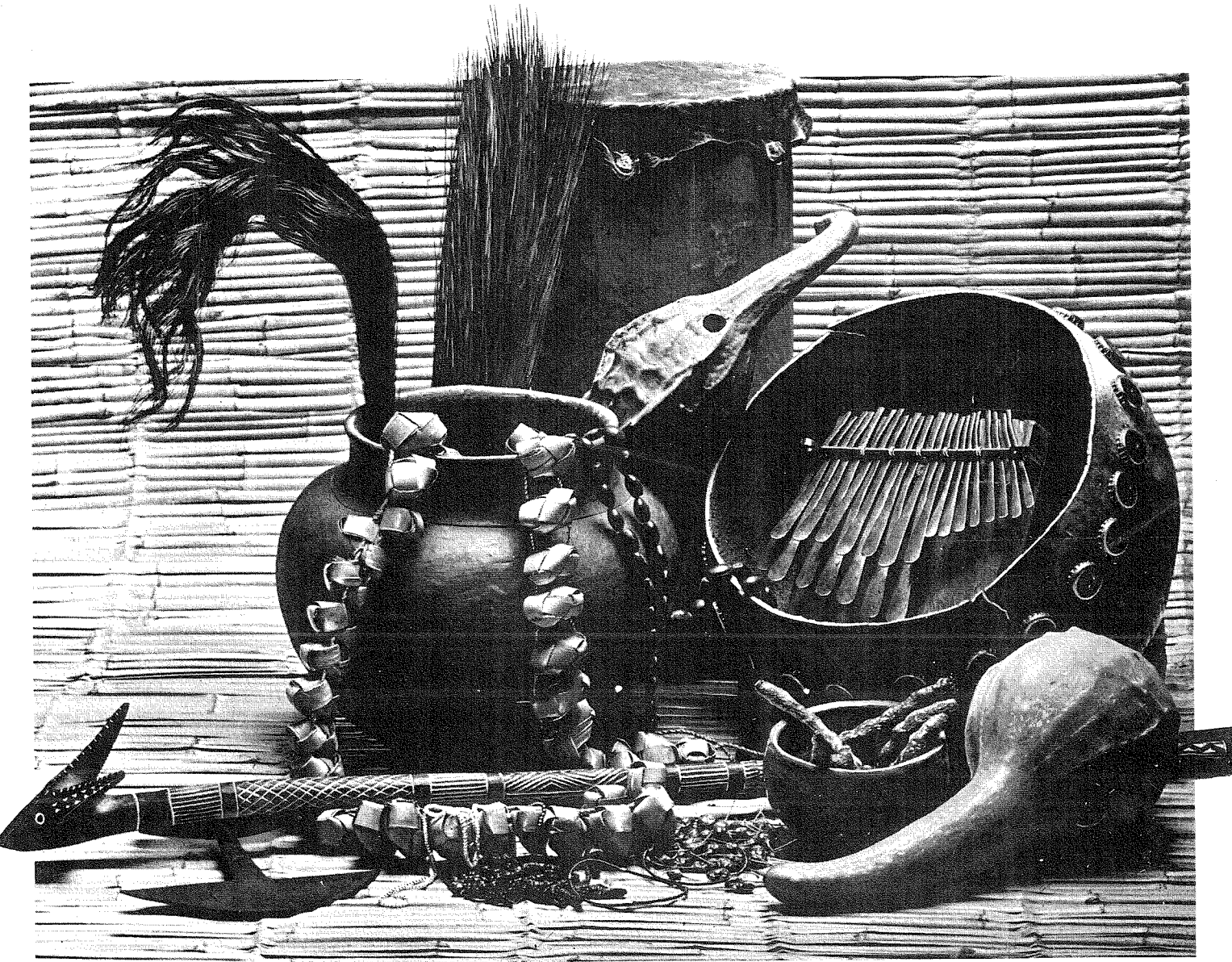


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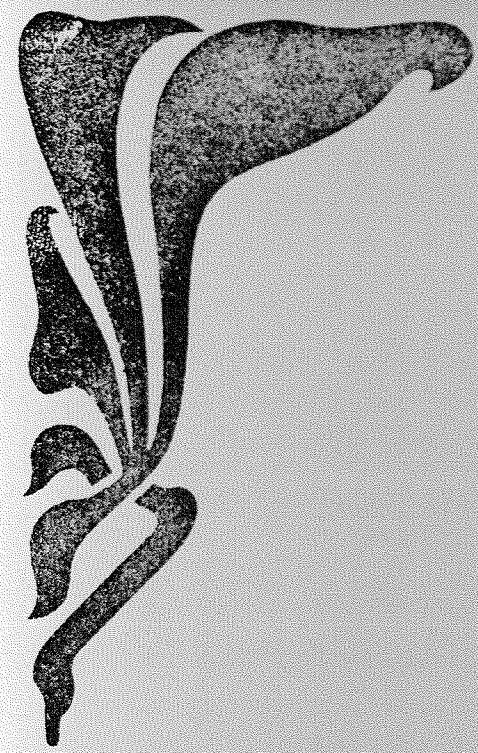
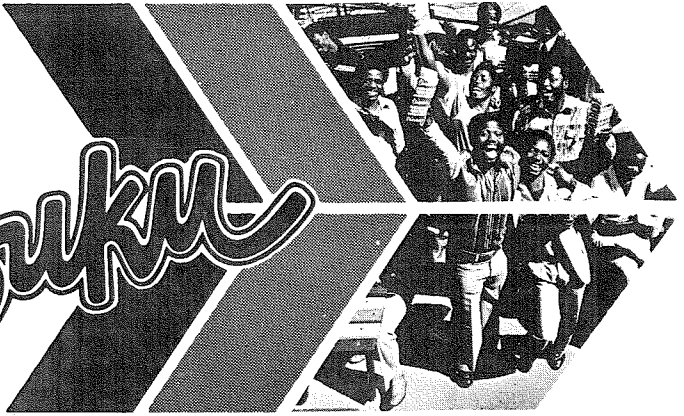


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Michael Hogg

## POST INDEPENDENCE EXPERIENCE IN FINANCING DISTRICT COUNCILS

DR. A.H.J. Helmsing

Department of Rural and Urban Planning University of Zimbabwe

Note: This paper presents in revised form a part of the paper co-authored with Dr K. Wekwete entitled "Financing district councils. Local taxes and central allocations", District Councils, held at Kariba, 15-17 October 1986.

### INTRODUCTION

Since Independence central government has stressed the importance of district council local authorities and their role in decentralizing both economic and political activities. The 1984 Prime Minister's directive on decentralization is the clearest manifestation of this. This directive elaborates, among other on the role of District Councils in planning, participation, coordination and implementation of development efforts. The success of the District Councils in fulfilling their role essentially depends on two questions. a) Do councils have effective powers of implementation (and thus of spending); b) Can the councils raise sufficient revenue to finance a wide range of development projects? This article concerns itself with the second question although it should be emphasized that both questions are interrelated. On this context it is important to have a good picture of the actual fiscal

situation in which most District Councils find themselves, if only to stimulate debate and promote a better understanding of the issues. This article will present some main aggregate trends and will analyze in more detail the financial situation of a sample of districts.

### GENERAL TRENDS AND COMPARISONS

At Independence Zimbabwe inherited an archaic system of local government. A dual system without real government in either part. In the commercial farming areas there was and still is no fully representative system of local authorities. In the other part African Councils were existing which for a long time did not fully cover the entire TTL population, nor were they viable units of local government. Most were too small and starved of resources. Some tentative calculation will show this. The Africa Councils had in 1972/73 a local revenue base of Rh\$3.9 mln (1). With an estimated population of 3.3 mln (2) this gives a per capita revenue of Rh\$1.81. The total of central allocations was not much higher, namely 4.7mln. That is on a per capita basis RH\$1.42. Thus, the total that African Councils could spend for the benefit of their population was Rh\$2,60 per annum.

If one would express this amount in 1984 prices so as to make it comparable to the 1984/85 District Council budgets (with one dollar one could buy more in 1972/73 than in 1984/85 due to inflation) than this figure would rise to Z\$9.10 (3). The actual amount in that year was Z\$56.48 (4). In other words, present day district council expenditures are in real terms more than 6 times higher than those of the African Councils. To a large extent this may be explained by the transfer and postindependence expansion of education.

Even though considerable progress has been made since Independence, the great economic imbalances between district councils on the one hand and the rural and urban councils on the other are still very much there. To illustrate this: the correct expenditures of district councils were in 1981/82 on a per capita basis Z\$25.60 while that for all local authorities together was Z\$77.40 (5). Since the latter is an all local authority aggregate the actual gap is more than a factor three. Although this gap has been narrowed, primarily thanks to central government transfers to district councils, there are still considerable inequalities, which call for continued transfer of resources in favour of the communal areas.

Table 1 and 2 give a summary overview of the composition of revenue of District Councils for 1981/82 and 1984/85 respectively.

**Table 1**  
Composition of revenue by account,  
District Councils, 1981/82  
(current dollars)

	total	general	education	liquor
Local Rve	11.527.825	2.067.348	3.596.743	4.909.766
Grants	102.527.825	4.660.127	97.867.698	
<b>Total</b>	<b>114.101.732</b>	<b>7.727.457</b>	<b>101.464.491</b>	<b>4.909.766</b>
Percentage distribution by source				
Local Rve	10%	40%	4%	100%
Grants	90%	60%	96%	—
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>
Percentage distribution by account				
Local Rve	100%	27%	31%	42%
Grants	100%	4%	96%	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>89%</b>	<b>4%</b>

Notes: liquor account refers to gross income Data from Ministry of Local Government, Rural and Urban Development, District Council Account 1981/82 (unpublished figures)

**Table 2**  
Composition of revenue, by account,  
District Councils, 1984/85  
(current dollars)

	total	general	education	liquor
Local Rve	44.577.178	6.063.051	27.334.880	11.179.247
Grants	216.674.828	4.660.127	207.243.368	
<b>Total</b>	<b>261.252.006</b>	<b>15.494.511</b>	<b>234.628.248</b>	<b>11.179.247</b>
Percentage distribution by source				
Local Rve	17%	39%	12%	100%
Grants	83%	61%	88%	
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>
Percentage distribution by account				
Local Rve	100%	14%	61%	25%
Grants	100%	4%	96%	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>4%</b>

Source: Ministry of Local Government, Rural and Urban Development, District Council Accounts 1984/85 (unpublished figures)

From the tables it can be concluded that education dwarfs everything else. In 1984/85 it constituted 90% of total district council revenue. This not only applies to grant revenue which even for 96% are destined for education, but increasingly also for local revenue. In 1981-

82 this was only 31%. A second important conclusion, when comparing 1981/82 with 1984/85 figures, is that the dependence on grants has diminished from 90% to 83%. A third observation is that dependence

of grants is least in the general account (39% of total revenue). Although, it must be said, its relative importance has not changed much compared to 1981/82, despite all debate around the issue.

### EXPERIENCES OF SOME SELECTED DISTRICT COUNCILS

The above analysis is based on aggregate figures which tend to hide a lot of the variation in experiences of individual districts. It is not easy to capture the complexity of the problems without actually descending to the level of individual councils. In order to be able to come up with a picture that would mirror the situation for all district councils, a random sample was drawn. In such a sample each district has the same probability of being selected. Hence there is no bias in selection which would influence the results. The following districts were selected: Batanai, Beitbridge, Buhera, Cheziya Gokwe, Chiweshe, Gazaland, Hlangabeza, Mashambazhou, Mhondoro, Kubatana, and Mutoko. Since our main aim is to get an overall picture for all districts, the names of individual districts have been deleted. What matter is the overall picture, not whether district A is slightly better off than B or vice versa.

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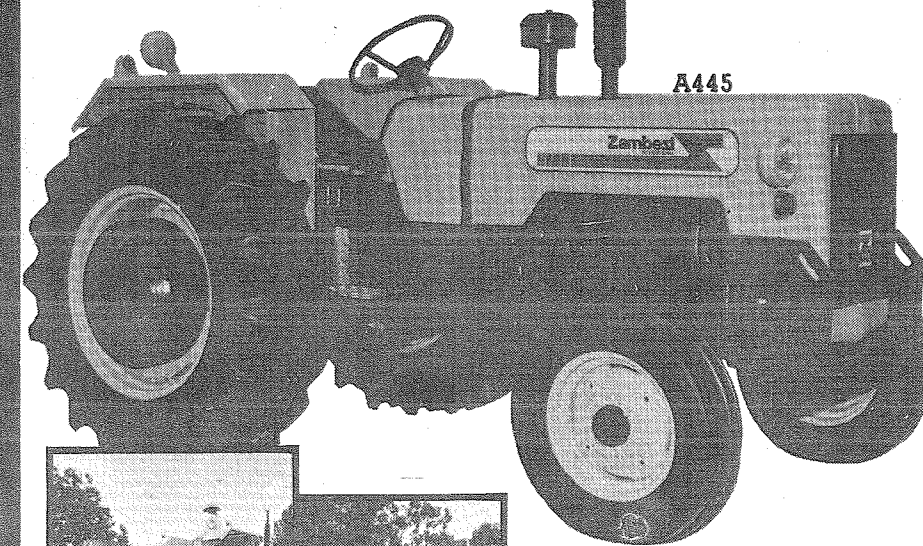
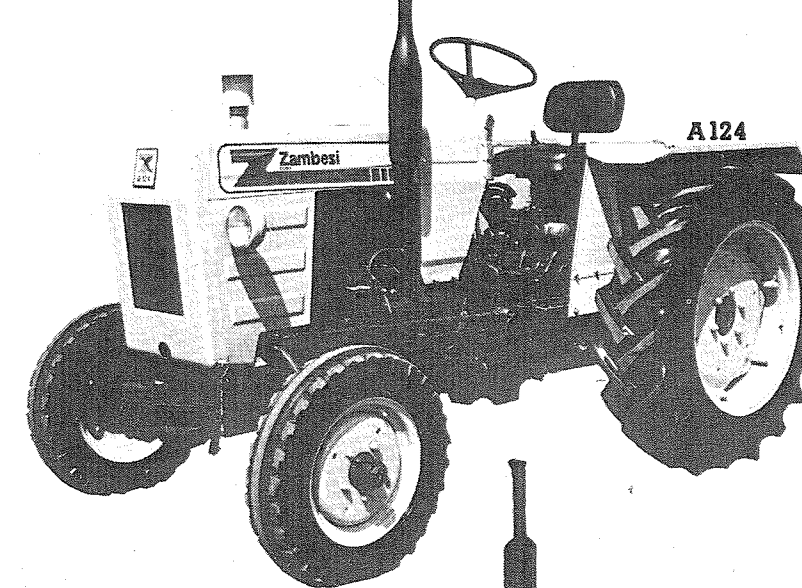
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**Table 3**  
Per capita grant and local revenue,  
Selected districts, 1981/82 and 1984/85  
(current dollars)

	Per ca. 1981/82	grant rve 1984/85	Per cap. 1981/82	local rve 1984/85
District 1	16.98	46.70	1.00	5.51
District 2	12.33	35.57	0.97	2.69
District 3	17.65	52.79	1.13	8.55
District 4	8.71	41.64	0.81	5.71
District 5	11.30	37.26	0.94	5.70
District 6	22.11	53.62	0.80	4.15
District 7	30.12	59.59	3.54	12.84
District 8	24.69	41.81	1.00	7.20
District 9	34.01	69.26	3.90	12.04
District 10	25.54	55.28	1.74	10.00
District 11	31.89	70.23	3.10	9.41
mean value	21.39	51.25	1.73	7.62
std dev	8.67	11.93	1.21	3.24
coef var	0.40	0.23	0.70	0.42

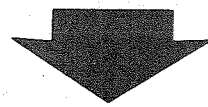
Note: calculations based on CSO preliminary results census 1982 and DC accounts of MLGRUD

From table 3 a number of important conclusions can be drawn. First of all, the interdistrict variation in the allocation of central government grants is relatively low, though not unimportant. Secondly it has gone down considerable over time. A third important finding is that there is a much greater local revenue. is a much greater variation among the various districts in capacity to generate local revenue. Although this variation has gone down relatively it is much higher that for the grant revenue. Furthermore, at the height of the drought 1983/84 the

interdistrict variation went up again (6), only to go down again in the last and favourable agricultural season. In other words, there are considerable differences between the districts in ability to raise local revenue. Furthermore, it seems that the differences in local fiscal capacity become accentuated in periods of drought. Lastly, it can be concluded that central allocations in the form of grants help to reduce differences in financial resources between the various districts. Without central allocations a potentially greater unequal development of

districts would be enhanced.

As stressed earlier, the education account dwarfs every thing else. Since the role of District Councils in the case of education is to act as 'field office' for central government and local discretion is limited to the execution of the budget, the picture gets somewhat distorted. It is therefore useful to take a closer look at the general administration account as it is particularly this department where District Council's capacity and responsibility is greatest. Table 4 gives a first impression of fiscal strength.



**Table 4**  
Relative importance of local revenue, Administration  
Selected districts, 1981/82 and 1984/85,  
(percentages)

District 1	30	60
District 2	50	44
District 3	63	67
District 4	20	51
District 5	69	70
District 6	57	79
District 7	60	74
District 8	52	63
District 9	70	73
District 10	40	32
District 11	24	38

Note: Calculations based on DC Accounts 1981/82 and 1984/85

Individual districts have made great strides in raising local revenue and are becoming less dependent on the various central government allocations. While it is true that most districts are experiencing a decline in grant revenue on the general account as a consequence of MLGRUD policy, the main reason for the increase in the relative importance of local revenue, are the efforts to enlarge the local fiscal capacity. As is shown in table 4, five of the eleven districts generate more than two thirds of the administration budget themselves. In 1981/82 only two districts managed to achieve this.

Table 5 takes a closer look at the several sources of local revenue. In the fiscal year 1981/82 nine out of the eleven districts were dependent for more than half of their administration budget on economic taxes such as business licences, market fees, beer permits and levies, etc. For three districts that was even more than 90%. A secondary, but far less important source of local revenue were 'Income Generating Projects' such as sale of gum poles etc., but above all liquor profits transferred. In one district this constituted 70 per cent of total local revenue on this account. Only in a few instances were other sources of revenue of significant importance.

**Table 5**  
Composition of local revenue, Administration  
By type, selected districts  
1981/82 and 1984/85, in percentages

	Rates & Ec. taxes		Service		IGP		Other Sources	
	Dev. Fees	& lics	charges					
	81/2	84/581/2	84/581/2	84/581/2	84/581/2	84/581/2	84/581/2	84/581/2
District 1	0	0 92	33 3	4 0	46 4	17		
District 2	0	15 46	47 0	4 38	7 17	27		
District 3	0	2 73	65 0	3 18	13 9	11118		
District 4	0	13 94	60 0	1 1	2 4	24		
District 5	0	0 60	79 0	0 0	1 40	19		
District 6	0	0 60	75 8	17 17	11 6	7		
District 7	0	1 12	15 10	2 70	42 8	40		
District 8	0	15 83	67 1	0 1	3 15	15		
District 9	0	0 69	75 0	6 28	2 3	17		
District 10	0	0 84	53 7	4 0	42 9	1		
District 11	0	5 96	39 0	3 0	1 4	52		

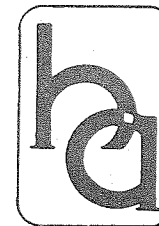
Source: DC Accounts 1981/82 and 1984/85

By 1984/85 the picture had changed. Development fees had become a significant source of revenue for three districts. Income generating projects are becoming more important also, though some

districts are clearly doing better than others. Five districts earned considerable revenue from these. In most cases these projects are commercial (sale of primary products). Manufacturing projects are

so far only in one case yielding sizeable revenues. The overreliance of economic taxes has diminished somewhat. Service charges remain a relatively unimportant source of revenue.

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On the whole one may speak of a diversification of sources, and this in itself is a positive development. It increases the ability of the District councils to withstand better cyclical variations such as droughts and recessions.

Despite this measured optimism one should realize that in real terms the fiscal capacity of the District Councils has not increased so rapidly (disregarding for a moment education and gross liquor sales). If one takes into account the growing population and the rising costs due to inflation, the real amount of resources increased 3.5% per annum in the period considered. Given the rising expectations about District Councils capacity to undertake development efforts, together with the insistence on the part of central government on greater local self reliance and reduction in (some) grants, the councils may get into a difficult fix, caught between fast growing responsibilities and slow growing resources.

### SOME CONCLUSIONS

In the above sections the financial situation of District councils was analyzed in some detail. The analysis is incomplete in so far as it has not dealt with the District Development Fund which in 1984/85 incurred some 23 million dollars, mostly on roads and bridges and water supplies. Also the implications of the future amalgamation with the Rural Councils have not been discussed.

Whatever the financial implications of amalgamation, it should be born in mind that the income of a communal land household was estimated to be Z\$ 300 in 1982 (7). Assuming an average household size of 6 members, this means a per capita income of Z\$50. The national per capita income of the same year (that is the sum of all earnings of all residents divided by the entire population) was estimated to be Z\$418 (8). Admittedly, these are speculative and inaccurate figures, and they can always be criticized.

Yet, they are indicative for the tremendous gap in income (and wealth) between the Communal Lands and the rest of the economy. Given this vast inequality, the continued transfer of income in the form of grants and expenditures is a matter of political justice. Furthermore, the historically grown imbalances in developmental infrastructure require grown above average effort in order for the communal areas to catch up. With a per capita income which is only one eighth of the national average, these extra efforts cannot be self financed locally. Self reliance is a laudable goal but history has given it sharp limits. It seems therefore unlikely that central government transfers will diminish in importance. A third argument in favour of central government grants is based on the observed spacial inequalities between districts. Only through central transfers can these real differences in fiscal capacity be evened out. It is important to distinguish here between fiscal capacity and fiscal effort. Fiscal capacity may be large, yet because of poor administration, low professional standards, political opportunism, etc, the actual amount of revenues raised may be relatively small. Such situations should of course not be enhanced by compensatory central grants.

If central allocations will have to continue to play a significant role in financing districts, the question becomes in what form. The present situation is a system of single purpose and unit cost grants (education, administration, health conservation, adult literacy etc). This system makes it difficult for District Councils to develop initiatives on their own. Introducing some form of block grants to be used for different purposes within boundaries prescribed by central government may be an alternative that gives councils greater discretion to respond to local demands and needs.

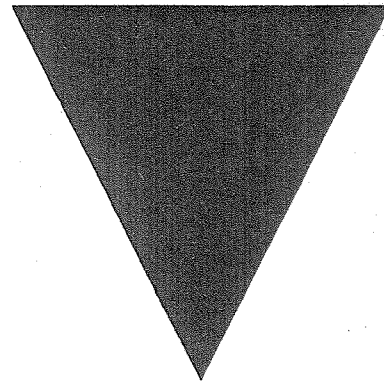
Tax sharing appears an attractive alternative. For example, if one could just get a 5 per cent share in the national taxes on goods and services, which consti-

tute 43% of all national tax revenues, than one would have had in 1984/85 a total sum of Z\$57 million (9). In other words, slightly over Z\$1 million for each council. but why should Harava with 28.000 inhabitants received with 28.000 inhabitants receive the same sum as Gutu with 177.000? The key issue is not the principle itself but a fully worked out proposal with a distributional formula that minimizes inequitable incidence among the districts.

Realizing the structural limits to the generation of local revenue, there are probably several ways to improve the situation. First of all, the fiscal effort of the councils can be improved by strengthening the administrative and legal capacity to implement existing tax (by) laws. The experiences with the development fees is illustrative. Some councils have been able to implement it with reasonable efficiency, others saw their revenue collapse after one or two years. Secondly, the fiscal capacity of councils may be expanded with the development of new forms of revenue. One way could be the introduction of new taxes. One tax that has been discussed a lot recently is the grain levy. This is a producer income tax and would, in all probability, be levied on marketed grains. The Grain Marketing Board would in such a scheme be the obvious collection point. Thus, a council would receive the amount of grain tax that is levied on grain sales originating in its territory. The most important drawback of such a proposal is that there are considerable differences between councils in the volume of grains marketed. Furthermore the introduction of such a tax would have to await amalgamation so as not to reproduce the pre-independence situation where communal farmers and not the commercial farmers paid a surcharge on their grain sales to help finance the then existing African Development Fund. The idea of a grain levy has caught on but needs further thought as to its implementation details (10).

Income generating projects have received considerable attention as means to expand local revenues. However, the practice of income generating projects is that incomes are generated but often not for the councils but only for those who are employed in these projects. Of course, this is a positive aspect in the sense that these projects contribute to the creation of employment in the rural areas, but it stresses the difficulty of achieving the fiscal objectives. Furthermore, in the case of beer sales, councils are faced with contradictory central government measures. On the one had Councils are told to generate their own income and at the same time prices on beer are controlled turning many liquor operations into net losses. The result has been the several councils have decided to close down beer halls and gardens which has meant that traditional beer brewing and its (illegal) sale is on the rise. Although the overall trends in terms of local revenue is not very encouraging there are also cases where councils have made success stories. Notwithstanding some rethinking of the objectives of such 'council projects' may be in order.

## NOTES

- 
- (1) Hughes A.J.B. 1974. Development in Rhodesia tribal areas. An overview. Tribal Areas of Rhodesia Research foundation, Salisbury. Table 13 page 138A.
  - (2) Based on CSO, 1984, 1982 population census. A preliminary assessment. Harare: CSO.
  - (3) Using the consumer price index (lower income groups) as deflator. Source: CSO, 1986. Statistical yearbook of Zimbabwe. Harare: CSO. Table 11.12

- (4) DC Accounts 1984/85. See also table 2
- (5) Sources: CSO, 1986. op.cit. p.91; population figures from CSO 1984. op.cit.
- (6) Figures calculated for 1982/83 and 1983/84:  
 Ave per cap loc rev: Z\$3.17  
 Standard Deviation Z\$1.75  
 Coef Variation 0.55
- (7) World Bank 1982. Zimbabwe agricultural sector study. Mimeographed.
- (8) CSO, 1986. Statistical Yearbook
- (8) Quartely Digest of statistics, March 1986, table 18.3
- (10) Currently the author is investigating the implications of a grain levy proposal

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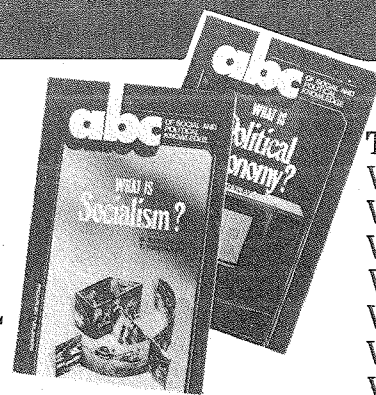
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## DECENTRALIZATION AND REGIONAL PLANNING

IN

## DEVELOPING COUNTRIES: Basic Considerations

by  
N.D. Mutizwa-Mangiza

### 1. Introduction

Since Friedman and Weaver's 1979 misgivings about our concern and level of understanding of organizational issues, we are now in the slightly better position of being able to compare various types of organization that have been adopted for the implementation of regional development policies in developing countries. Decentralization encompasses a number of such organizational alternatives. However, before proceeding with the discussion, it is appropriate at this stage to state what is meant by the term 'regional planning'. 'Regional planning', as used in this paper refers, firstly, to the process of planning for geographical areas or spatial entities below the national level. Secondly, it refers to 'local regional' or 'intra-regional' planning, in contrast to 'national regional' or 'inter-regional' planning (Hall, 1975; Conyers, 1984). Thirdly, it refers to a process of integrated area planning, combining different dimensions traditionally known as 'physical planning', 'sectional planning', 'project planning' and 'social planning'. This holistic or integrated approach to area planning is an emerging trend in developing countries which, not without some controversy in academic circles, appears to be increasingly welcome; as studies of recent changes in the scope and organization of planning in a number of African countries have demonstrated (Conyers, 1981 and 1984; Mawhood, 1983; Mutizwa-Mangiza, 1985).

Turning now to the aims of this paper, these may be summarised as follows:

- To describe briefly the various types of regional organization most commonly used in developing countries, focusing on the meaning or conceptions of the term 'decentralization';
- To discuss the advantages and disadvantages of decentralization which have been frequently cited in the centralization-decentralization debate; and
- To point out some basic considerations in the implementation of decentralization for purposes of regional planning and development.

In more general terms, the purpose of the paper is to provide a background to the various and more specific papers and discussions that will follow.

### 2. Types of Organization for Regional Planning and Conceptions of Decentralization

The first basic distinction to be made in comparing organizations for regional or area planning is that between 'special area organizations' on the one hand, and 'national area organizations' on the other. Conyers, in making the same distinction, has referred to these as "special organizations for planned regional development" and "organizational reform for planned regional development" (Conyers, 1982, pp. 12-23; see also Conyers and Hills, 1984, part 3), respectively. While

the former involves the setting up of an organization(s) in one (or more) specific geographical area(s) of a country for the purpose of implementing one or more types of development activity in that area(s), the latter refers to the setting up of similar institutions across the entire space-economy to implement specified or delegated development activities in all areas. Let us turn now to a slightly more detailed description of these two basic types of organization.

#### A. Special Area/Regional Organizations

These organizations, as pointed out above, are specified created to implement specific regional development activities in specific geographical areas. The internal structure of such organizations varies, depending on their purpose, and they are normally superimposed on existing governmental structures such as local governments.

They may be temporary or permanent; they are usually more autonomous (financially and administratively); and the geographical areas they cover usually do not coincide with administrative boundaries. Many such organizations have been based on the model of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) formed in the USA in the 1930s for the purposes of controlling the waters and land in the Tennessee valley area and to implement a number of interrelated hydrological and land development activities. Well known examples in the third world include the 'Damodar Valley Corporation' (DVC) in India (see Bhalla, 1969) and the 'Corporacion Venezolana de Guayan' (CVG) in

Venezuela (see Friedman, 1969). In the case of Zimbabwe, the 'Agricultural and Rural Development Authority' (ARDA) estates may be placed in this category, so would the 'Sabi-Limpopo Valley Authority'. Conyers (1982) has further tentatively divided this type of organization into the following sub-types;

- A1 — Temporary planning unit or team
- A2 — Special regional administration
- A3 — Regional development corporation
- A4 — Special local government authority.

Conyers' very useful classification table, which is reproduced on this page (Table 1) describes the basic characteristics of the subtypes.

CONYERS' TABLE

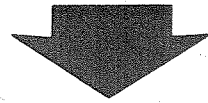


TABLE 1  
TABLE COMPARING ALTERNATIVE MODELS OF REGIONAL ORGANIZATION

Type of organization	Area coverage	Type of region (jurisdictional or programme)	Type of authority	Degree of autonomy from centre	Coordination within organization	Coordination with other agencies in region	Popular participation	Costs in terms of finance & skilled manpower	Replicability in other regions
<b>A. Special regional organizations</b>									
A1 Temporary planning unit/team	Selection areas only	Either	Usually central govt.	May operate relatively autonomously but depends on centre for its existence	Usually very good	Very weak; no control over implementation	May occur but impact limited because temporary	Usually fairly high but temporary	Possible because temporary
A2 Special regional administration	Selected areas only	Either	Central govt.	Varies but tends to be fairly high	Usually good	Usually weak but depends on scope of functions and mode of operation	Depends on structure but in practice usually very little participation	Usually very high	Very limited because of costs
A3 Regional development corporation	Selected areas only	Either	Public corporation	Varies but tends to be high		Usually quite good	Usually coordination problems with central govt.	Participation through local rep.	Usually fairly high
A4 Special local government	Selected areas only	Jurisdictional	Local govt.	Relatively autonomous	Usually quite good				
<b>B. Nationwide regional organizations</b>									
B1 Central govt. field administration	Nation-wide	Jurisdictional	Central govt.	Usually very little autonomy	Usually very weak	Coordination problem with local govt. if one exists	Only through extension staff	Usually relatively very low	Already nation-wide
B2 Local authority with mixed central local representation	Nation-wide	Jurisdictional	Mixed central-local govt.	Varies greatly	Quite good if enough autonomy	Few other agencies involved	Depends on degree of local rep.	Potentially relatively very low	Already nation-wide
B3 Elected local authority (dual system)	Nation-wide	Jurisdictional	Local govt.	Relatively autonomous	Usually quite good	Coordination problems with central govt.	Participation through local rep.	Depends on size, scope, etc.	Already nation-wide
B4 Elected local authority (comprehensive system)	Nation-wide	Jurisdictional	Local govt.	Varies but relatively autonomous	Quite good if enough autonomy	Few other agencies involved		Potentially relatively very low	Already nation-wide

Source: Conyers, D. 1983



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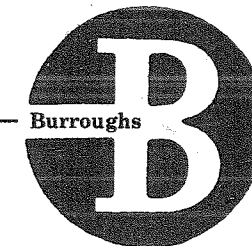
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## B. National Area Organizations

This type of organization involves the setting up of local government authorities for the whole country at different spatial levels for the purposes of planning and administering development within specified administrative geographical boundaries. Virtually every country has such an organization in one form or another. Such organizations may be more centralized or more decentralized, depending on the required levels of a number of aspects such as, government control, popular participation, local financial autonomy, *et cetera*. Again, Conyers (1982) has divided this type into four sub-types;

B1 — Central government field administration

B2 — Local authority with mixed central and local representation

B3 — Elected local authority (dual system)

B4 — Elected local authority (comprehensive system)

The basic characteristics of these, once again, are shown in Table 1.

In their discussion of decentralization, Cheema and Rondinelli (1983) have offered an alternative classification consisting of four basic types or conceptions of 'decentralization', *viz.*;

— Devolution

— Deconcentration

— Delegation to semi-autonomous or parastatal organizations

— Transfer of functions from government to non-government institutions.

'Devolution' and 'deconcentration' refer basically to local government organizations (Conyers' type B), while 'delegation to parastatals' and 'transfer of functions to non-government institutions' refer to special organizations or Conyers' type A organizations discussed above.

As this discussion is more concerned with type B organizations, let us consider in more detail 'devolution' and 'deconcentration' in the manner in which they are seen by Cheema and Rondinelli (1983) as types of decentralization.

## Devolution

This is sometimes implied to be the 'purest' form of decentralization (Moharir, 1984). It is based on the creation of independent levels of local government units which are free from extensive hierarchical control. Such local government units are usually wholly elected and exhibit five interrelated fundamental characteristics:

(i) They are "...autonomous, independent and clearly perceived as separate levels of government over which central authorities exercise little or no direct control";

(ii) They "...have clear and legally recognized geographical boundaries within which they exercise authority and perform public functions"; (iii) They "...have corporate status and the power to secure resources to perform their functions";

(iv) They "...are developed as institutions in the sense that they are perceived by local citizens as organizations providing services that satisfy their needs and as governmental units over which they have some influence"; and

(v) They are arranged in such a way that "...there are reciprocal, mutually beneficial, and coordinate relationships between central and local governments; that is, the local government has the ability to interact reciprocally with other units in the system of government of which it is a part" (Cheema and Rondinelli, 1983, p.22).

## Deconcentration

This involves geographical redistribution or dispersal of central government's administrative activities. Three levels of deconcentration have been identified by Cheema and Rondinelli:

(i) 'Shifting of workload' — this involves mere shifting of workloads from central government ministries in the capital to the ministries' field staff located in provincial or district offices. Field staff in the provinces or districts are there to implement central government directives without themselves making any decisions.

(ii) 'Field administration' — in addition to shifting workloads, this arrangement allows a limited transfer of some decision making powers

in respect of the day-to-day implementation of central government directives in order to adjust those directives to local conditions.

(iii) 'Local administration' — in this arrangement, subnational units of government (provincial and district) are agents of central government's administrative machinery, headed by executives appointed by central government and directly responsible to a ministry of 'local government' or some other ministry of similar character. 'Local administration' can itself be further divided into two further sub-types, 'integrated local administration' and 'unintegrated local administration'. Within 'integrated local administration', field staff employed by the different central government ministries are responsible to the local chief executive, such as the provincial administrator/commissioner or district administrator/commissioner, who is himself or herself appointed by central government. In 'unintegrated local administration', different ministries' staff work independently at provincial or district levels, reporting back directly to their ministry or department head offices in the capital city. Administrative staff of the local authority, that is the provincial or district council (consisting partly of elected local representatives), are employed by the local authority and report to a local chief executive such as the town clerk or district chief executive officer.

'Devolution' as defined by Cheema and Rondinelli roughly corresponds to Conyers' type B4 — elected local authority, and 'deconcentration' roughly corresponds to type B1 — central government field administration. As Conyers (1982) herself points out, these classifications of regional organizations are only tentative and can be refined into many more sub-types. However, they help us in reducing the centralization-decentralization debate to more concrete descriptions of both alternative and complementary types of organization.

Before moving on to the examination of the advantages and disadvantages frequently cited in the

seemingly endless centralization-decentralization are not fixed opposites, but more of processes. Alternatively, centralization and decentralization may be seen as different positions on a continuum or on a number of continuum representing the different dimensions which constitute the 'planning — administration' process (Apthorpe and Conyers, 1982). No other words can put it better than those from Faltas (1982, p.5):

An organization can neither be absolutely centralized nor decentralized and still be an organization. In the former case, we would have a one-man show; in the latter, we would have a rabble of actors, each one doing his own thing.

## 3. Advantages and Disadvantages of Decentralization

Cheema and Rondinelli (1983, p.10) assert that the desire to adopt decentralization policies in developing countries arose from three principal historical factors:

(i) There was disappointment with the results of centralized systems of planning during the 1950s and 1960s;

(ii) 'Growth with equity' development policies which started emerging in the 1970s required new organizational structures to enable the implementation of more egalitarian policies as well as popular participation; and

(iii) As developing countries became more complex, there was the realization that decentralization might be a more effective and efficient way of planning and administering the increasingly complex development activities of these societies.

These historical factors do, to a large extent, encompass the major advantages which have been argued in support of decentralization. There are, on the one hand, 'administrative' or 'managerial' arguments and, on the other, 'political' arguments (Conyers and Hills, 1984).

## Advantages: Administrative-Managerial Arguments

(i) Decentralization is argued to be a way of enabling or improving effective coordination between the various agencies involved in regional plan-

ning. The typical pattern within a more centralized system, such as the first level of deconcentration discussed earlier (involving mere shifting of workloads) is that ministry representatives at provincial/district level will always have to refer to their headquarters for decisions, and any decision made are determined by the priorities of that particular ministry rather than by those of the province or the district. 'Horizontal' coordination is very difficult to achieve as the various agencies seldom agree on anything. Decentralization, on the other hand, gives local agencies the power to make certain decisions without reference to the centre, and to adjust those decisions whenever necessary in order to suit local demands from both the local population and other agencies operating at the same level. Thus one of decentralization's aims is to weaken 'vertical' control and to increase 'horizontal' coordination instead, thereby enabling more integrated planning for the region in question (Faltas, 1977).

(ii) Decentralization increases popular participation in planning and implementation, a fundamental political aim, as shall be seen later. In administrative or managerial terms, however, popular participation helps to formulate more realistic plans because more accurate information on local conditions can be obtained and used through discussions with local people. The resulting plans are acceptable to local people, much more than plans imposed from above and, for that reason, implementation is made easier. In the case of 'Community Development' approaches to rural development planning (Passmore, 1972; Mutizwa-Mangiza, 1980), or the more recent 'basic needs' approach, the chances that self-help projects will be well maintained by the community are much more increased if the community itself has been closely involved in both the planning and implementation of the projects in question.

(iii) Related to point (i) above is the argument that decentralization increases flexibility and responsiveness in the management of development projects, as decisions to cor-

rect mistakes or to adjust to changing and unforeseen circumstances can be made quickly at the local level. This makes the whole planning and implementation system more efficient.

## Advantages: Political Arguments

(i) The most widely accepted political argument is that decentralization enables and increases popular participation. Ordinary people should be able to influence decisions which affect their lives, thereby determining their own destinies. In this respect, popular or citizen participation is considered to be a personal or human right automatically acquired by an individual by virtue of being a local citizen. In that sense, popular participation can be considered as an *end* in itself, rather than simply as a *means* of improving the planning and implementation process. Popular participation also improves the individual's awareness of his or her environment and of the socio-economic and political determinants of the development process in general. This in turn improves the quality of the individual's contribution to the planning and implementation process. For this reason, a number of development approaches such as the 'basic needs' approach and the older 'Community Development' approach mentioned earlier, see popular participation as a fundamental and essential ingredient of development programmes. In countries like Zimbabwe where freedom from colonialism was won through a protracted process of mass politicization and guerrilla warfare guided by principles of equality between races and sexes, 'participatory democracy', as Kaund (quoted in Conyers and Hills, 1984) calls it, is regarded seriously as a necessary addition to 'political democracy'.

(ii) Another political argument is that decentralization minimises the risks associated with corrupt, weak or despotic central government which frequently forget those on the social and geographical periphery of the nation in pursuit of personal political and financial ambitions. Where such governments exist, some areas may be forgotten and

left far behind in the development process, so that serious regional inequalities may emerge. Decentralization is thought to guard against these problems and spread the risks.

(iii) In some circumstances, decentralization may actually strengthen national unity, contrary to the argument that decentralization is more likely to threaten the national polity with fragmentation. This may be true in countries composed of many distinct ethnic groups desirous of maintaining individual ethnic identities. In such situations, granting of partial regional autonomy may prove to be better than enforcing a total unity which may eventually provoke violent secessionist or irredentist movements.

One more general argument in support of decentralization which is neither purely administrative nor purely political is the conjoinment of planning and financial power. Friedman (1973) has argued that, unlike regional planning, sectoral planning has proved to be more effective because planning is made by the very agencies in charge of budgeting and investments. This conjoinment of planning and budgetary powers ensures that plans are more realistic or cost conscious and, more important, that such plans are implementable. Decentralization, where it involves the creation of regional authorities with substantive financial autonomy — that is authorities either capable of raising significant financial resources or with freedom to decide on the use of the regional allocation from the centre — will clearly be beneficial to regional planning. Conjoining planning authority with financial authority should favourably shift the destiny of many regional plans, from dark archival shelves to the implementation stage.

Turning now to the disadvantages of decentralization; the arguments which have been put forward in support of centralization can largely be considered to be the disadvantages of decentralization, as these would be aspects to be sacrificed through the adoption of policies towards more decentralization. As in the case of arguments for decentralization,

the disadvantages of decentralization can also be divided into administrative/managerial and political.

#### **Disadvantages: Administrative-Managerial Arguments**

(i) The first argument is that decentralization tends to be relatively more wasteful or demanding in terms of manpower. Within developing countries there is often a shortage of skilled planners and administrators. In this situation, it may be better to deploy the limited manpower resources available at the centre to serve the whole country. This is a more efficient arrangement than having a decentralized system which may fail to function due to inadequate, or incapable and inefficient staff.

(ii) Decentralization may also create conflicts and inconsistencies in the implementation of development policies, and lead to the implementation of decisions made from a narrow local perspective, whereas it may be better to have a wider national perspective.

(iii) Another argument is that decentralization actually makes the planning process longer and necessarily complex because of detailed consultation with people whose knowledge of development processes may be severely limited. Small vocal groups of people may quite unfairly prolong the planning process through unrepresentative arguments. The general result, at the end of the day, when everything has been said and done, is that much more will have been said than done! This also raises the question of the extent to which spatial or area planning organizations should be decentralized — down to the district, or ward, or village, or subvillage level? The system may become too complex and burdened with 'decision makers', and with few 'doers'.

#### **Disadvantages: Political Arguments**

(i) In many former colonies, such as Zimbabwe and many others in Africa the immediate post-independence period is or was characterised by socio-economic structures inherited from the past which are frequently dualistic and based on racial segregation principles. In such situations, it has sometimes been argued that it is necessary for central government to have a strong national development policy, if any radical policies requires strict central government guidance which would be difficult within a decentralized system — only a centralized planning and administrative system is capable of bringing about radical and rapid socio-economic structural changes. In this respect, the examples of the USSR and other eastern bloc countries are often cited.

(ii) Reduction of regional economic inequalities is also a strong argument against decentralization. Too much decentralization may encourage regional inequalities to increase as different regions with different resource endowments are allowed to pursue different courses at different paces. It is usually the disadvantaged regions, in terms of natural resources, which suffer. Only a strong centre can redistribute resources between regions more effectively.

(iii) Too much decentralization encourages fragmentation of the nation state, especially in the case of young nations consisting of many large ethnic groups. If politics is organized along ethnic line, which often happens, then decentralization may be a recipe for disaster. In such circumstances, centralization policies enable the building of a sense of nationhood and concentration on ore pressing issues of hunger, disease and illiteracy.

(iv) It is also sometimes argued that decentralization structures adopted in many countries encouraged exploitation of the weak and illiterate by the local elites. Local elected or appointed representatives are often those who are already privileged in terms of wealth and education. Such representatives often manipulate local institutions for personal advantage, to the increasing detriment of the poor. Decentralization thus fails to redistribute resources to that section of society which really ought to benefit from redistribution.

tion, the disadvantages of decentralization can also be divided into administrative/managerial and political.

#### **4. Decentralization and Regional Planning: Some Basic Consideration for Implementation Purpose**

From the discussion in the previous section, it is clear that the arguments in support of centralization, being also strong, cannot be ignored if a decentralization course is adopted. As pointed out earlier, it is generally agreed that decentralization should not be regarded as an absolute state, but should rather be through of in terms of degrees of decentralization. Further, decentralization should, for implementation purposes, be defined in terms of a number of dimensions. Thus within one decentralization policy package there may be different degrees of decentralization in respect of the individual dimensions which constitute the package. The desired degrees of extent of decentralization will depend on the socio-political and economic environment, and should be clearly specified for each of the dimensions.

For the purposes of regional planning, the following organizational dimensions of decentralization are important, and should be clearly spelt out in any policy package.

(i) The objects of planning at each level, such as provincial and district, must be made absolutely clear in order to avoid confusion and duplication of activities. The roles of the local authority and of central government ministries should be clearly specified in order to establish a workable relationship between on the one hand, 'sectoral', and, on the other, 'regional' or 'integrated area' planning — or an effective system of vertical' and 'horizontal' coordination.

(ii) The desired extend or level of popular participation must be made clear. This dimension of decentralization is largely determined by central government's attitude towards the question of central control or development processes in relation to the prevailing political and manpower characteristics. Issues of nation building, multiplicity of ethnic groups and the depth and pace of required socio-economic restructuring are impor-

tant here. The resulting regional set up may be a largely devolved local government or a mixture of appointed and elected local government representatives.

(iii) The level of financial autonomy required must also be made clear in any decentralization policy package. Bearing in mind Friedman's point on the need to link up regional planning authority with financial authority, the success of regional planning, in terms of implementation, may ultimately depend on the manner in which this question is handled.

There may be other considerations to be taken into account in implementing decentralization for regional planning purposes, but the above are some of the most basic and fundamental. The importance of clarity in respect of these dimensions of decentralization becomes obvious if the question of monitoring and evaluation is considered. Implementation, monitoring and evaluation of decentralization policies becomes easier if the dimensions given above are thoroughly understood by all those involved. Finally, the desirability of having a check-list for monitoring the impact of decentralization should also be emphasized. An example of such a list is the Zambia one described by Conyers (1981, p. 118) in her comparative analysis of decentralization policies in Tanzania, Zambia and Papua New Guinea. Such a monitoring check-list should help to overcome the often cited problems accounting for the failure of decentralization policies such as those given by Picard (1979) — financial difficulties resulting from dwindling financial bases; staff shortages and instability; staff inefficiency and corruption; divisive ethnic politics; and lack of commitment on the part of central government ministries resulting from their reluctance to share power and money with regional authorities.

#### **5. Summary**

This paper, being more of a reminder on issues already well known, has attempted to open up the discussion on decentralization and planning by providing some basic information on; different organizations for

regional planning, conceptions of decentralization, frequently cited arguments for and against decentralization, and basic considerations in the implementation of decentralization for regional planning purposes. Perhaps it should be pointed out again, for emphasis, that the success of regional planning within a decentralization strategy will depend on clarity of policy intentions, objectives and goals, as well as on the strength of commitment on the part of central government ministries. It should also be pointed out that other aspects of decentralization which should accompany decentralization of public planning and administrative institutions, such as decentralization of industry and urban development, though very important, have not been considered here due to the limited nature of the topic.

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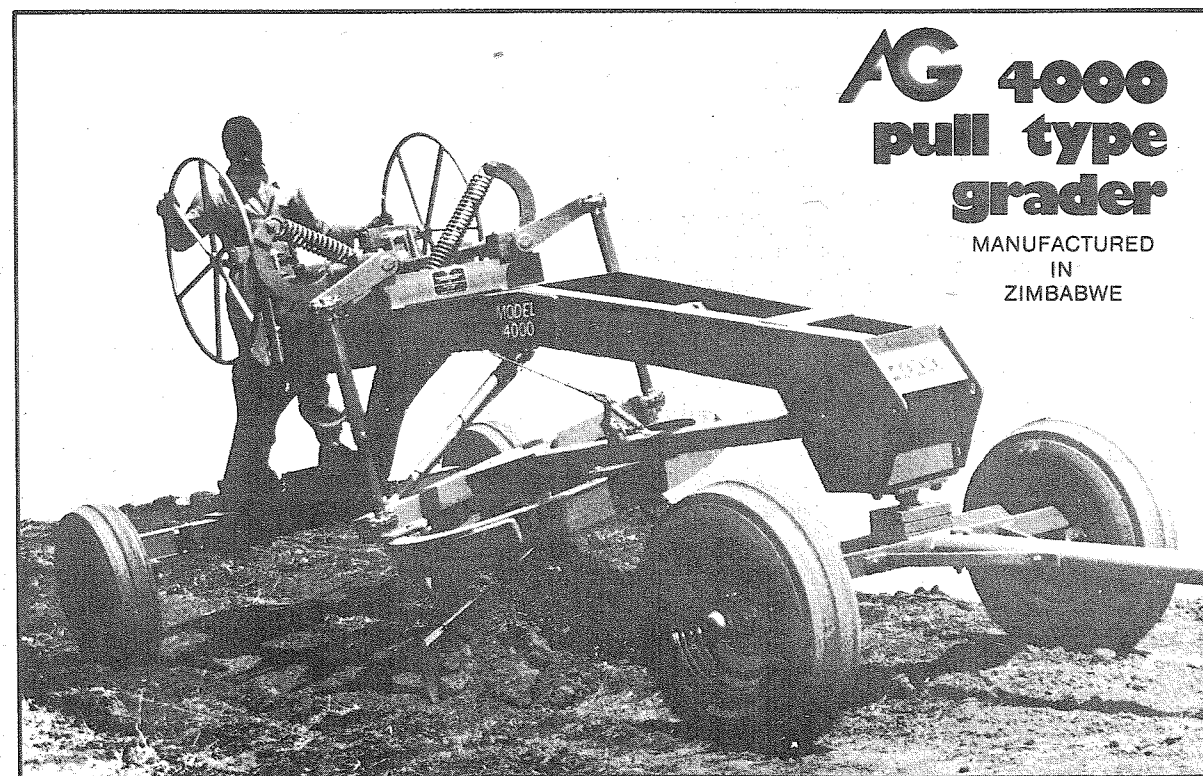
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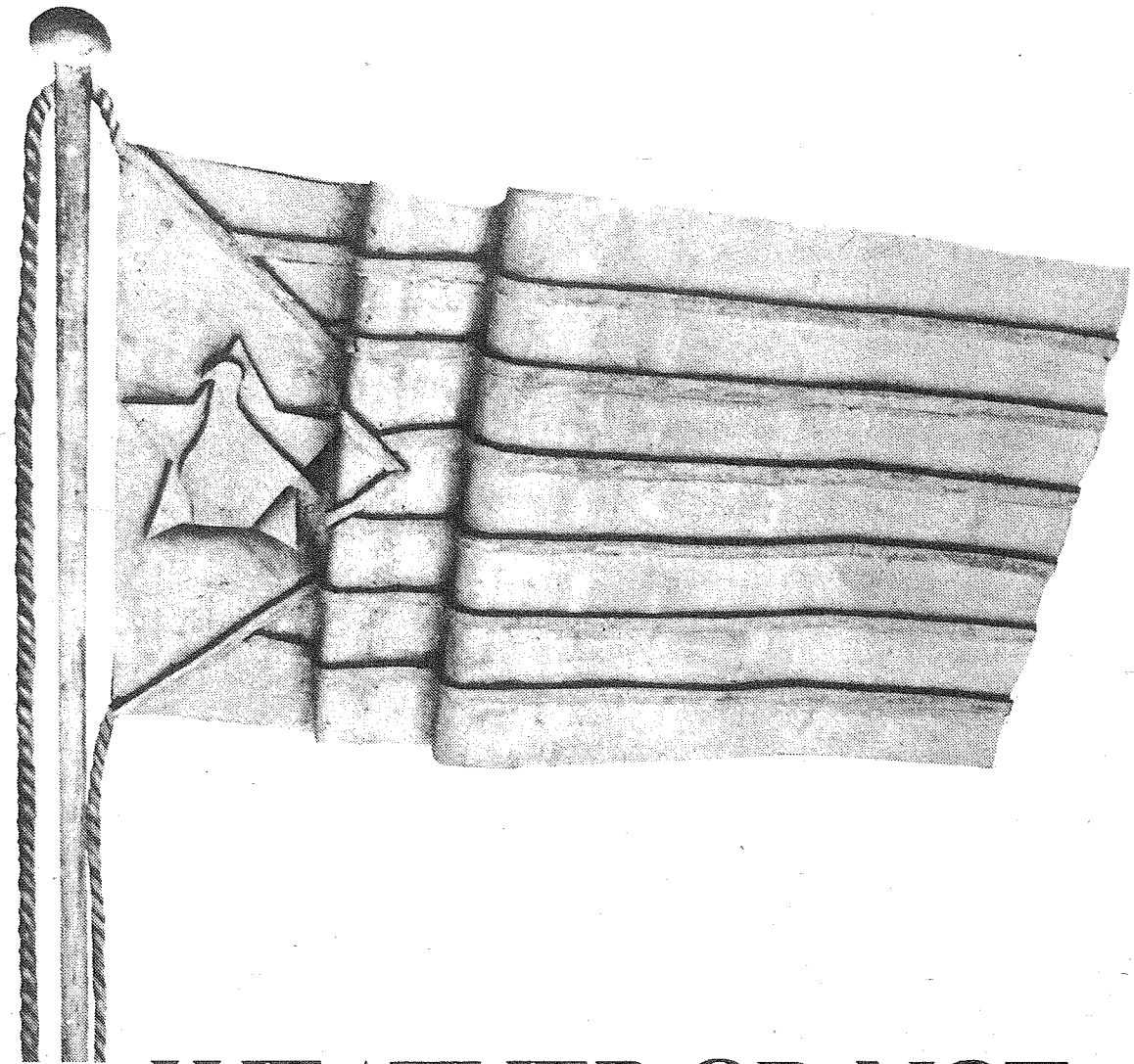
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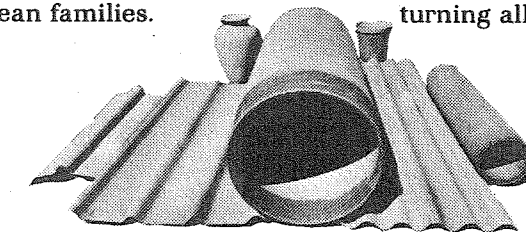
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