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Editorial

Commonwealth Journal of Local Governance
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Alison Brown

School of City and Regional Planning
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Climate change, sustainability, diversity, financial probity, gender and governance are profound and complex challenges facing local government today, and are all topics raised by the researchers and practitioners contributing to CJLG Issue 10. Cash-strapped local governments are required to deliver core services ('roads, rates and rubbish' as Heather Zeppel's interviewee said), yet are increasingly required to embrace broad social inclusion and environmental concerns, as our contributors show.

The five **research papers** in this issue touch at the heart of equity and democratic governance. The role of critical theory in delivering good practice is explored by Eris Schoburgh in her reflection on local government and local development, and her comparison of Trinidad & Tobago's structured decentralisation and Jamaica's communitarian approach. She dismisses the 'leading laggard' model where linked settlement economies sink or swim together, and the 'learning region' which maximise local synergies to promote economic growth, to propose a new 'hybrid model' of local growth that tackles on-going issues such as gender equality, the informal economy and the local commons.

In Canada's federal system with 13 provinces, and over 3,600 municipalities, dealing with diversity is a major challenge. John Martin, Gary Paget and Brian Walisser highlight the problems of capacity in rural administrations covering vast areas and diverse communities, and argue the need to strengthen capacity and innovation. There is no universal local government system in Canada, and each province varies in its approach, so the *Symposium on Strengthening the Rural* held in Québec city in 2008 provided an important opportunity for debating structure, practices and processes, highlighting a new role for local government associations in advocating strategic system reform

'What happens when women are in charge' asks Hilde Bjørnå in her fascinating study of a local council in Australia where women representatives are the majority. In her

(anonymous) council, 8 of the 11 representatives elected in 2008 were women. Compared to the previous pro-development administration, the new council focused on community and green politics, e.g.: social welfare for (aboriginal) island communities; council meetings were no longer like an auction, and councillors ‘talked things out’. Yet, Hilde concluded that it was the community orientation rather than the women’s platform that led the agendas, and that women’s contribution is strongly contingent.

Heather Zeppel explores how local governments tackle climate change in her survey of the carbon mitigation measures taken by 14 Greater Adelaide councils. All had faced environmental challenges of drought, heat waves, flooding, bush fires or coastal erosion, but were tackling the issues with innovation and verve, acting strategically to provide leadership in climate change adaptation planning and raising community awareness, and internally to reduce their own carbon emissions. Interestingly she notes that street lighting is one of the largest contributors to local government carbon emissions.

Transparent and effective management of local government finance is crucial to underpin democratic governance, argues Umar Kakumba in his study in Uganda of the agencies that audit and inspect local government. He suggests that, instead of blaming local councils for inefficiencies, it is also necessary to ‘audit the auditors’. He found the agencies plagued by staffing gaps and budget shortfalls, and in 2006/7 almost half of the accounts they held had not been completed, and calls for greater support for these agencies to foster better public management.

In the **Commentary** section Jude Okafor explores how a squabble between Nigerian state and federal government has hindered local government evolution. In 1976 local government was recognised as in the military government’s political transition programme. This landmark reform was enshrined in the 1977 and 1999 Constitutions, which listed the then existing local governments. One side now argues that State Governors have powers to create new local government areas, while the other that the number is fixed by the Constitution. In burgeoning Lagos and elsewhere new areas were not allocated Federal Funds, although a High Court Judgement has now deemed this illegal.

Jade Herriman, Hazel Storey, Phil Smith, and Grahame Collier argue that effective working relationships are a pivotal but frequently undervalued variable in local government sustainability programmes. In this richly illustrated piece, they argue that complex sustainability agendas need a deliberate approach to building relationships amongst multiple

partners, requiring commitment, time, and resources, and conclude with helpful ideas on how this challenge may be approached.

Delivering effective participation through the medium of SEA (strategic environmental appraisal) is the focus Corrado Zoppi's comparison of SEA in two coastal authorities, Torbay Council in the UK and the Cagliari port area in Sardinia. The timing of participation is crucial to its influence on the plan; in Torbay the goals of the SEA location-specific and directly fed into the transport plan, whereas in Cagliari a long-drawn out planning process and late start to SEA meant that the goals were generic and much less influential.

The first of the two **Practice Notes** by CLGF Project Officer Rachael Duchnowski, summarises the final phase of CLGF's three year Good Practice Scheme, funded by DFID, which finished in late 2011. The programme partnered councils and local government associations from Jamaica, India, South Africa, Sierra Leone, Pakistan and Ghana with counterparts in South Africa, India and the UK to exchange good practice and generate innovative solutions to local governments' challenges. Finally Chris Berry explores the 2009 local government reform in Western Australia, the last Australian state to embrace structural change. He evaluates two different approaches to reform, Regional Transition Groups and Regional Collaborative Groups, giving flexibility for voluntary reform arrangements.

Finally please follow our contributor John Martin's blog as he cycles across Canada, and look out for the next Research Colloquium in Kamapala, Uganda on 13/14 May 2013 for which new ideas and papers are welcome, with an interim issue of the e-journal at the end of 2012.

Local Government and Local Development: Bridging the Gap through Critical Discourse: Evidence from the Commonwealth Caribbean

Commonwealth Journal of Local Governance

Issue 10: December 2011- June 2012

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Abstract

Local development, whether construed broadly as community development or more narrowly as local economic development (LED) is not always associated with local government but rather is the purview of a central government department or agency in Anglophone Caribbean policy systems. However with the emergence of 'local place - and people-oriented approaches' to development that offer new propositions about how to respond to risks and opportunities brought by globalization, local government is seen increasingly as an appropriate institutional context in which to pursue short-range objectives, such as creation of market opportunities and redressing the disparities within national economies; as well as the long-range goal of social transformation.

A developmental role for local government raises two questions that form the central concerns of this paper: What are the institutional and organisational imperatives of a developmental role for local government? To what extent have these imperatives been addressed in reform? A critical analysis of local government reform policies in Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica revealed substantive convergence around local development as an outcome of reform but also important divergence in the approach to achieving this goal which suggests the absence of a cohesive model. The paper argues for a new agenda in reform that links local government more consistently with a local development strategy. It asserts that such a strategy must incorporate gender equality, the informal economy and institutional organisational capacity in the process of transformation and as a basis for creating a local context in which all types of resources can be maximized in the process of wealth creation in a locality.

1. Introduction

The debate about local development in the Commonwealth Caribbean is gathering momentum and much of it is being done against the institutional backdrop of local government. Two orientations are observed: In countries with well-established systems of local government the concern surrounds the exclusion of this level of government from the process of development generally; in countries that have undeveloped systems of local government pressure is being brought to bear on government to establish a viable

subnational governmental framework to which responsibility for local development will be delegated.

In either case the pursuit of local development via the medium of local government has emerged as a priority. Victor Ayeni in the 2004 Report of the Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF) noted that “(l)ocal government plays an essential role in the development process as it is the closest tier of government to ordinary citizens,” a sentiment that seems to be in synchrony with ‘local place and people-oriented approaches’ to development that offer new propositions about how to respond to risks and opportunities brought by globalization. Local government is seen increasingly as an appropriate institutional context in which to pursue short-range objectives, such as creation of market opportunities and redressing the disparities within national economies; as well as the long-range goal of social transformation.

Acting on cue reformers in the Caribbean region have declared a symbiosis between local government and local development, with local economic development (LED) as an implicit but significant policy objective. In all of this there is a presumption of a new role for local government. Following Neville Duncan’s advice to the Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF) in 2004:

The single most important opportunity for local government is for it to develop a model for local development and systematically seek to implement it within the framework of national development strategies. This would considerably increase the role, position and importance of local governance within the national governance system (p. 60).

Duncan (2004) opines further that a developmental role for local government could have a transformative effect on the socio-political superstructure as local democracy would be strengthened and service delivery would be improved (Ibid).

However a developmental role for local government raises two questions that form the central concerns of this paper: What are the institutional and organisational imperatives of a developmental role for local government? To what extent have these imperatives been addressed in reform? A critical analysis of local government reform policies in Trinidad and Tobago¹ and Jamaica revealed substantive convergence around local development as an outcome of reform but conversely important divergence in the approach to achieving this goal which suggests the absence of a cohesive model of local development.

¹ The constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago entrenches the Tobago House of Assembly (TBA) as a local government body with a degree of autonomy and the TBA Act of 1996 empowers it to formulate and implement policies on behalf of the jurisdiction.

The analysis in this paper is developed throughout six sections with Sections 1-3 providing conceptual foundation of the major positions on local development to set the framework for an understanding of the new role envisaged for local government. Section 4 compares the reform process in Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica. Sections 5 and 6 extrapolate the “model” of local development being pursued by engaging three propositions on which it depends, followed by a summary analysis and the conclusion.

2. Defining ‘Local Development’

The first task is to establish the meaning of “local” to convey the interpretation *local development* used in this analysis, recognizing that though *local development* is distinguishable from *community development* or even *local economic development* (LED) the concepts are linked (see e.g. Porter 1990, 1995, 1998; Bingham and Mier 1993; Blair 1995; Plummer and Taylor 2001; Blakely and Bradshaw 2002).

Early theories of local development were not merely economic based but were preoccupied with place. For the most part these theories were macro in their outlook in that ‘local’ was used interchangeably with ‘regional’ with two primary connotations evolving around ‘region’. Region at one time is depicted as a geographic space within multi-tiered countries such as Canada or the United States and to which is associated the concepts of ‘growth centre (pole) and hinterland.’ At other times region is interpreted in the context of inter-country comparisons of economic linkages particularly between developed and developing countries.

In this case a ‘region’ may be seen as a group of nations, such as the Caribbean or a single country, which finds expression in the concepts of ‘core’ (also centre) used in reference to the developed country and ‘periphery’ that describes the developing country. The leading-laggard conception used to describe policy innovation and diffusion that may take place between developed regions or countries and their lesser developed counterparts is used to explain the economic differentials between locations.

Local development in this paper is interpreted within the geographic confines of the state. Thus ‘local’ is both spatial and locality-based, and is also endogenous in character meaning that the impetus for any form of initiative is found principally in the area in question (Coffey and Polese 1984). In terms of territoriality ‘local’ is understood to be subnational in scope but may manifest as regions, cities, districts or in less tangible forms as networks or temporary associations.

Local development is therefore a process of socio-economic transformation that occurs due to the use of initiatives, application of skills of actors as well as efficient and effective utilization of all types of resources located within a subnational space. It is distinguishable from community development which incorporates similar values but is broader in scope. Community development may be seen as the pursuit of specific socio-economic objectives via local action and deployment and allocation of local resources in tandem with national goals. While exogenous factors cannot be ignored in the process of social transformation that is attached to *local development* or *community development*, the emphasis on endogenous factors assigns local government a special place in the process. And the concepts of leading-laggard or growth centre–hinterland or core-periphery are relevant and useful socio-economic characterization of regions, cities or districts within the state. Finally, local economic development is considered to be a critical lever of *local* or *community development*.

Suffice it to say that perhaps this paper errs on the side of simplicity given the never ending debate about *what is development*, complicated by the various qualifiers that emerge over time – *local* and *community* being just two. These are the meanings that will inform this analysis.

3. Theorising Local Development Processes

There is an abundance of explanations with varied assumptions about how local development occurs and each set of assumptions can be linked to an interpretation of ‘local’. The two most relevant to this paper - leading-laggard and learning regions modules - are discussed here, to demonstrate that local development places specific demands on local political institutions to translate ideas into practice.

Leading-laggard model

The idea postulated in this discourse is that location is a critical determinant of the development potential of firms/industries. An important factor is the capacity of the site/locale to ensure the firm’s competitiveness in the marketplace. Part of what enhances competitiveness is the firm’s ability to incur minimal costs in linking raw materials to markets. The least cost variable is illustrated in the industrial site model of local development in which it is assumed that resources (raw materials) exist in a particular space in inert form and it is through the interventions of firms that their developmental values are realised. This is so because the distance between raw materials and markets is relatively short. Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have made distance less of a consideration in where to locate firms/industries but have not erased it totally.

Following this line of argument urban centres are deemed suitable for supporting “large economic units” (firms) that are in turn viewed as “instruments of prosperity” (Perroux 1950: 103) given their ability to induce economic activity within their sphere of influence (Boudeville 1966: 11). These urban centres are conceived as “growth poles” (Perroux 1950) because they are endowed with knowledge and information and are able to support large firms that are “vehicles of dynamic change, fostering new technologies of production and organisation” (cited in Plummer and Taylor 2001: 223). The classic interpretation is that local development occurs because growth flows from industrial centres to less-costly/peripheral locations. A counter argument is that growth poles are linked to other growth poles and not necessarily the periphery (Perroux 1950) suggesting that there is little spread effect of development in the absence of specific economic linkages.

However Gunnar Myrdal’s (1957) theory of “cumulative causation” advances the location thesis by arguing that certain locations have a competitive advantage because they have markets that attract capital, skill and expertise. These locations are termed “leading regions”. But the “lagging regions” may experience some backwash effects in the form of migration of skilled and educated workers and venture capital to “leading regions”. Myrdal (1957) propounds that the development differential between these economic spaces can be minimized through public policy which can be used to discourage certain kinds of investment in “leading regions” and induce investment in those that are “lagging”. Malizia and Feser (1999:103) make the point: “industrial growth can be diffused to backward regions by concentrating infrastructure investments and direct business investments at selected locations that possess growth potential.”

The differences in the growth prospects of locations are developed further in the “hierarchy of settlements” concept that distinguishes locations according to functions in the economic value chain. At the bottom of the hierarchy are the smallest areas that provide the narrowest range of services to residents. Social interactions in these locations are predominantly face-to-face and economies of scale are characteristically low. These small areas are markets for, and suppliers of resources (raw materials and industries) to intermediate levels that are described as “minimum convenience centres.” The intermediate level in the hierarchy functions similarly for the urban centres at the top and in which are found all the activities at the lower levels in addition to other functions but with greater levels of specialization and productivity. Development occurs due to functional integration of these tiers of geographic areas. The hierarchy of settlement concept is used to explain why certain services are located in particular areas as well as the reason for economic decline in others (Howland 1993).

The other side of the debate is that areas in economic decline can impact their economic fortunes positively by using incentives and subsidies to attract investment. The presumption is that localities have the capacity to determine how they are viewed by industrialists/investors. Thus localities are products within a marketplace of similar products and as such must be packaged to assure their competitive advantage to which investors will be drawn. Investments in these areas will “generate taxes and increase economic wealth” (Blakely and Bradshaw 2002:66) overtime reducing the locality’s reliance on subsidies.

New markets theory synthesises the foregoing ideas in its acknowledgment of the unrealised economic potential of, for example inner-city neighbourhoods that are *economic opportunity zones*. Carr (1999), intimates that the economic potential of the innercity lies inter alia, in understanding the value of their assets, developing and matching financing tools to these assets, and designing institutional arrangements that recapture value to recycle new wealth back into these communities (Blakely and Bradshaw 2002: 62). Porter’s (1990:1998) concept of ‘clustering’ which describes the close proximity of inner-city neighbourhoods to large collections of related companies that are competitive nationally and internationally is used to elaborate the economic prospects of innercity neighbourhoods.

Learning regions and innovative milieux

Institutional, cultural and social factors are recognizably important considerations in local development (see, e.g., Kuznets (1965; 1966; Friedmann and Weaver 1979; Ostrom 1990, 1994, 2005; Clague 1997) and are theorized using the concepts of ‘learning regions’ and ‘innovative milieux’.

Learning regions according to Malmberg, Solvell and Zander (1996) are endowed with “a regional variety of skills and competencies, where the-often unplanned interaction between different actors will lead to new-often unexpected-ideas [i.e. synergies](88)”. Innovative milieux are subsections/areas of a geographic space much like a community or district in which may be found “certain coherence based on common behavioural practices” (Plummer and Taylor 2001: 226).

Plummer and Taylor (2001:226) identified four characteristics that distinguish these innovative milieux:

- (a) a group of actors (firms and institutions) that possesses a degree of autonomy to make decisions and develop strategies;
- (b) elements that are tangible, intangible and institutional that

- include firms, infrastructure, knowledge, know-how, authorities and legal frameworks;
- (c) norms of cooperation in the interactions among actors; and
 - (d) self-regulation that induces learning.

Learning regions and innovative milieus are tools of institutional analyses used to show place-specific economic activity can be pursued and in which are assigned critical roles for information, (tacit) knowledge and 'learning' as stimulants for local development.

Learning regions and innovative milieus support the development of networks, based on shared cultural, psychological and political experiences that may offset immobility of capital that can affect local development. However strong psycho-social connection to a locality along with local integration of firm enhances the aforementioned features of innovative milieus and in turn fosters place-based learning, continuous innovation, and the constant refreshment and reinforcement of local competitive advantage" (Ibid 226).

Assessment

The explanatory power of the place-base theories discussed above has improved overtime with a marked shift in the focus of these models of local development from "attracting factories to attracting entrepreneurial populations, particularly certain socio-economic groups to a community or area" (Blakely and Bradshaw 2002: 66).

However, emphasis on growth does not sit well with broad-based conceptions of local development to which local government is linked; especially given its distributional problems (see e.g. Blair 1995). Yet growth is recognizably important as it points to critical economic indicators such as employment creation that are positively related to quality of life issues at the subnational level and with which local government ought to be concerned in its new role. While economics represents a critical dimension of local development there are socio-cultural and institutional elements that are relevant to the communitarian approach that is a fundamental *raison d'être* of local government within the current socio-economic environment.

A communitarian approach rides on certain assumptions:

- that the community is vested with good quality human resources in the form of requisite levels of creativity and talents, knowledge resources in the form of technical, scientific and market information to identify infrastructural resources with developmental values as well as gain access to capital resources;

- that through communal bonds good social capital will be developed which will transform individual/personal utility into social/public utility; and
- that greater economies of scale will be achieved through community ownership of the process and structures set up to facilitate development.

The fact that local government reform in the Caribbean has evolved alternative models of local development, viz., regional vs. communitarian strategy, suggests that the fundamental concern of how to sustain growth and development at the local level has not been erased. Both strategies presume that there are certain self-generating capacities that are as, or even more important, than the traditional factors of production – labor and capital - which Coffey and Polese (1984) assert are “a population’s entrepreneurial spirit and the sum of its knowledge and talents” (p. 3).

Implicit in the leading-laggard conception is the quality of the capacity of local government to deal with the development differentials between localities/areas. The hierarchy of settlements interpretation demands an appreciation for functional differentiation to assure best use of resources. That local communities can be made to take responsibility for their economic future resonates with contemporary thinking about shared responsibility in development efforts. Essentially local government’s role in the process of local development is neither trivial nor impartial. Local development draws on a range of competencies and dictates a new policy and organisational outlook in local government.

4. Policy Learning and Response in Trinidad & Tobago & Jamaica

Arguably a definitive model of local development is yet to be articulated in the Commonwealth Caribbean but policy learning about the value of local government to the process is evident. Perhaps on account of strong pressure on governments in the region to establish and maintain cohesive systems of subnational governmental frameworks to which the responsibility for local development is to be delegated. An emphasis on an elaborate role for local government in local development is consequential to achieving the goal of democratic decentralization which underpins the governance agenda.

The African Caribbean Pacific Local Government Platform (ACPLGP 2005)² notes the comparative advantage of a developmental role for local government, which inter alia, are:

² ACPLGP is a representative structure established in May 2001 to defend the interests of local governments in ACP-EU cooperation. It supports the operationalisation of the Cotonou Agreement.

- better understanding of local needs and priorities (as a result of proximity); scope for participatory approaches to development;
- new opportunities for empowering poor and marginalised groups;
- enhanced legitimacy of local government (and national) through increased accountability and transparency in decision-making;
- enhanced spatial coherence of development and poverty reduction efforts (in the framework of overall local development strategies); and
- contribution to peaceful settlement of local conflicts (p.4).

Local government reform policies in the Caribbean have designated the subnational level a separate sphere of socio-economic interaction for the pursuit of developmental objectives. Admittedly, implementation is slow on account of the political cost and benefits that such a policy portends of radical shifts in the decisional power and material resources from one group of actors to another, whether as individuals or organisations.

The subnational level will accrue greater socio-political capital at the expense of the centre. Perhaps this might explain the variance between stout defence of the developmental value of local government and the fact that strategies to realize this goal lag behind. Local government's development orientation is explored in greater depth in the following sub-sections based on Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica's experience with reform. For a more comprehensive analysis of the policies see Schoburgh (2006, 2007, 2009).

Trinidad and Tobago

The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago's Municipal Corporations Act 21 of 1990 and subsequent amendments have resulted in a restructured system of local government into nine regional corporations, three boroughs and two cities (see Table 1). The new structures respond to three main local problems: unevenness in economic growth and development of jurisdictions; blurring of service delivery boundaries due to spill-over of economic activities from burgeoning growth centres; and urbanization with unique service delivery demands. All regions have been granted corporate municipal status to enable the *businessisation* of the organisations.

Regions are significant to the developmental role envisaged for local government as they are larger geographic spaces than the former county councils and are organised around attributes that are expected to form the base of the economic activity of the local authority. Regionalization is Trinidad and Tobago's strategy for transforming local government. A regional framework is driven by the presumption of greater economies of scale for local

government in its facilitation of local development and the propulsive nature of the industries that would emerge around those natural endowments that would 'trickle-down'. A communitarian dimension though understated is present in the participation of Citizens' Bureaux that provide the 'tacit knowledge' that is required to ensure greater equity in the distribution of growth.

The Draft White Paper on Local Government Reform 2009 links the reform programme to the realisation of 'developed country status' by 2020. It states:

The charge of the Local Government System in the Vision 2020 National Strategic Plan is to contribute to national development by focusing on regional development and the creation of sustainable communities (RoT&T 2009: 1).

Essentially Trinidad and Tobago's local government reform policy tends towards amalgamation as the strategic direction in local development.

Jamaica

Jamaica's Ministry Paper 8/1993 is also explicit in its intent to reengineer local government as seen in the following statement:

The government perceives both local government and community development as being complementary processes by means of which it can achieve its focal objective of empowering citizens to enjoy greater self-management over their affairs and take initiatives towards, and responsibility for, determining and solving their own problems (p.3).

The policy specifies among its objectives a change in the focal role of local authorities from service delivery as an arms' length agency of central government to "one of providing leadership and a coordinating framework for the collective efforts of the people of their respective parishes towards local development."

However, in Jamaica a communitarian approach to local development relies on social capital as the primary stimulus evidenced in the establishment of a federated participatory mechanism through which to channel the creative energies of local actors and at the bottom of which are Community Development Committees (CDCs) and at the top, Parish Development Committees (PDCs). Ministry Paper 7/03 envisions that PDCs will "promote local development through partnership of local authorities with other state agencies, the private sector, civil society groups as well as national utility service providers" (pp. 6-7). The expectation is for PDCs to co-produce long-term strategic plans for their respective parishes in which are outlined unambiguous strategies for enhancing local business competitiveness which will spur economic development and create employment opportunities (Ibid p. 7).

Jamaica's local government reform programme, like Trinidad and Tobago's responds to the rapid transformation in the socio-economic profile of local government jurisdictions, brought on by an unprecedented growth in secondary cities and towns that challenge the traditional economic dominance of capital cities and towns. These new and emerging centres of economic activity have been designated *Development Areas* defined as "localities that exhibit great potential for economic take-off and where social and economic activities cause spillover across the functional areas of local administrative units" (Schoburgh 2007: 169) (see Table 2).

Seventy two *development areas* have been identified but policy discussions are mostly about effective municipal management arrangement for these discrete urban and rural spaces rather than whether to aim at local integration or local sectoral specialization of these sub-economies. Amendment of the Parish Councils Act to facilitate the creation of municipal corporations, town and area councils and business and special improvement districts (BIDs and SIDs) are options being considered. Already the Municipalities Act of 2003 which established the Municipality of Portmore signals that fragmentation of local government structures is the strategic direction in the quest for local development.

Policy Outputs or Outcomes?

Despite the debates in both Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica, local development still remains at the stage of policy dialogue with the most obvious output being demarcation of spatial boundaries within which the process will be managed (see Tables 1 and 3). The model of local development is also shrouded in mystery even with an orientation towards the development-from-below paradigm.

One explanation is that reform has still not identified the 'missing link' in the normative arrangements that are necessary for local development and to which the concepts of 'learning regions and innovative milieus' may be applied. In the absence of these normative arrangements local development becomes unsustainable, particularly in environments where there is a history of integration of local economies into national frameworks, and where civil society activism, a critical ingredient, morphing into political movements that are sometimes co-opted by the centre (central government).

From the newly articulated development plans of both countries one may discern a decisive shift at the macro level from a purely statist or market driven model of development to a 'third path' that incorporates the triad of the state, business and civil sectors, which reflects for the most part the development agenda of the international donor community.

At the local level this third path manifests in a hybrid model of local development. Hybridized models tell many stories: While a broader normative governance framework may serve as a reference point for economic and political action at central and local levels it does not guarantee congruence in policy outputs. Indeed the triadic relationship at the subnational level in the Caribbean paints a different picture. The extent to which the episodic nature and slow pace of local government reform has captured the interest and imagination of the local private (business) sector is still in question: A point illustrated by the number of PDCs in Jamaica that have failed to achieve their functional mandate due to high incidence of atrophy among its membership.

The Manchester PDC has been the one exception, managing to formulate and publish a strategic plan for the parish, the first of its kind in the Caribbean, with the help of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). The Manchester PDC seemed to have been able to overcome what appears to be *a tenuous working relationship* between PDCs and local authorities in which there are allegations of power struggle at the individual and organisational levels, partisanship and unethical practices. In the mix are questions about the capacity of local government to forge the requisite synergies among actors. The state's central administrative apparatus continues to be a strong contender in development while local authorities remain tethered to the centre weakening their capacity to innovate in response to theoretical trends in development and local environmental impulses.

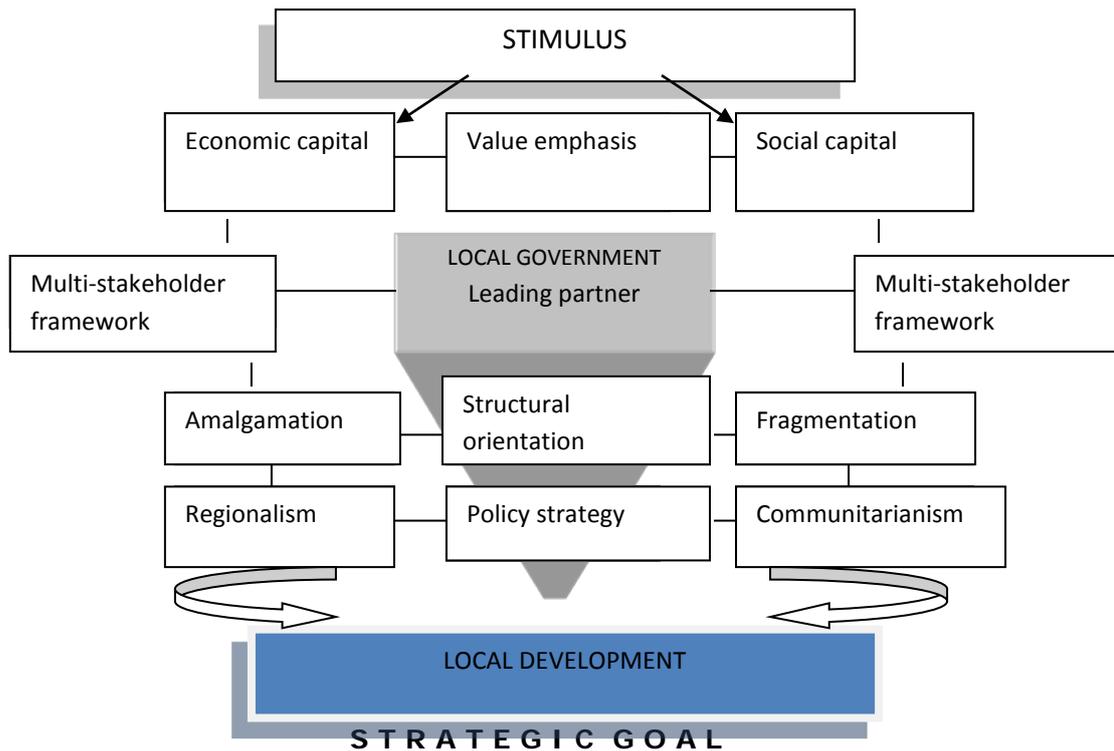
Policy reversal is also a feature of reform, illustrated in the pronouncement by the political administration in Jamaica in 2007 that local government would be given greater autonomy. Apportioning a specific percentage of the GDP to this level of government was seen as the best way to delink it from the centre. The most salutary action taken towards this new direction was the downgrade of the Ministry of Local Government to a Department of Local Government. In 2011 a new political administration reverted the Department of Local Government to a ministry with questions being raised about the status of local government. Obviously much is left to be sorted out prior to a specific focus on a developmental local government.

5. A New Local Development Agenda: Conceptualising the Hybrid Model

Drawing on the cases of Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica's local government reform policies, this paper develops the concepts of a *hybrid model of local development*. This model illustrated in Diagram 1 subsumes neoclassical economic view of community interests as driven by economic utility under a governance paradigm that promotes a multi-

stakeholder framework based on norms of cooperation, collaboration and partnerships. As Diagram 1 shows, amalgamation through regions is Trinidad and Tobago's strategy for shoring up economic capital; while fragmentation through community management systems assures social capital formation in Jamaica. Economic and social capital thus represent alternative paths to achieving the same goal.

Diagram 1: Modelling approaches to local economic development, Caribbean Trinidad and Tobago Jamaica



On the economic side the model departs from the normative private sector-led development strategy and instead assigns a leading role to local government. On the political side it departs from the view that the relationship among the actors involved in the local development process is based on equality. Rather, the model echoes Skocpol's institutional view of development (Skocpol 1995), arguing that businesses and civil society groups thrive to the extent that the state actively encourages them (cited in Woolcock and Narayan 2000:234). This view requires a strong local government, working in partnership with the other actors to identify complementarities and forge partnerships. Here politics and economics make easy bedfellows in both countries. The contradiction in the case of Jamaica in operationalising the model, is that the core value of empowered communities that underpins communitarianism is in contradiction to a strong local government. Nevertheless, local government is expected to facilitate the growth of the entrepreneurial spirit and creative energies required for local development.

Core propositions of the hybrid model

Despite the potential of a hybrid model, there still exists a high level of reticence in the Caribbean with respect to activation of a new agenda in local development. Issues such as *gender equality*, risks and opportunities of *the informal economy*, and the institutional and organisational requirements for *managing the 'local commons'* must populate the development trajectory. In these socio-economic variables are strategic opportunities for social transformation but they also pose serious threats to the new local order. The paper tackles these issues by setting out three propositions that are essential if the dominance of local government in local development as envisaged in the hybrid model is to be effective.

(En)gendering development

P1: *Mainstreaming gender in local government policy is the only route to assuring a sustainable participatory ethos and by extension sustainable local development.*

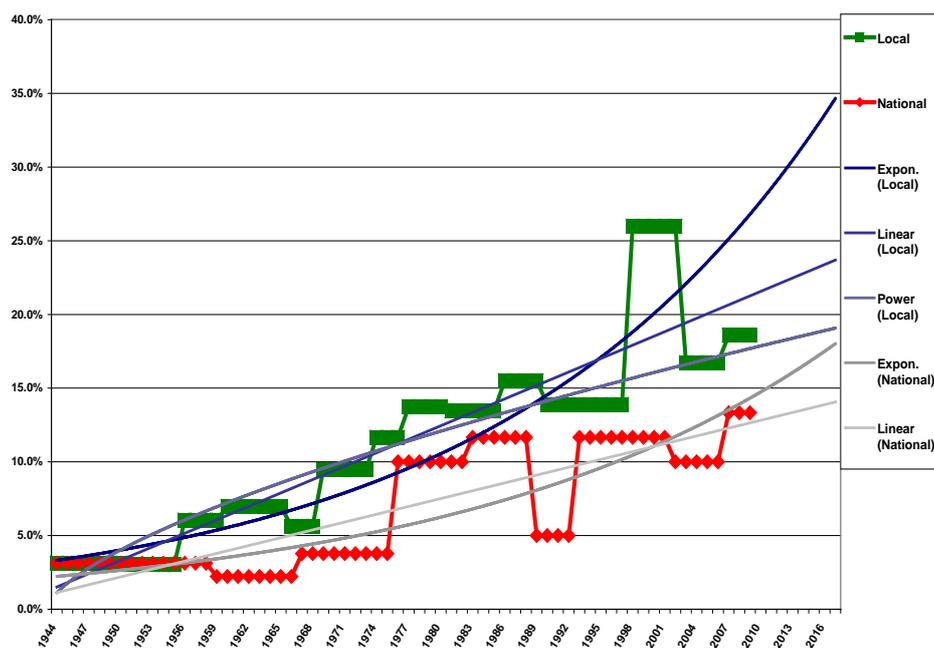
There is general consensus in contemporary development discourses that sustainable development is predicated on strong democratic institutions which in part explains the renewed interest in local government both as a site for democratic renewal and for its catalytic role in social and economic development. Provided it has the autonomy, authority and resources, local government can enable political devolution which creates the formal-legal framework in which communities are empowered to exert their influence on local decision-making (Cheema and Rondinelli (2007)). But the democratic value of local government is often in question, which has evoked the question raised elsewhere (Schoburgh 2010) of whether local political institutions in the Caribbean are structured in a manner that permit the development of natural incentives for *responsiveness*, *accountability* and *representativeness*? The latter are the mediating concepts underlying the principles of *popular control* and *political equality*, the fundamental pillars on which democratic institutions rest (Ibid).

It is uncertain as to the extent to which local governments in the Commonwealth Caribbean stand up to the scrutiny of *popular control* or substantiate fulsomely the principle of *political equality* which attaches to two criteria: “(a) each vote is of equal value irrespective of location or the voter’s preference for a particular political party; and (b) each individual regardless of social group status has equal opportunity to stand for public office making the electoral process socially representative” (Ibid). Though not stated definitively, the issue of gender and the situation of women’s political participation come to the fore.

Progress has been made in women’s political participation in the region but there are several paradoxes. First the Commonwealth Caribbean on a whole has not attained the 30% quota

average that countries have committed to³ suggesting the unevenness of women's political participation. Moreover, in comparison to their Latin American counterparts women struggle to attain executive and legislative positions at the national level, although are more likely to gain access to the legislative than the executive at the local level. It was found that in 2010 women comprised 21% of councillors but merely 7% of mayors in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) (see e.g. Htun and Piscopo 2010). Figueroa and Mortley's (2009 c.p) study of Jamaica revealed a tendency for women to achieve higher levels of participation in the administrative as opposed to the political sphere, acting as indoor agents for the political machinery rather than entering representational politics.⁴ They also point out that although women's participation in representational politics tends to be slightly higher in local government than in central government, this has not approached equality and is low in comparison to other countries. Figueroa and Mortley (2009 c.p) provide a forecast⁵ which suggests that women's political participation in Jamaica in 2017 will be below 15% at the national level and 25% at the local level (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Percentage of Female Representation Local and Central Government, Jamaica



Source: Figueroa and Mortley, 2009

³ At the 1997 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting a target of 30% women in decision-making in the political, public and private sectors by 2005 was endorsed as the benchmark for greater gender parity in decision-making in the Caribbean.

⁴ The Human Development Report 2010 argues that "women have traditionally been disadvantaged in the political arena at all levels of government" (p. 91) although the global average of the proportion of women in political leadership still stands at 16%.

⁵ Figueroa and Mortley acknowledge the absence of an in-depth study of the party structures that would support more confident predictions about the future of women representation in politics, and derived results from simply fitting trends line to existing data. Using an exponential projection, they note a more optimistic picture with women's participation in local government rising above the 30% target but remaining below 20% at the national.

The evidence is clear: Not only is the principle of *political equality* undermined in local government, implicitly local developmental goals rest on a flawed foundation.

The critical point is that if local government is to assume a developmental role, it is essential that local leaders recognise the centrality of human capital formation to the process of local development. Moreover the alternative development models and empowerment strategies require a shift in organisational focus from the standard tasks of infrastructure development to human resource development as the basis for a holistic approach to local development and as a way of unearthing the creative talents and energies of citizens within their jurisdictions. The latter are *a priori* to increased productivity at the local level and by extension the transformation of social values into sustainable economic values. Local government is thus the arena in which to resolve the outstanding matter of gender parity not merely for the imbalances that characterize political and administrative leadership but for their potentially negative impact on [community] empowerment, as well as the strategic goal of socio-economic transformation as acknowledged in the Human Development Report 2010 and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) - Goal #3.

The National Advisory Council (NAC) on local government reform in Jamaica is unequivocal about the *sine qua non* of gender equity and the empowerment of women noting that they constitute more than 50% of the population; have particular needs and interests that are elemental to the ethos of local services; are already the principal actors in community management whether through formal or informal networks and importantly are linked with the pursuit of the 'common good' (NAC Report 2009: 9). Gender equity is linked directly to good quality social capital as noted in the NAC's prefatory comments that:

...on the guaranteed empowerment of women rests the expected desired outcomes of the sort of social transformation which will socialize the youth around to values of tolerance one to another, mutual respect in relating to both leaders and peer groups, collaborative and cooperative endeavours starting with family extending to yard, village, community parish and nation (NAC Report 2009: 5).

Essentially local development is inextricably tied to issues of gender, which demands deliberate and decisive action in identifying those factors that are strategic to economic transformation which leads to the second proposition.

Transforming informal citizenship into economic citizenship

P2: *Local development involves: (a) the integration of peripheral groups/economies into mainstream socio-economic development processes; and (b) an understanding of the social relations of the informal economy as a basis for transforming informal citizenship into economic citizenship.*

The concept of ‘growth centres’ presents another opportunity for an examination of what is required of local government in its developmental role. ‘Growth centres’ are portrayed as incubators of economic take-off but represent a paradox for local development in that more often than not, rather than outcomes of rational policy making, they are the consequences of spontaneous economic activities of private individuals whose single purpose is to maintain their household income. Many of these economic activities are not integrated into formal economic structures as a result but remains in their natural state outside the pale of government regulation creating a type of parallel economy.

Growth centres sometimes emerge as a source of consternation for local governments for two reasons: (a) they create a high degree of economic spillover that blurs service boundaries and causes jurisdictional overlaps as they are frequently associated with densely population areas, and (b) they utilize local services without bearing the true economic cost. The socio-economic linkages from this economic sub-sphere have challenged the capacity of local government to meet local needs efficiently and effectively and have propelled restructuring reforms, as exemplified in the case of Jamaica’s municipal management systems to respond to these issues via the *Development Areas* and *Business District* concepts; regional corporations is the answer for Trinidad and Tobago.

Strategies to spur local economic development must thus confront the phenomenon of the *informal economy* which is being suggested here is a dimension of “growth centres”. The concept describes the whole range of informality – both enterprise and employment relations – manifesting in industrialized, transition and developing economies and which is representative of production that occurs outside of visible, formal organisations, subjected to the laws and policies of the state (Harrod 1987:122; Portes and Haller 2005; Tokman and Klein 1996; Witter and Anderson 1991 ; Witter and Kirton, 1990)). An Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) 2004 study characterized the *informal economy* as:

...an atomic configuration of economic units that compete individually with each other, in the absence of productive cooperative links and linkages with large firms (Ibid: 165).

The trouble is that the informal economy, though within the oversight of local governments in the region, has turned out to be a case of missed economic opportunity. Notwithstanding that its economic value has been identified in national economic discourses, very little attempt is made in local policy, outside of provisional regulatory activities, to understand its constitutive dimensions in order to either shape discourses or devise strategies to deal with it. For instance, explanations have shifted from emphasizing the logic of economic survivalism,

though still considered critical in the development of this phenomenon, to the logic of decentralization in the context of a liberalized macro economic framework (Tokman 2001).

As an instrument of decentralizing reforms there exists a proximal relationship between local government activities and the informal economy which renders the latter an imperative of local policy analysis. The “wait-and-see” stance adopted by local government officials against a perception that the informal economy will simply disappear with regulation, belies its complex nature. As Tokman (2001: 50) argues “informal activities are not caused by regulatory inadequacies, but rather by the failure of the economic system to create enough productive employment.” Herein lays the first clue to the direction that policy-making in local government ought to be reoriented.

Part of the complexity of the informal economy lies in its far-reaching social effects, the most recent exposition of which is found in Schoburgh’s (2007) seminal article: *Informal economy and informal citizenship: Exploring causation and connectivity in socio-political shifts in Jamaica* that introduces the concept of *informal citizenship* to the debate around the social relations of the informal economy. Schoburgh (2007a) characterized these social relations thus:

The informal economy provides participating agents/individuals with a first-hand experience of the inability of the formal institutions to meet their needs and guarantee those benefits to which they are entitled through their social membership and participation in the wider political community. Through this welfare function the informal economy facilitates a psychological retreat from the wider society by those who operate within it and the creation of a ‘social world’ in which the actions of participating agents are subjectively justified (9).

Out of the socio-economic experience of the informal economy evolves an informal citizen-self with a particular socio-political affect (whether as an individual or group) that is instrumental in nature and which guides behaviour towards self-interested ends (Ibid). This informal-citizen-self undermines traditional notions of citizenship giving rise to an *informal citizenship* which for Schoburgh (2007a):

... is a status acquired through an individual’s membership in a social sub-structure/sub-group with which he/she identifies as the legitimate collective/context in which to pursue those claims normally associated with and attached to formal citizenship status. Informal citizenship resides in that realm of formal citizenship status where particularistic needs (be they political and civil, economic, or socio-cultural) are either un-met or under-met and where a subordinated social system assumes responsibility for meeting them (p. 11).

Informal citizenship status destroys cooperative relationships as well as good social capital, and a stance of neglect on the part of local government has to change as it must balance the economic and social aspects of local development by integrating under-served publics into

local development policy processes. Employment creation, poverty reduction, and women's and community empowerment are cross-cutting issues that find sustenance in the informal economy.

Local government in its role as enabler of local development and in light of its implied function in substantiating citizenship, must be made to see that the informal economy represents an alternative development strategy for two fundamental reasons: (a) its potential development impact – it is an *economic opportunity zone*; and (b) the implications it has for social membership of a political community – it is a source of *informal citizenship*. These issues are linked to the final proposition.

P3: *Managing the 'local commons': The principal role of local government in local development is managing the commons which translates into developing the capabilities to regulate the use of community assets and forging and sustaining synergistic relationships among actors.*

If there is a single lesson to be taken from the theories reviewed earlier it is that irrespective of the model of local development adopted the repositioning of local government towards a developmental role rests on three criteria: *knowledge* about a locality's resource base; *strategy(ies)* to transform latent and emergent resources into economic values for development, and *capacity(ies)* to ensure that a locality's competitive advantage is sustained over a longer term. This inference is complemented by Blakely and Bradshaw's (2002: 341) observation that "economic development is an institution-building process." In this sense local government as the enabler must forge and sustain synergistic relationships among local actors which in turn will evolve new norms and practices towards the achievement of social goals, recognising that such a process can hardly be left to occur by accident (see, e.g. Hardin 1968; Ostrom et al 1999).

'Commons' in this analysis is a metaphor for the range of interactions that links actors (policy makers and citizens) in the local development 'enterprise'. When the concept of the 'commons' is substituted with the local space in which social goals are pursued the application is clear: development benefits and costs accrue to all, not at the same time nor in the same quantum and as a result produces a contested terrain creating a dilemma for local development policy as local actors follow their own short term interests (Ostrom et al Ibid.) rather than pursue long-term collective goals. The presumption of self-interested behaviour does not mean that the 'commons' is devoid of cooperative norms. Neither should an assumption be made that because the policy approach to local development involves cooperation among a range of actors (public, private and civil) that these norms will evolve

naturally. They may or may not, depending on the development issues, strategies and goals and the distributional effects in relation to costs and benefits. Local development requires a neutral arbiter to mediate the contending and sometimes conflicting interests and positions. Implications for the internal capacity (i.e. institutional arrangements and organisational capabilities) are obvious. Managing the ‘local commons’ is therefore a process of institutional design in which the ‘rules of the game’ are ‘devised deliberately’.

Fortunately the policy approach to local development in the Commonwealth Caribbean has demonstrated that partnerships and collaborative arrangements constitute the new ‘rules of the game’ but negotiation and consensus-building, monitoring and enforcement activities remain to be sorted out. In fact the multi-stakeholder framework of the hybrid model requires that local government ascertain the nature of the vested interests that people and organisations have in an area’s economic development as a basis for managing partnerships and collaborations. The concept of covenanting has been explored elsewhere (Schoburgh 2009). To do so hinges on requisite capacity on which issue the literature provides a direction, suggesting two types of institutional endowments that are necessary for the assumption of an economic developmental role: *authority* – the legitimate power to act on behalf of local actors; and *resources* – the technical, material and informational stocks at the disposal of the organisation. These are linked to specific organisational behaviour and outlook (Blakely and Bradshaw 2002) shown in Table 4 and are self-explanatory.

Table 4: A Profile of Local Development Organisations

COMPONENTS	DESCRIPTION
Research	Generation of policy relevant information; needs assessment; establishing causation
Information provision	Identification and articulation of policy issues/problems, developmental goals/alternatives and targets
Marketing	Promotion of development attributes (of locale) and strategies
Coordination	Synchronization of local interests for collective goals; balancing efficiency and equity
Learning and Innovation	Development of technical capacity for innovation; utilization of feedback instruments; infusion and deployment of new information and communication technologies (ICTs) to support existing technologies
Leadership	Strong and competent leadership with progressive worldview at individual and organisational levels and straddling political and administrative dimensions

Author’s elaboration of Blakely and Bradshaw’s (2002) ideas.

Applying the concepts of ‘learning regions’ and ‘innovative milieus’ it may be inferred that the contemporary local development ‘commons’ requires that local government develops a ‘technical culture’ – described as “a way to develop, store and disseminate knowledge, technical know-how, norms and values – linked to a certain type of economic activity” (Plummer and Taylor 2001: 226). The evidence in the Caribbean suggests new roles, new functions and new outlook for individuals and organisations.

6. Analysis and Conclusion

Theoretical explanations of local development and the models that are attached do not have universal application. Nor are they expected to. Yet they offer useful insights into understanding the role that local government and communities are expected to play in facilitating the local development process. The ‘leading-laggard’ or ‘hierarchy of settlements’ concepts even with their economic determinism illustrate that there is an external dimension to the pursuit of local development irrespective of the source of the impetus for change. That is, local policy must account for the various types of linkages as well as the manner in which the locality is integrated into the national and even international economies. The idea of ‘growth centres’ directs attention to a fundamental policy action, that is, identification of locational attributes of a community and ascertaining their relative value to form a promotional package in order to attract the necessary investments. With advancements in technology that have spawned different and more unpredictable behaviours in investors as exemplified in the growth of e-commerce and ‘foot-loose’ industries, reliance on natural physical endowments and close proximity to markets as primary pull factors for development may not be adequate bases on which to plan. Increasingly natural resources have to be complemented by other types that are socio-cultural and institutional in nature: To which issues ‘learning regions’ and ‘innovative milieus’ point.

If there is one inference that theories of local development offer, it is that location is more than the physical space and thus suggests the adoption of a pragmatic approach to local development. As Blair (1995:15) observes “local economic development is part of a larger process of community development.” Also following Coffey and Polese’s (1984), local development is a process “in which ‘local’ factors – the local spirit of entrepreneurship, local firms, or local financial institutions – constitute the principal bases” for local economic growth - taken to mean an increase in employment rates, expansion in the number and size of businesses, and increase in per capita incomes, hardly means the preclusion of a broader process of development that takes into account the ‘softer’ (social relational) side of economics.

The second inference is that economic development is a critical dimension of local development. And perhaps a false dichotomy is created between local development and LED in the context of local government. For as Beauregard (1993) observes there are ‘fictions’ associated with the label *economic*. LED is a process in which “individuals and organisations engage in production, distribution and consumption of goods and services” at the local level (p. 269). But there is difficulty in delineating between economic and non-economic realms in policy practice as LED may also be interpreted as “the enhancement of institutions that make capital investment possible and successful” (Ibid 271) among which are financial institutions, but also education and training entities, legal structures, social networks of entrepreneurs and inventors, mutual support groups (informal sector) and notably governments (Ibid). The latter interpretation resonates with the economic developmental role of local government. The question that remains is: Which should be the focus – local development or LED? This might be the source of the ambiguity observed in the model of development hypothesized and hence the hybrid model attempts to be all things to all people.

Local development is increasingly seen in consonance with local government. At this stage of local government reform in the Caribbean there is sufficient evidence of an attempt to reformulate the critical components of the policy cycle to reflect relevant theoretical norms and respond to urgent empirical trends. While location remains constant it is modified by qualitative aspects such as empowered communities and citizens linked by networks and partnerships to indicate that policy has arrived at a firm position on what the critical ingredients for determining competitiveness of a socio-economic and cultural space.

Local development is implicitly recognised as having a broader connotation and is not merely about place but about the people that occupy that space, plus the interactions that form the bases of institutions in that space. As the partner accorded the status of *primus inter pares* in local development, local government has the task of ensuring that models and strategies of local development are in synchrony with the new requirements of local development. Local government must therefore confront the issues of gender and the informal economy frontally in order to maximize human and natural resources in the process of wealth creation. In these factors reside unconventional policy tools, capacities and sources of new forms of wealth. In their absence the ideas and strategies of local development are ‘dead on arrival.’

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Appendix 1

Table 1. Distribution of authorities, Trinidad and Tobago

	Municipal corporations	Population	% rural
City	Port of Spain	49,031	0
	San Fernando	55,419	0
Borough	Arima	32,278	0
	Chaguanas	67,433	95
	Point Fontin	19,056	90
Region	Couva-Talparo- Tabaquite	162,797	95
	Diego Martin	105,720	10
	Mayaro-Rio Claro	32,143	100
	Penal-Debe	83,609	80
	Princes Town	91,947	87
	Sangre Grande	65,680	72
	San Juan-Laventille	157,295	10
	Siparia	81,917	92
	Tunapuna-Piarco	203,975	93
	Total	(14)	1,208,300

Source: Commonwealth Local Government Forum Country Profile Website (CLGF 2011a)

Table 2. Local Development Management Structures, Jamaica

Parishes	Municipal Management Areas	Development Areas	Communities
Kingston & St. Andrew	1	13	82
St. Thomas	3	3	51
Manchester	3	9	82
Clarendon	3	3	73
St. Elizabeth	3	6	58
Westmoreland	3	5	69
Hanover	-	3	41
St. James	1	3	85
Trelawny	-	3	38
St. Ann	-	9	48
St. Mary	-	5	30
Portland	3	6	40
St. Catherine	1 ^a	4	48
Total		72	745

a. Portmore Municipality created 2003.

Table 3. Distribution of local authorities and population, Jamaica

Local authority	Population	% rural
Clarendon	228,300	70.0
Hanover	67,500	91.7
Kingston & St. Andrew	716,000	11.5
Manchester	188,800	66.2
Portland	79,400	79.2
St. Ann	164,900	75.5
St. Catherine Portmore	413,200	29.9
St. Elizabeth	148,600	89.9
Sr. James	180,800	45.8
St. Mary	112,800	79.4
St. Thomas	92,400	74.1
Trelawny	72,500	81.7
Westmoreland	140,600	80.0
Total (14)	2,605,800	50.4

Source: Commonwealth Local Government Forum Country Profiles Website (CLGF 2011b)

Rural Municipal Development and Reform in Canada: Policy Learning through Local-Provincial Collaboration

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Abstract

In a federated country like Canada, diversity challenges universal policy prescriptions for local governments. The success of its provincial governments, which have exclusive jurisdiction for systems of local government, depends on balancing the need to act comprehensively and systematically while dealing thoughtfully with the unique situation of individual local governments. Canada's provinces are shifting their approach to strengthening rural governance – shifting away from more directive interventions and now seeking to facilitate capacity-building in a manner that is less state-centred, more bottom-up, and better adapted to variable local circumstances. A dialogue was organised to focus on this shift in provincial practice. It brought together more than 50 savvy and influential policy practitioners representing all provinces and most local government associations at the provincial level. Practice recommendations emerged for provinces, local government

associations, and local governments focusing on concrete actions and tools but also on the potential for redefining the roles played by, and relations between, the associations and provincial governments.

Introduction

The capacity of local governments in western democracies has been of concern to national and state or provincial governments⁶ over the last few decades (Painter, 1991). This applies particularly to thinly populated, low capacity rural municipalities with whom central governments manage a precarious relationship. They are responsible for framing the powers of local governments while also maintaining the capacity of local governments to function as effective local democracies delivering essential services in an efficient and effective manner. Managing this relationship is not easy. While local governments have much in common, it is their diversity that challenges universal prescriptions. Success often depends on how central governments manage to act systematically and comprehensively while still dealing with the unique situation of individual local governments.

Since the federal government is legislatively inactive in the local government sphere, Canada's provinces are responsible for the architecture of local government systems in their territories. As discussed below in section 4, a provincial consensus appears to have developed in the 1960s on pursuing structural reform as a means of strengthening local governance capacity. Although happening in different ways and times, these structural reforms tended to be legislatively imposed and often involved forcible consolidation or regionalization of municipal units: what we will call *directive intervention*. Most provinces appeared content with this management strategy especially in the 1960s, 70s and 80s.

Since then, contentment has diminished as universal prescriptions for strengthening rural governance continued to face the sector's enormous diversity. Now, Canadian provinces are transitioning toward a strategy of *facilitative intervention* – which seeks to build capacity in a manner that is less state-centred, more bottom-up, and better adapted to variable local circumstances. Routine networking among the provinces (via communication mechanisms designed to connect deputy ministers and senior policy officials) revealed that, even if they were confident in the need to transition toward facilitative strategies, no province was satisfied that all the management techniques required to make the transition successfully had been acquired or developed.

⁶ In Canada, the primary parliamentary subdivisions of the federal state are called 'provinces' and 'territories.' In this discussion, references to 'provinces' should be interpreted to include 'territories.'

In 2008, the *Symposium on Strengthening the Rural Municipal Sector* brought together more than 50 savvy and influential policy practitioners representing all Canadian provinces and most local government associations at the provincial level. The symposium focused on rural governance and cast light on the transition to facilitative intervention – relying on participants to share insights and generate ideas while imparting a sense of opportunity and challenge. Emerging from the symposium was guidance to provinces and local government associations alike. As discussed below in section 5, the guidance focused on concrete actions and tools but was also about changing roles of the provinces, the associations and localities in meeting challenges and the need for new mechanisms to bring these sectors together.

Innovation in Local Government and the Role of Central Government in Local Development

Innovation in local government is not a topic widely researched in public management. Innovation is often assumed to occur with new and different programs but it is questionable as to whether such initiatives reflect an innovative culture in local government. In 1999, Martin researched a number of award winning local government councils in Australia in an attempt to understand how their innovation process had developed and what the consequences were for councils as a result of having an organisational culture that encouraged innovative thinking and action. Martin's research highlighted "the way in which innovation processes become embedded in the culture of local government organisations" (Martin, 2000, p. 3).

In this paper we are considering innovation within provincial local government systems and between Canadian provinces. It is important to appreciate the context for innovation. Albeit now some time back, Bingham's industry level analysis of innovation in local government identified three key variables that are still relevant today: community environment, organisational environment and organisational characteristics (Bingham, 1976). The issue of innovation in Canadian rural municipal governance has more to do with the first two of Bingham's three variables. The role of the provinces in facilitating innovation and change in rural municipal governance is more about the organisational environment – an environment where each province and the various local government associations work with small rural municipalities to enhance their capacity.

One important change that has occurred in public administration over the last two decades is the focus on NPM or the New Public Management (Barzelay, 2001). Osborne and Gaebler's *Reinventing Government* (1992) was both a reflection of the vanguard of change sweeping the administration of western governments as well as a call for change in these institutions.

Hood observed that the NPM was characterised by four underlying themes: an attempt to slow down or reverse government growth; a shift toward privatisation; increased use of information technology in the production and delivery of services; and the development of a more international agenda to public management (Hood, 1991, p. 3). This ideological change has seen a shift away from the traditional top-down approach to administering local government by central government found in traditional public administration. Under NPM, we see a more negotiated environment where local politics plays an important role in the actions of central governments toward strengthening their local governments (Sancton, 2000; Sancton, James, & Ramsay, 2000).

The normative view of local community development is best represented by Kretzmann and McKnight in their popular book, *Building Communities from the Inside Out* (1993). They outline an “assets-based approach” to community development where the guiding principle is to identify and engage local assets in the development task. Such publications reflect increasing support for endogenous development in communities, an approach supported by central governments as well as local government. Nevertheless central governments are responsible for their local governments and responding to the diversity of issues across municipalities remains a challenging task.

In developing a theoretical perspective on the role of central government in the governance of rural communities Shucksmith asks “what is the role of the state in promoting sustainable rural communities?” (Shucksmith, 2010, p. 1). He suggests that there has been a shift from a policy focus on integrated rural development focussed on planning, design and infrastructure to one of “place shaping” in which the governance of rural communities, embracing a range of stakeholders and decision-makers, has become the predominant paradigm. Herbert-Cheshire (2000, p. 203) refers to the discourses of self-help: an ideology “based upon notions of individual and community responsibility, self-help and ‘bottom-up’ techniques which mobilise the skills and resources of the local community and consequently ‘empower’ it from the imposing structures of government programmes”. The challenge for central governments is to get the right balance of exogenous and endogenous rural municipal development, and universal prescriptions will rarely reflect the great diversity that occurs across systems of local government.

Background on Local Governance in Canada

Canada is a vast and diverse country with a population of only 34 million. Larger than either Europe or Australia, Canada spans six time zones west to east, stretches from 41° to 83° south to north, and covers nearly 10 million km².

Governance Context: Federal / Provincial

Canada is a federal state with 13 provinces (including three province-like territories). Constitutional powers are distributed between the national and provincial governments. Provinces have exclusive jurisdiction for the architecture of the local government systems within their territory, systems that therefore vary in design.

There is no national statute directly influencing the Canadian local government system. However, the national government has used its spending power over the past two decades to address local government infrastructure challenges in fields such as environmental and energy sustainability, water and air quality, and transportation (Berdahl, 2006). At one level, the constitutional division of powers between the national and provincial governments in relation to local government is clear and simple. In practice, however, multi-level government processes in Canada are rather more interdependent and interrelated than it might seem on the surface (Courchene, 1995; Leo, 2006).

Governance Context: Local

Local governments play an important role in Canada. They generally have similar core responsibilities across the country including transportation and communications, water and waste water, refuse collection/disposal, recreation and culture, land use planning and regulation, and building regulation. Fire and police protection are local responsibilities although, in many provinces, a national police force is available to provide local policing by contract. Local government spending on health, education and social services is minimal as these services have for the most part (with the exception of Ontario) been taken over by provinces (CLGF, 2009; Kitchen & Slack, 2006; Kitchen, 2002).

Both nationally and provincially, Canadian local governments have combined into local government associations. Associations at the provincial level are particularly influential in policy processes but how this is done varies across the country. Local government associations are unified in most provinces but in others are separated by purpose or language. As a result, there are 19 recognized associations among the 13 provinces.

There is substantial variation among the provincial-level local government associations in terms of capacity and role. A 2007 survey found that about a quarter had only 1 or 2 employees while another quarter were quite large at between 20 and 40+ employees. For each, the key activity is policy advocacy on behalf of local governments. Higher-capacity associations are able to conduct more intensive policy research and analysis while also

providing a variety of member services (such as fund management and bulk procurement, capacity building and professional development, and/or legal services) ⁷.

Profile of the Rural Municipal Sector in Canada

There is no universal local government system in Canada. Each province differs in its approach to developing a local government system appropriate to its geography, history, economy and social character. However, all provinces face similar rural governance challenges associated with large geographic areas, low population densities, and large numbers of local government units. Today, Canada has in excess of 3600 municipalities (CLGF, 2009), the vast majority of which are small and limited in capacity.

Rural Canada, and especially Canada's northern and Arctic regions, is very sparsely populated. The urban population of Canada surpassed the rural in the 1920's and its growth rates have been higher ever since. Now, according to the latest estimate, 23.2 million or nearly 70% of Canadians reside in just 33 census metropolitan areas defined by the national statistical agency (Martel & Caron-Malenfant, 2007; Statistics Canada, 2009).

To comprehend the varying architecture of rural governance systems in Canada, a comparison among selected provinces and territories helps to underline the differing

Table 1: Selected Statistics on Local Government in Selected Provinces, 2006

	Ontario (most populous)	Quebec	British Columbia	Alberta	Manitoba (mid-sized, west)	New Brunswick	Northwest Territories
Municipalities (#):	415	1,117	158	353	201	103	33
Municipalities of sub-2000 population (#):	116	743	52	213	147	70	29
Total municipal population ('000):	12,075.7	7,498.1	3,600.1	3,243.7	1,148.4	457.0	40.8
Total non-municipal population ('000):	84.5	48.0	513.4	46.6	0	273.0	0.1
Total population of largest five municipalities ('000):	4,922.3	2,952.0	1,474.1	1,958.5	714.1	219.4	30.1
Total population of sub-2000 cohort ('000):	95.3	641.0	48.7	114.7	127.6	65.8	12.6
Number of municipalities in decline (2001-2006):	137	510	74	117	118	73	5
Average municipal population:	29,098	6,713	22,785	9,189	5,381	4,437	1,237
Median municipal population:	5,818	1,207	4,306	1,010	1,003	1,291	460

Source: (Statistics Canada, 2006a; Statistics Canada, 2006b; Bollman & Clemenson, 2008)

⁷ From information compiled by the provincial-level local government associations in 2007; shared with one of the authors as part of routine local/provincial information exchange.

circumstances faced (see Table 1). Selected information is provided on the four most populous provinces, two mid-sized provinces from the west and east respectively, and one northern territory. Together, this sample represents over 90% of the Canadian population.

It is clear from the data that, despite a high level of urbanization in most Canadian provinces, municipalities are typically many in number and small in size. With the exceptions only of Ontario and British Columbia, one can expect provinces to have more than one municipality per 10,000 of population. The median population for municipalities is usually in the range of only 1000 persons – very small indeed. This is a reflection of Canada’s immense spaces and relatively small population.

Evolution of Provincial Policy toward Governance Structures

Coupled with the fact that provinces are constitutionally responsible for local government, the twin challenges of vastness and diversity are a recipe for considerable variation in both the architecture of systems for local governance and in the approaches taken by provinces toward strengthening local governance in their jurisdictions.

Strengthening Local Governance – Era of Directive Intervention

Beginning about 1960, the provinces started to rely on structural reform for strengthening local governance. According to observers (O'Brien, 1993; Sancton, 1993), and consistent with the authors’ experience as provincial officials, structural reform has often involved consolidating municipal units or introducing regional or two-tier local government formations. Furthermore, such reforms have tended to be imposed rather than negotiated.

The period of intense provincial interventions to reform local government structures dates back at least as far as 1953 and the introduction of two-tier local government in Toronto. Sancton (1993) describes several major interventions that followed across the country:

- Manitoba – reforms to Winnipeg’s governance structure in 1960 (two-tier) and 1972 (single-tier consolidation)
- Québec – formation (in 1970) of two-tier “urban communities” in Montréal and Québec; later, provincially-imposed mergers to form today’s Laval and Longueuil
- Ontario – in the 1970s, the creation of two-tier regional formations in most major centres outside Toronto
- New Brunswick – a “drastic” provincial reform initiative (1967) to create a new and “scarcely recognizable” local government system
- Alberta – a continuing tradition of annexing territory to its two major cities, Calgary and Edmonton; a consolidation initiative to create the municipality of Crowsnest Pass

Provincial activism, or what one might label *directive intervention*, is one common denominator in all these structural initiatives. Indeed, hindsight makes clear that structural reform was a major preoccupation in many (certainly the most populous) provinces over the three decades from 1950 to 1979. In only isolated instances have observers of this period identified a different approach to strengthening local and rural governance.

Strengthening Local Governance – Transition to Facilitative Intervention

This alternative approach, less state-centred and more bottom-up, is what one might label *facilitative intervention*. British Columbia was one early adopter, employing a “strategy of gentle imposition” (Tennant & Zirnhelt, 1973) when introducing a system for federated regional governance beginning in 1965. The system introduced relied on local choice both for establishing individual regional districts and for assigning their functions thereafter in a process of continuous evolution (BC-MCSCD, 2010). A strategy of gentle imposition also underpinned the roll-out of Québec’s system of RCM’s or regional county municipalities. In 1979, traditional counties were converted to RCM’s but without specifying either boundaries or the exact composition of their governing councils, which were to be negotiated, in the authorizing legislation (Sancton, 1993, pp. 15-18).

In 1993, Sancton wrote that the “days of large-scale centrally imposed municipal reorganisation are clearly over” (1993, p. 40). He was premature. Since 1995, significant directive interventions to reform local government structures took place in Nova Scotia (Halifax, Cape Breton), New Brunswick (Miramichi), as well as among metropolitan and non-metropolitan local governments in both Québec and Ontario (Sancton, 2003).

However, more recent evidence suggests Sancton’s assessment was early but essentially correct. Almost all provinces are moving away from directive amalgamation and regionalisation and appear to be developing robust, multifaceted facilitative intervention techniques. Evidence includes:

- Cessation of recent, provincially-led amalgamation initiatives by Ontario and Québec (Sancton, 2006)
- The new focus on capacity-building and facilitated change management in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba (C-SPO, 2008)
- The establishment or continuation, in Newfoundland and British Columbia respectively, of “gentle” programs for strengthening rural governance (C-SPO, 2008)

Grounded in a different conception of how provinces relate to their local government sector, emerging practices among the provinces indicate an important shift toward collaborative

engagement. Further evidence may be advanced. First, there is growing reliance among the provinces on a new model of intensive collaboration with local government associations in developing new and more broadly empowering local government legislation.⁸ Second, under Québec’s sophisticated rural policy, the focus is on rural regional vitality through integrated or “joined-up” multi-level governance. The policy is a deliberate attempt to harness energies across a broad spectrum of parties interested in rural development. Under the second consecutive “rural pact”, extending through 2014, the province has committed to solidifying the gains made in the 2002 pact and to working through committees of partners (*Comité des partenaires de la ruralité*) and elected officials (*Conférences régionales des élus*) to improve horizontal and vertical coordination of initiatives (C-SPO, 2008; Province of Québec, 2011). Third, and in relation to rural governance nation-wide, engagement can be illustrated with

Table 2: mechanisms employed by provinces to strengthen rural governance

Structural Measures	Amalgamation processes
	Regionalism processes & institutions
Measures Relating to Building Capacity	Technical guideline issuance
	Human resource initiatives
	Advisory services
	Communications support
	Training initiatives and programs
	Policy implementation support
	Innovation & best practice initiatives
Measures Relating to Improving Coordination	Vertical coordination facilitation
	Horizontal coordination facilitation
Financial and Resource Measures	Legislative powers
	Transfers (tied / untied)
	Borrowing processes & institutions

Source: from 2008 survey returns from provincial ministries responsible for local government; compiled by one of the authors as part of routine interprovincial information exchange

reference to a growing range of collaborative mechanisms employed by the provinces, as shown in Table 2. Facilitative intervention is emerging as the norm.

Symposium on Strengthening the Rural Municipal Sector: Deepening Understanding of Facilitative Intervention

Late in 2008, there was a unique opportunity to explore the practice of rural municipal governance in Canada. A very experienced group of governance practitioners assembled for the *Symposium on Strengthening the Rural Municipal Sector*. Reflecting the highly disaggregated municipal sector in Canada, never before had such a high-ranking group of

⁸ The development of Ontario Bill 130 or the *Municipal Act, 2006*, is one example among many (see www.mah.gov.on.ca/Page184.aspx, retrieved July 2011).

government professionals been convened for intensive, interactive dialogue around an issue like rural municipal governance.

The event was framed in the context of the changing concept of local-provincial relations outlined in the preceding section. In particular, a key objective was to create a platform for policy learning. Spicer (2010), cites one broad definition of policy learning as a “process of evaluating new policy ideas, past practices and foreign precedents” in order to identify pathways to improved performance.

The Symposium’s Design

The design of the symposium was informed by two skilled scholar-practitioners, one Canadian, one Australian.⁹ In a nutshell, the methodology selected involved:

- Choosing participants from among the most experienced rural governance practitioners in all parts of Canada
- Supplying common information on the range of practices across the country¹⁰
- Creating opportunities for direct, face-to-face intergovernmental dialogue around successes, failures, and future opportunities in relation to rural governance (C-SPO, 2009, pp. 17-20)
- Challenging individual participants at the conclusion of the symposium to contribute specific ideas and reflections on rural governance reform (C-SPO, 2009, pp. 22-23)

An elite corps of more than 50 governance practitioners gathered in Québec City for the symposium. Every province and most of the 19 local government associations were represented by senior officials. Typically, those attending included heads or deputy heads of agency or senior policy professionals. Each of the co-authors of this paper attended the symposium, one as chief organiser, another as discussion facilitator, and the third as a participant / presenter.

Symposium Outcomes: Policy Learning

The following discussion focuses on synthesizing symposium outcomes produced from small group discussion (designed to encourage a frank exchange of views among participants) and from written post-symposium reflections provided by participants (intended

⁹ The Canadian then headed the Rural & Small Town Programme (Mount Allison University, Sackville NB). The Australian heads the Centre for Sustainable Regional Communities (La Trobe University, Bendigo VIC).

¹⁰ See the symposium document server at www.muniscope.ca/home/Symposium/index.php (retrieved July 2011) for all materials provided to participants prior to or at the symposium.

to elicit their recommendations for reform *after* benefitting from the symposium's facilitated dialogue¹¹). In short, the focus is on the products most likely to embed policy learning.

New views about structure and system architecture

Symposium participants were concerned about the overall architecture (powers, decision-making processes, structures) of the rural governance systems in the provinces. Participant recommendations for strengthening the rural governance architecture far outnumbered any other recommendation among post-symposium reflections submitted.

However, only a very small proportion of symposium participants recommended the classic approach of imposed structural reform to create large municipal units by amalgamation. A slightly larger proportion of participants shared the view that less fragmentation among local governments would increase effectiveness but rejected directive intervention as a technique. From the latter group, recommendations were framed around soft-power strategies (such as incentives or practice guidance) for stimulating regionalization, interlocal collaboration and shared services.

Interestingly, among participants who favoured structural reforms, the largest proportion of respondents favoured an approach that attaches more significance to the *process* of structural reform than to the *outcome* of reform initiatives. These respondents appear to have concluded that regional cooperation is best built on a voluntary platform, driven by mutual benefits, flexibility, and incentives. Opinions differed about where – if not on provincially-inspired directive intervention – to place the onus: a) some espoused voluntary action emerging from needy local governments themselves; b) others promoted a new role for local government associations in managing structure change; c) still others viewed the issue more in terms of managing the politics of obtaining formal or, more commonly, informal voter consent for structural reform measures.

Downsides and barriers to strengthening the architecture of rural governance systems were also touched upon by participants. Some pointed toward the inadequacy of provincial legislative frameworks either because in their view: a) existing legislation creates unintended barriers for interlocal cooperation, or b) existing legislation fails to lever sound performance out of the rural municipal sector. Thus, some participants called for provincial legislative adjustments where required. Examples cited included introducing comprehensive

¹¹ Participants were asked to reflect on the symposium and to submit three recommendations for strategic change to improve governance in the rural municipal sector – change that could be accomplished: a) by the local government sector working in its own sphere of self-determination; b) by provincial governments working to modify the "architecture" of the system for rural governance; and c) by the municipal and provincial spheres together, working in tandem to improve governance outcomes. Full results are documented (C-SPO, 2009).

frameworks for inter-municipal collaboration under provincial legislation and legislation making comprehensive five-year service and financial plans mandatory. And while encouraging provinces to reinforce the transition toward facilitative modes of intervention, the sometimes achingly slow progress of voluntarism was occasionally cited as a concern.

Possibly as a result of concern over the prospect of glacial progress under purely voluntary reform strategies, some symposium participants appeared to be impressed by Québec's comprehensive rural strategy (QC-MAMROT, 2006), and called for similar action in other provinces. What is attractive about the strategy is its assumption that rural communities have the capacity to take their development into their own hands. According to the Québec ministry, the strategy enables rural communities to put forward initiatives based on their own priorities, is focused on mobilization and partnership, is designed to be flexible, and fosters innovation and support (C-SPO, 2008). Symposium participants saw this strategy as a model for establishing facilitative provincial policy frameworks to guide progress on rural governance reforms while still maintaining the voluntary, facilitative approach that is becoming so valued. As framed by one of the small group panels, propelling reform through strategic frameworks must be "flexible, non-intrusive, and adaptable" (C-SPO, 2009, p. 19).

Interest in improving coordination practices

Symposium participants strongly supported horizontal and vertical coordination or "joined-up governance" but appeared to find tangible evidence of effective coordination practices to be lacking. Joined-up governance has a number of dimensions:

- Horizontal coordination within the local government sector (*interlocal*)
- Vertical coordination between provincial and local governments (*intergovernmental*)
- Horizontal coordination between provincial ministries or departments (*interministry*)

The symposium revealed that local government associations and provinces share a common interest in developing the tools to support interlocal coordination through regionalism, interlocal collaboration and shared service arrangements. This was somewhat surprising in that it points to a role for associations that is beyond their traditional role as advocates for, but not participants in, reform initiatives. At least some local government associations view change management as not purely a provincial role; they saw themselves becoming active in promoting dialogue on improving governance mechanisms. It was seen as a "two-way street" with both provinces and associations benefitting. Participants felt that sharing best practices both within and between provinces would help.

There was agreement that vertical coordination between the provincial governments and local governments is essential. Participants concluded that more effort by the provinces to achieve this is necessary. Symposium participants showed concern that unstable or unpredictable arrangements interfered with achieving common objectives in rural areas, and some believed long-term intergovernmental financial agreements could lessen instability. One example cited was Québec's fiscal and financial partnership (*Partenariat fiscal et financier*). Under this agreement, the province agrees to supplement Québec local government revenues in exchange for intergovernmental agreement on goals.

Symposium participants also agreed that properly designed infrastructure programs can be vital for leveraging regional or interlocal action. Some participants believed that provincial and federal infrastructure funds could be used to promote collaborative action but were not being used effectively. The concern was that traditional programs reinforce atomization and result in locally-oriented or parochial solutions rather than regional or interlocal cooperation. Some participants were attracted to British Columbia's experience in using "smart" grant programs, an example being the implementation of the federal gas tax transfer agreement (where a portion of available funds is dedicated to a "regionally-significant project fund", encouraging infrastructure projects that produce regional as opposed to purely local benefits).

At the same time there was recognition that neither structural reform nor incentives are by themselves sufficient – effective implementation processes are required. Québec's unique approach of bringing provincial, regional and local elected officials together through regional conferences of elected officers (*Conférences régionales des élus*) appeared to be influential among participants. These intergovernmental bodies have the mandate to consult horizontally and vertically to address implementation of agreed objectives (QC-MAMROT, 2011). Generally, participants seemed to form a strong view that provinces needed to focus on improving both intergovernmental and interministry coordination practices and make "joined-up governance" a reality.

In search of effective capacity-building

Symposium participants agreed that rural or rural regional governments are apt to need considerable support to build their capacity to manage change. Capacity building includes providing support through advice, providing data and technical guidelines, information on leading practices, and the training of elected and non-elected officials.

Traditionally, capacity building has been seen as an exclusive responsibility of the provinces. Some symposium participants, however, showed that their thinking is migrating toward the view that local government associations and provinces *together* must take responsibility for capacity building. In addition, the view was expressed that localities must take more responsibility for managing their own internal affairs. This requires local governments to move beyond mere compliance with provincial legislative requirements or policy prescriptions. Symposium participants pointed toward a need for communities themselves to take responsibility for monitoring their health and choosing their responses. Participants viewed Manitoba's self-assessment tool (AMM, 2011), developed as a local / provincial partnership, as a model approach. The online self-assessment tool (search on "tools change municipal health checklist Manitoba") helps Manitoba communities measure five key indicators of local strength or well-being – including indicators such as tax base growth and diversity and community engagement and support.¹²

The symposium discussed a number of actions provinces and local government associations could take to strengthen capacity. For example, participants recommended:

- Leading practice guidance and policy guidelines regarding governance and financial management, especially to assist the most vulnerable centres (one specific need relates to leading practices in the interlocal and intergovernmental domains)
- Easier access to appropriate statistical data (such as data relevant to self-assessment) that is synthesized at an appropriate scale (noting that Canadian data tends not to be aggregated by statistical bodies at a supra-municipal scale)
- Additional stress on supporting rural and rural-regional governments to convert policy into action (recognizing the need for sensitive, place-based adaptations for generic policies)

In all such action spheres, the evidence is that some of the local government associations viewed themselves advancing toward sharing responsibilities (and risks) with the provinces. In Canada, sharing responsibilities in this manner is not an established practice among either the provinces or the associations. That some local government associations are migrating in their thinking is another indicator of the on-going attitudinal shift in provincial-local relations discussed in section 4.

A key component of capacity is leadership, from both elected and non-elected officials. Participants agreed that there is a role both for provinces and local government associations

¹² A good summary of cross-Canada interest in self-assessment is presented on the website of Saskatchewan's local government ministry: www.municipal.gov.sk.ca/MID/Sustainability (retrieved July 2011).

in leadership training. The principal challenge is “leading outward”, building relationships and partnerships with other local governments, provincial and federal governments, and various stakeholders. Participants took notice of British Columbia’s Local Government Leadership Academy (lgl.ca), a partnership of the province, the local government association, and other local government stakeholders.

Conclusion

The diversity of a federated country like Canada challenges universal provincial policy prescriptions for local governments. The success of its provincial governments depends on how well they balance the need to act comprehensively and systematically while dealing thoughtfully with the unique situation of individual local governments. Acting flexibly yet comprehensively will be easier for provinces in Canada that embrace the shift reflected in the New Public Management, the shift away from a traditional top-down approach to administering local government toward a more collaborative, negotiated stewardship of their local government systems. The 2008 symposium on rural local governance reported in this paper yielded valuable insights on practical ways to manage the shift toward collaborative system management.

While the New Public Management remains topical, the fact is that it has been topical for at least two decades – and is no longer especially “new”. In the abstract, it is easy to comprehend the virtue in shifting toward collaborative stewardship. That Canadian practitioners are still struggling, two decades on, to achieve genuinely meaningful forms of collaboration *in practice* is a measure of how difficult it is to change a long-established management culture of unilateralism and replace it with a new philosophy of collaborative system management. It is difficult on many levels: defining the proper set of collaborative mechanisms, reorienting the behaviours of decision-makers and other officials, and sustaining a new culture of collaboration given the volatile and recurrent political and economic pressures that governments routinely face.

Some of the recommendations ventured by symposium participants called for, in a Canadian context, collaboration to an unprecedented degree and depth, going well beyond the mere notion of intergovernmental consultation prior to decision-making. For instance, there were advocates for defining new roles for local government associations, achieved either by intervening in and helping resolve contentious structural problems or by teaming with provinces to set strategic directions for system reforms. Implementing what amounts to a system co-management arrangement would be very difficult in most countries. When faced with an established culture of unilateralism, one is bound to ask whether achieving such a dramatic shift in management philosophy is an attainable goal. There are several reasons to

be wary. For one, a central government might not accept having its freedom of action curtailed under a joint system management scheme. Second, a local government association might actually be reluctant to accept the responsibilities and risks inherent in genuine co-management. Finally, the capacity of local government associations and even some central governments might not be adequate to execute a successful transition.

While the 2008 Canadian symposium sought to identify recommendations for reforming rural governance systems, it did not focus on implementation requirements. Any central government contemplating reforms of the type identified in this analysis will need to develop a resilient change management plan. First, that government will need to launch the transition with clear communication around the vision for and direction of change. Second, the central government will need to carefully shape the institutional environment – engaging with local governments in determining objectives, providing the right legislative framework, using “smart” incentives, furnishing support for capacity building at the central and local government levels, and encouraging tolerance for implementation setbacks. Third, noting that situational readiness will vary from country to country, wise counsel would be to approach implementation in a selective, phased or experimental manner, aiming to build toward a solution in an evolutionary manner. Fourth, any local government association intent on meaningful collaboration will need to consider overhauling its own mandate – given that shared system management implies going beyond the traditional role of advocacy and accepting both the responsibilities and risks inherent in playing an expanded role as a partner in reform. Finally, all participants will face the challenge of developing the requisite skills in leadership and diplomacy.

Disclaimer

* The views expressed are those of the authors and do not reflect the views of the Government of British Columbia, the British Columbia Ministry of Community, Sport & Cultural Development, or any other Canadian official.

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Women in Charge: Politics in a Women Majority Local Council in Australia

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Abstract

The article is based on a study of a local council in Australia where women representatives hold a majority of the seats. How do these representatives understand their role in this context? What is their preferred style of doing politics, and what can explain their political aims and behaviour?

What we find is that these women representatives are oriented toward green politics and prefer deliberative decision-making. This case study of a local council in Queensland suggests that the political objectives and style of women representatives largely reflect the specific local context, the electoral system and the political composition of the council, and not just the fact that women hold more than 70% of the seats. However, women representatives do feel that “numbers matter” for their ability to be acting out “who they are” in politics.

Key words: local government, women councillors, gendered politics, political styles.

1. Introduction

Women are under-represented in the parliaments of all advanced democracies (IPU 2012). Such gender inequality is also prevalent in the lower tiers of government, but usually not as pervasively (Stokes 2005; Vengroff, Nyiri, and Fugiero 2003). There is, however, an influx of women in elected assemblies, accompanied by raising expectations of what they can achieve as representatives. Are they really making a difference? Some are hoping that stronger female representation will alter the nature of politics and the prevailing competitive political culture; others that it will bring typical women’s interests onto the agenda.

Research suggests that women politicians have other priorities than men, they are more intent on reaching agreement, more polite and collegiate and more inclined to cooperate across political divisions (Bochel and Briggs 2000; Buckley 1997; Childs 2004; Mackay 2001; Norris 1996; Thomas 1994). Such differences in political aims and behaviour may be explained by institutional factors such as party structure and election rules, by individual interests or by what can be called a patriarchal political culture. Or they may simply be down to the lower number of women representatives. It has therefore been suggested that women are likely to make a difference once they constitute a certain proportion of parliamentary representatives (Kanter 1977).

One would therefore expect women representatives in an advanced democracy like Australia to make a difference in politics when their numbers increase so as to constitute a critical mass (Dahlerup 1988; Kanter 1977). In Australia this point may have been reached as female representation at the federal level is 30% (as of 2008), and around 30-35 per cent at the state and territory level.¹³ Still, we would certainly expect women to make a difference *when they are in majority*. Our case – to be detailed below - is thus an excellent example at the local level, as the local council studied here has a women's majority of over 70 per cent. It also has a female mayor.

It is somewhat puzzling that women in *local* politics have received little scholarly attention compared to women in national politics (Stokes 2005) since decentralised institutions – being closer to their constituencies - are expected to be more open to women (Johnson, Kabuchu, and Kayonga 2003; Neyland and Tucker 1996). By studying this rather special case we hope to shed some light on the implications of extensive women's representation in local government. Are there any changes in the style of doing politics and in public policies that can be attributed to a women majority? How do these representatives understand their political roles and to what extent are they making a difference?

2. Making a Difference

“Our” local council is part of a majority rule-based institutional structure, where decision-making is often characterized by confrontation, competition, bargaining and log-rolling (Sawer 2002). Political attitudes and political processes are, however, often believed to be influenced by the *sheer number* of women representatives, and research has focused on the connection between the increasing number of women in political assemblies and changes in political behaviour, institutions and public policies. Large numbers are said to influence women's potential to represent women (Celis 2006; Mansbridge 1999; Phillips 1995; Young

¹³ Data from “Public Administration Group, Parliamentary Library”

1997, 2000). A fair amount of “descriptive representation”, i.e. where representatives stand for a group with which they share certain characteristics such as class, race, gender, is believed to improve “substantive representation”, where representatives act on behalf of their group (Childs 2003; Dovi 2002). Substantive representation is about the “deeds” of elected representatives, rather than their identities. Substantive representation requires action (Tremblay 2006), in the sense that women politicians are expected not only to stand *as* women, but also to act *for* women as a group when elected (Lovenduski and Norris 2003; Pitkin 1967).

The importance of a certain number of women in political assemblies is often emphasized by advocates of electoral reforms and in debates about women’s representation. Women’s equal right to participate in public decision-making with men is seen as justice; the absence of women from parliamentary positions is a consequence of direct or indirect discrimination (Phillips 1995; Sawer 2002) and the wish that women will make a difference in politics is on the agenda of women’s movements (Dahlerup 2006).

The critical mass – or tipping point – is understood to be around 15–30%; from here on women are expected to make a difference (see Childs and Krook 2006). Kanter (1977) makes conjectures regarding the growing number of women in corporate life: women would be potential allies and thus affect the culture of the group and will appear more differentiated from another. The theory of critical mass is, however, strongly contested by researchers like Childs & Krook (2006), Grey (2006), Tremblay (2006) and Dahlerup (2006).¹⁴ Factors like political positions, time in office, personal opinions and party ideology, electoral systems, reactions to women in office, complexity of power relations and the like, also matter. The debates surrounding the critical mass theory, however contested, identify several changes that might follow from a more balanced gender representation (Dahlerup 1988), giving us ideas of what can be expected in a female majority council. These include changes in the style of doing politics, changes of policy, changes in the reaction to women politicians and increase in the power of women. We limit our discussion to some of the key assumptions in the women and politics literature about changes in the style of doing politics and changes of policy (Table 1). We will also address some of the possible hurdles for “women making a difference” in this electoral system and local context.

¹⁴ They argue that most important for substantive representation are critical *acts*, not numbers. There are difficulties in isolating the effect of an increased share of women from what happens outside the political arena, and only when it comes to changes in the social climate of the institutions one can expect a change. Only one woman present could make such changes occur .

Table 1. Assumptions about women making a difference and expected characteristics

Women making a difference	Assumption	Characteristics expected
The style of doing politics	Deliberative rather than competitive	Political culture based on consensus and inclusion An “expressive” dimension: debating in the public sphere is personally rewarding
Policy aims	Care aspect in policies Feminist concerns from the concrete conditions of women lives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Issues of maternity - Care for weaker groups - Helping other women - Helping other female politicians

Changes in the style of doing politics: It is suggested that women’s socialisation and caring roles will make them approach politics as a matter of consultation and consensus-seeking rather than one of confrontation typical of Westminster-style parliaments (Sawer 2002). Empirical support can be found in interview-based studies (Black and Phillips 2000; Henderson 1999; Sawer 2002) indicating that women MPs would like to replace what Sawer (2002:7) calls a “masculine parliamentary culture” with more consensus-based politics at the state and territory level in Australia. Research suggests that women politicians are more intent on reaching agreement, more polite and collegiate and more inclined to cooperate across political divisions (Bochel and Briggs 2000; Buckley 1997; Childs 2004; Mackay 2001; Norris 1996; Thomas 1994).

The deliberative style of politics implied by this consensus orientation (Bohman and Rehg 1997; Gutman and Thompson 2004; Habermas 1996) is held to have an individual dimension insofar as the political debates are ends in themselves and debating in a public sphere is considered rewarding (Arendt 1958). It is rewarding to be able to express, on equal terms, who you are and what can be done. Political activity is valued because it enables each citizen to exercise his or her powers of agency, and because it enables citizens to develop capacities for judgment and to decide about matters by acting “in concert” in political life.

Changes of policy: Women are, regarded a heterogenic group, assumed to have certain distinct policy priorities (Swers 1998; Thomas and Welch 2001). Research has shown that women’s interests often involve feminist concerns and that these interests are contextual as they involve “practical” aims emerging from the conditions of women’s lives (Celis 2008; Molyneux 1985). What women’s interests are and how they are promoted depend on women’s experiences and will differ among cultures, classes, periods and contexts. But what might the group interests be? They will vary, but we might identify some. They are often

assumed to include issues of maternity, child care, safety, women's access to employment and pay on equal terms – so that women are not punished for parenthood and remain autonomous (Lister 1995; Phillips 1995, 1998; Wängnerud 2000). Here research shows that many female parliamentarians feel an obligation to represent women (Carroll 2002; Reingold 2000; Skjeie 1998), and that women representatives act on behalf of other women, by helping women into political positions, promoting feminist values, addressing problems and aspirations connected to women's lives and intervening on behalf of women (Celis 2006, 2008; Molyneux 1985; Skjeie 1998; Thomas and Welch 2001).

There are, however, several barriers that may hinder women from making a difference in this respect. Here it is relevant to shed some light on the possible effects of the electoral system.

Constraints of political institutions

The policies that a women politician can pursue are restricted by the contexts in which they operate. Here, it is particularly relevant to mention the local government's authority and the scope and magnitude of its tasks. It is also relevant to point out that the electoral system in which they operate might influence how they act as representatives and what interests they promote. In systems of proportional representation (PR), and multi-member constituencies, the election is contested by a number of candidates from different parties and seats are allocated in accordance with the proportion of the votes won. The representational functions are less tied to a geographically defined constituency, and there is more scope for the representation of broader interests, including issues of equal opportunity for women and minorities (Sawer 1998; Tremblay 2006). In majority systems representation is more about defending and promoting the interests of a specific electoral district (Tremblay 2006). The particular context here is a majority electoral system with preferential voting and two political blocs competing for seats (Table 2). This is a variant of the previously mentioned Westminster-type parliament system, and thus with a historically embedded confrontational style of politics that could prove difficult to change.

Table 2. Assumptions about constraints in case study local government electoral system

Political institutional constraints	Assumption	Characteristics expected
Majority system	Representatives promote interests associated with her electoral district This is a confrontational type of parliament	Women do not perceive themselves as "women interest politicians" Path dependency in style of politics

The Institutional Architecture of Local Councils in Australia

The Federal and State governments wield vast powers as regulators of local governments. Issues of health and child care for example are not the responsibility of local government in Australia.¹⁵ Local governments are set up by state (Queensland) legislation and are financed by the State and Federal governments. Traditionally, local councils have provided services such as roads, water and sewage, but are increasingly involved in the social, economic and cultural development of their communities. They work on improving quality of life, sustainability and prosperity of their regions. Councils try to encourage and attract industry, create jobs and build infrastructure. They are also responsible for regulating activities that affect the quality of the environment and to contribute to the overall welfare of the community.

Australia has seven systems of local government with different electoral systems, some first past-the post, some preferential and some proportional representation. Local governments are elected for a fixed four-year term and voting is mandatory.

In Queensland, the 2008 situation was that 51 of 73 councils were 'undivided' with "First Past the Post" voting elections for mayors and councillors, while 22 councils had single member electoral divisions with "Optional Preferential"¹⁶ elections for mayors and councillors (Hoffman 2008). It is common in some states that candidates run on party tickets (especially Green and Labour) and 'how to vote' cards are issued with teams of endorsed candidates. It is also common that candidates are endorsed and funded for election by affiliated party members, and there is a long history of connectedness between local government elections and political party politics. As (economic) development is a key issue for all local governments it is always high on the electoral agenda and closely related to the Commonwealth governmental politics and platforms. .

¹⁵ Australia is a federation with six states and two territories (which latter are under the control of the Federal Parliament). State parliaments are subject to the national Constitution as well as their state constitutions and the federal law overrides any state law not consistent with it. The two levels of government cooperate in many areas where states and territories are formally responsible, such as education, transport, and health and law enforcement. Income tax is levied federally.

¹⁶ "Optional Preferential Voting": This system gives voters opportunity to rank candidates in order of preference (1, 2, 3, and so on). To win, a candidate must obtain a majority (more than half) of total formal votes in the count. This is different to first-past-the-post voting, where electors do not express preferences beyond a first choice and where a candidate wins if she or he gains more votes than any other candidate.

4. The case and its context

The case study is a municipality divided into separate divisions using the Optional Preferential Voting system. The research is undertaken in the period of 2009-2011 and is part of a Norwegian research council project about local government leadership.¹⁷ The empirical data are based on interviews with eight of the ten local councillors and the mayor; six women representatives (subsequently referred to as w1, 2, 3,4, 5 & 6), two men (subsequently referred to as m7 & 8) and the female mayor. To understand the history and context of this particular council, I interviewed two administrators, made one on-site observation of a council meeting and read official reports and media articles. The male councillors were interviewed in order to gain a broader understanding of policy formation and political attitudes (Considine and Deutchman 1996). The interviews took 1-2 hours, and some people were contacted several times. The interviews were tailored to the special gender composition in this local government and contained a set of questions about their tasks and concerns, their motivations for joining politics, the political decision-making procedures, their feelings about working in a council with a majority of women councillors, and their understanding of women's issues and concerns in this particular context. Representatives with experience from previous councils were asked about this. I also did a comprehensive study of council minutes, policy documents and management plans and reports to get "thicker knowledge" and to strengthen the reliability of the empirical findings. To strengthen reliability further, each of those interviewed was given the opportunity to respond to a résumé of the empirical findings.

In Queensland, 30% of all elected local councillors and 15% of mayors are women (2008-2012). The population of this particular Australian municipality numbers more than 100,000 of which about 2,000 are identified as indigenous. The current population is about four times larger than 25 years ago and is expected to grow rapidly over the next 20 years. A growing proportion of new residents are retirees from other parts of the nation. The climate is pleasant. The municipality has a natural environment of ecological significance with populations of wild koalas, biologically diverse wildlife and a bay of high recreational and ecological value. It also contains islands with beautiful beaches. The municipality is situated on the outskirts of a large city (about an hour's drive away) and 60% of the workers commute daily. Small businesses and retailers are the most important employers, and there is a range of industries including sand mining, food processing, agriculture and specialist manufacturing. Tourism is currently of minor importance.

¹⁷ NFR project: "De-collectivisation of decision-making and the decline of a local mandate".

Politically, the main cleavage is between the “pro-development” and “community based” camps. However, most of the representatives did not hold political party membership; they campaigned for themselves and their team of candidates in their divisions and answered directly to their constituencies. The council mayors usually campaign against one or several mayoral candidates, and are elected by the constituency in the entire municipality. One councillor is elected from each of its ten divisions. Campaign methods include knocking on doors, setting up stands at the ferry landing and in shopping centres, setting up web-sites, putting up posters in gardens, making statements in the local newspaper etc. Every candidate makes a point of making themselves visible and well known. They therefore put in appearances at community gatherings, campaign for their candidacy, organise and attend public meetings, and join public interest and action groups. Once elected, they make sure they can easily be accessed.

The previous council (2004–2008) was chaired by a male and the majority of the councillors were men and belonged to the pro-development camp, which also included a female representative. In that period the smaller community-based faction wielded little power. Prominent issues in the 2008 election campaign included the environment, population growth, development and rates reform. Protection of the remaining wild koalas was also a big issue, as was the need to improve the infrastructure on some of the municipality’s islands. A special interest organisation, an alliance of local residents and community groups, launched a campaign against the sitting pro-development councillors, focusing on the need to slow down, take stock and consider the consequences of the urban development taking place in the shire. It did not, however, campaign on behalf of specific candidates. The election of March 2008 led to the “community based” female majority council studied (Table 3). Most of the representatives are members of local green groups like “koala care” or “bush care”. The pro-development faction in the council is very small and has never included more than a few women.

Table 3. Overview of council representatives, gender, fraction and experience

Representatives	Gender	Fraction	Experience
Mayor	Woman	Community based	No
w1	Woman	Community based	Yes
w2	Woman	Community based	No
w3	Woman	Community based	No
w4	Woman	Community based	Yes
w5	Woman	Community based	Yes
w6	Woman	Pro development	Yes
w7	<i>Woman*</i>	<i>Community based</i>	<i>No</i>
m8	Man	Community based	Yes
m9	Man	Community based	Yes
<i>m10</i>	<i>Man*</i>	<i>Pro development</i>	<i>Yes</i>

*Not interviewed¹⁸

Today, eight of the ten representatives and the mayor are women (73%). All councillors work full time and are aged from “40-something” to “60-something.” Most are married, a few have higher education and their work experience ranges from small businesses, private companies, and tourism to teaching and other public services. Most of them (four women and three men) sat on the previous council, but the female mayor is a “freshman”, highly experienced in the field of education and government.

Policies and objectives

The current council was elected in March 2008 and the development of a new community plan was embarked upon later that year. This plan includes values that guide most of the council’s work and capture its visions for the next 20 years. It has involved popular participation and community engagement. The impact of a growing population on the environment, lifestyle, land use and infrastructure are addressed throughout the plan. It is based around eight prospective outcomes: healthy natural environment; green living; embracing the bay; support local indigenous cultural heritage; wise planning and design; supportive vibrant economy; strong and connected communities, and inclusive and ethical governance.

The council is an environmentally conscious assembly. It stopped some developmental projects when it took over and rapidly made plans for vegetation protection, biodiversity and strategies to protect the endangered koalas. The councillors label their assembly a “green” one. This does not mean they want to conserve everything at any cost but they do want “a balanced development” (mayor). Such development should not, however, take place at the

¹⁸ Two of these two representatives were not available for interview: one male councillor had left the council because of a new commission, and one of the woman representatives (a “freshman”) was unable to engage because of personal reasons.

expense of the environment or jeopardize the welfare of citizens. The council wants to create new jobs locally: “We need to get business opportunities and work locally. We want to encourage people to work locally. We do not want all this commuting” (statement from w1, all interviews confirmed this). Councillors want to slow population growth to avoid harming the environment, degradation of the bay and further loss of koalas. This was an important part of the policy platform of the community-based faction that currently holds the majority of seats. This community-based orientation seems to be gaining ground in this fast-growing part of Queensland as neighbouring councils seem to face many of the same challenges.

“Our” council is different from the previous one in setting the preservation of wildlife firmly on the agenda and in writing environment friendly policies into council plans. Renewable energy, a policy for senior citizens and the problem of greenhouse gas emissions are also on the agenda.

The council deals with issues common to local governments all over Queensland as well as specific local challenges. The council’s tasks are “the important smaller matters” of society and these are not very different from those facing previous councils (data from council meeting minutes 2007-2011). At the time of the research the council was discussing closure of pathways, instalment of local area traffic management and speed regulations as well as traffic safety measures. Water supply and waste, development applications and regulation of building sites and the dedication of land for road purposes and sporting facilities were also on the agenda. The council discussed pet policy and graffiti problems and was developing a range of reports, strategies and policy documents on these and other issues such as storm hazards, tourism, physical health, festivals, asset management and senior strategies (council minutes). In 2011 they had 30 strategies, about 100 official policy documents and 27 management plans.

Some projects are given special priority. The council wants to cooperate with the state in order to fund the refurbishment of an important harbour, upgrade the roads on one of the islands, and improve sustainable transport (busses, bike and pedestrian paths). They also want to improve health conditions in some of the (aboriginal) island communities that have lower social, health and economic status, by providing a Health and Wellbeing Hub and Justice and Domestic Violence Centre. They are lobbying the State to get funding for this. Issues of particular interest and importance to the indigenous population are higher on the agenda than ever before. Attitudes towards the indigenous people, the local aboriginals, have changed, and the council flies the aboriginal flag together with the state and national flag outside the council building. They acknowledge and pay tribute to “those who were here

first” in public speeches and include aboriginal interests in action plans for culture. They are engaged in discussions about an Indigenous Knowledge Centre, and in negotiations on an indigenous land-use agreement.

The council has also made an agreement with a smaller town on traineeship for a handful of young indigenous people. They have made a special policy document on Indigenous community policy, where the municipality commits itself to acknowledge and support local Indigenous cultural heritage, practice and protocols, and recognise and respect cultural rights. The aboriginals are to be included in decision making processes about their people and country. “All agree to acknowledge them; anything else would be politically incorrect” (w2). The council has also worked with a Child-Friendly Cities project and policy document. Here they commit to ensuring an organisational culture which is open to new ideas and to contributions from children and young people as well as to the nurturing of projects which demonstrate child and youth friendly principles, operations and design. The council will be working to support the city’s ambition to be a great place for children to grow-up, and a place where young people develop a strong local identity and are connected to their local communities.

Many councillors see a potential in small-scale sustainable tourism and clean manufacturing, as well as in services for the increasing proportion of retirees and the educational sector, but they do not want more retailing. They also agree that infrastructure problems related to building sites should be sorted out before any new development can take place. Traffic safety around schools is also a concern, as are the preservation of open spaces and the development of good communities.

All informants stress the importance of ensuring that women have the opportunity to enter politics, and most of them see female representation as of the utmost importance. The women councillors generally encourage other women to stand for election, but “not in this council” – they don’t want an all-female council. Two of the women (w2 and w6), however, do not see gender as particularly important when it comes to representation in local government. They look at personal character rather than gender, and think that the best person – be it a man or a woman – should be encouraged to run for office. However, on this point all councillors agree that there is *no* gendered politics in the council. They regard themselves as representatives of their constituencies and want to speak for everyone there. They find personal joy and fulfilment in this work and believe that they are promoting policies that benefit the community as such. They are accessible to everyone and do not give

the women in their district undue precedence. “We are not women’s interests’ representatives and I and my colleges are on equal footing with male representatives” (w2).

The decision-making process

According to experienced councillors, the present council’s proceedings differ from those of its predecessor. “The previous council was like an auction, now we talk things out. May be too much, but we get things done (w1).” “It is a softer debate with a lot less pressure. This council is more about consensus - it is less aggressive than before (w3)”. “People tend to be less combative and listen more” (m7). “When we were four women we were probably closer, one cannot be that close with 8 people. But we are a lot happier than we were, even if we do not have the closeness” (w1).

The women councillors, all except one, think it is important “to come to the bottom of things” and “want to tell the whole story”. They think it is important to thoroughly consider how their decisions may affect children, parents, friends and even future generations. They listen even when they disagree. “We got to tell the whole story and that takes a bit longer. They [the men] want to go straight to the point, we want to ensure that everyone understands what goes with it” (w4). The men would like to speed up decision making and conclude as soon as there is a sense of agreement but at the same time the male councillors also say that, “you can be a male and still be consensus driven” (m7). The men think it is OK to work with so many women. “It is not like a woman’s world,” (m8).

All councillors feel they have a voice; no one thinks of themselves as spectators at a show. “We always include all councillors in all discussions” (mayor). The mayor is considered to be a consensus-oriented leader, she tries to include everybody, making an effort to have all councillors agree to decisions (seven of eight representatives emphasised this in interviews). She would like to do even more to reach consensus. They all say that men and women on this council work as a team and have the same priorities, by and large. They can discuss things with colleagues and get help from one another. “We disagree sometimes, but meet up and have a coffee,” (w1 and w5) said in the interviews. This is a relatively closely knit group of female councillors even though opinions and interests differ to some degree. With so many women the council becomes an even playing field. “We fight a bit amongst ourselves now. It is a bit different because some of us are ‘greener’ (more radically environmental concerned) than others. But generally we agree in the end” (w1).

This is a council whose members enjoy their work. They feel respected and believe that their work is important and makes a difference. The women on the council insist that it is their policies and their ability as politicians – not their gender - that have got them elected.

5. Discussion

Local governments are vital democratic arenas that deal with the everyday concerns of their communities, as well as challenges pertaining to social, economic and cultural development. However, in Australia local councils do not engage as much in the traditional care tasks – like kindergartens, schools and health services – as the other levels of government.

Environmental protection is top of the councillors' list of political priorities. When they voice their environmental concerns their arguments are firmly anchored in the local context, which is one where developmental and environmental challenges and problems loom large. In the Queensland council studied here, the basic argument is that there has been too much development, the koalas are dying and the bush is being destroyed. Ultimately, both the people and the environment suffer. The female representatives do not find their concern for the environment to be gender specific, and point out that the local koala and bush care groups show that being green is not a gendered value. They are environmentally conscious because the quality of the environment is important for the community they represent. Politics, they believe, is about communities, not gender. Environmental protection was at the core of their political platform. The challenges they deal with affect all, or most, citizens, and only indirectly the concrete conditions of women's lives. Their green politics and environmental concerns will, in other words, benefit the entire community, and two of the three men on the council have joined this political platform. The large number of women in the community-based fraction of this council (7 out of the 8 women representatives) is a clear testament to the appeal of environmental values to women.

The care aspect is reflected in the council's attention to "green values", and in other policy priorities. The council has for instance committed itself to acknowledge and support aboriginal cultural heritage, to include aboriginals in decision-making and negotiate about land rights. Elements of care are also embedded in traffic regulations, policy documents on the rights and welfare of indigenous people, strategies for senior citizens and health and youth policies. This would be the right thing to do in most communities and it is certainly regarded as the proper thing to do *here*. Some measures, like helping other women into politics and the health hub and domestic violence centre, have been identified (but not yet implemented) and can indeed be characterised as "women's concerns" and to be "acting for other women".

On the other hand, most of the tasks of this council are those usually delegated to this tier of government; maintenance of roads and pathways, traffic management and speed regulations, water supply and waste. Building regulations and development loom large on the agenda, as does the making of strategies and policy documents. The “acting for other women element” cannot be said to be dominant in the work of this particular council as it deals mostly with assigned tasks and local challenges. This, of course, is what local councils do and always have done. The councillors do have a general caring attitude embedded in various policy fields, but this might not have been much different with men “in charge”. We cannot assume that male representatives do not value care, and there is certainly a political risk in reducing women’s political careers to issues of care (MacGregor 2004). There is a change in policies but this seems to have more to do with the general support for the community-based political platform than with the female majority on the council.

The fact that female representatives take a broader perspective and do not act as “women’s interest politicians” is what one would expect, given this particular electoral system, where each councillor represents a municipal division and a community-based platform. When it comes to policy, the council is split in two political factions, one “pro-development” and one “community-based”, and each member has been elected by a simple majority. Those elected will thus feel obliged to represent the entire citizenry within their district, in accordance with the political platform on which they were elected. In other words one may argue that it is difficult for a council member to favour women (or any other group) in the Australian local government system. This may be different in PR-systems where values and groups, not particular divisions, are represented by a variety of political parties.

The style of doing politics is very different from that of the previous council. The new councillors have established a deliberative and consensus oriented political culture (summarised in Table 4). This particular council is a deliberative assembly bent on improving the quality of political decision-making. The policy process is well-informed, all opinions are heard, information is thorough and members respect each other. The decision-making process underpins the legitimacy of policies and decisions, honours relevant knowledge and requires justification, encourages public-spirited perspectives, and helps council members earn the respect of those they represent. Policies are intended to serve “the common good” – or the community as such - of which women’s concerns are crucial elements.

Table 4: Overview of findings in the case study local council

	Characteristics expected	Findings
The style of doing politics	Political culture based on consensus and inclusion An “expressive” dimension: debating in the public sphere is personally rewarding	Confirmed: a clear shift Confirmed: they feel that they can act out “who they are” more than ever
Policy aims	Issues of maternity Care for weaker groups Helping other women Helping other female politicians	Less: this is somewhat addressed, but less a local government task Confirmed: care for environment is the core element of policy. Also attention to less privileged groups Less: but feminist concern plans are made Confirmed
Political institutional constraints	Women do not perceive themselves as “women interest politicians” Path dependency in style of politics	Confirmed No

Group interests are articulated in council deliberations, and knowledge is brought into policy discussions. However, the focus on overall integration implies that group interests (those of women included) have to be toned down in favour of what is perceived as common, or community, interests. A deliberative, consensus-seeking political culture is based on an assumption of homogeneity of interests; its procedures demand a common understanding of problems and consensus on solutions, something that will favour incremental change rather than large steps in a “women friendly” direction.

Preserving a consensus-oriented culture and a deliberative approach to policy-making is made easy because the council is less spilt than ever. Given more diversity - of opinions, objectives and interests - decision-making would probably be an entirely different ball game. Personalities matter too, as this form of decision-making depends on most councillors being willing to comply with deliberative procedures, at least to a certain degree.

Nevertheless, the political process in a deliberative setting like this does involve more than self-interested competition governed by bargaining and log-rolling (Bohman and Rehg 1997). A conception of politics as confrontational and competitive invites us to see the policy process as a high level battle between political factions, where consensus is difficult, if not impossible. Interests may even be totally absent from the agenda (Bachrach and Baratz 1962). If so, gender equality and issues that typically concern women can easily fail to gain a

place on the agenda in both consensus-oriented and competitive systems of political decision-making.

Deliberation and consensus-seeking is the preferred style of politics, and this seems to have had some positive effects for the atmosphere; the female majority on this particular council has made the atmosphere more relaxed, and strengthened the ability of female councillors to express their opinions and what they believe is right and fair. This has proved very rewarding for them personally and encouraged further political engagement on their part. The difference and main “gain” for them seems to be that they feel at ease, that they are taken seriously and can act out “who they really are” in politics. This “expressive side” to political participation is highlighted and makes these women thrive, especially those with experience from the male-dominated councils of the past. This clearly indicates that numbers do matter for the women themselves. It is reasonable to assume that this particular council “is perceived as it is” by the women themselves chiefly because they command such a vast majority.

6. Concluding remarks

This is a “special case”, a particular situation where women hold a large majority in a local political body in a well-established democracy. The case is unique and hardly tells the whole story of (local) politics. It does, however, give us some ideas about what women can do when in majority in an Australian local government.

The empirical findings from this case are that this “female council” is an environmentally friendly one promoting green issues on behalf of the community. The imperative of “acting for other women” – is not pursued with any strength or conviction. There are some women-friendly policies and some caring aspects embedded in their policies, but these might not have been much different if men were “in charge”. The change in policies seems to have more to do with the strength and pervasiveness of the community-based political platform than a female majority. This council has also changed its ways of doing democratic politics, from something akin to an “auction” to a more deliberative and consensus oriented style. However, these particular ways of doing politics are not necessarily gender-specific; they may also be attributed to the balance of political factions. But it is certainly what these women prefer, and they take their work as politicians very seriously. They do, however, insist that they are not women representatives; they want to be valued as politicians in their own right. This is what one would expect within an electoral system that encourages candidates to broaden their appeal and makes them accountable to the entire constituency and the community as such. On the other hand there is no denying that the women enjoy

their majority as their sheer number has made the atmosphere less confrontational and strengthened their ability to express their opinions and beliefs.

The overall conclusion is that the way women will make an impact is likely to be contextually contingent. The fact that this particular council exists in a specific context of developmental challenges and is constituted by a specific electoral system has implications for what it does and how it performs. Women representatives do not always want the “women-interest politician” label, either because of personal or political convictions or because it is not gaining their interests as professionals who repeatedly are seeking re-election. The assumption that women will make a difference when it comes to changed policies therefore takes a normative twist as it is placing an additional “load” on the shoulders of women representatives. Such expectations may make women more reluctant to stand forward as candidates, even if they believe they could change politics for the better. Maybe it is sufficient to insist that women should be strongly represented in politics because they constitute half of the population (the justice argument) in the demands for increased women’s representation.

Further research about elected women in local government is needed, in particular comparisons that consider the effects of different contexts, interest based politics and electoral systems. The era of this particular women council is over, as only four women got a seat in the 2012 election. There is however a new female mayor and there was nearly as many female candidates as male candidates running for seats. The new local government is “pro-development”.

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Governing carbon mitigation and climate change within local councils: A Case Study of Adelaide, South Australia

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Abstract

There is growing concern about climate change impacts on local government areas. In Australia, the federal carbon tax (from 1 July 2012) will also increase costs for local councils. This paper evaluates what carbon mitigation (i.e. energy, water, and waste management) actions have been implemented by metropolitan Adelaide councils (n=14) and why (or why not). A survey of environmental officers profiled carbon mitigation actions, emissions auditing, and motives for emissions reduction by Adelaide councils. The main reasons for adopting carbon actions were a climate change plan, climate leadership, and cost savings. Internal council governance of climate change actions was also evaluated. A climate governance framework based on adaptive management, communication, and reflective practice (Nursey-Bray 2010) was applied to assess climate mitigation by Adelaide councils.

Keywords: carbon mitigation, climate governance, local councils, Adelaide, South Australia

1. Introduction

Climate change impacts and carbon mitigation initiatives are key issues for local government (ALGA, 2009, 2010a, b). In this paper, 'Mitigation involves taking actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions being emitted to minimise the impact from climate change' (QLGA, 2009, p. 58). In Australia, local governments that exceed an emissions threshold of 25,000tCO₂-e, mainly from landfill emissions, are legally required to report their emissions under the *National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting Act 2007*. Local councils are also liable for fugitive emissions (over 25,000tCO₂-e), from uncapped landfills and from stationary energy under the *Clean Energy Act 2011* (Tax Ed, 2011). The associated carbon tax of \$23tCO₂-e, set by the Australian federal government and effective from 1 July 2012, will also increase council costs for electricity, gas, fuel and materials. Local councils are thus implementing eco-efficiency measures in energy, water and waste management to reduce operating costs, meet state government targets, and address liability for carbon emissions.

This paper reports on carbon mitigation actions adopted by the 14 Greater Adelaide councils in the wider metropolitan region of Adelaide and adjacent Adelaide Hills in South Australia. It begins by reviewing carbon programmes implemented by the Local Government Association of South Australia (LGASA), and then presents survey results profiling carbon mitigation actions, emissions auditing, climate governance, and motives for emissions reduction by Adelaide councils. This paper focuses on how local councils internally govern and implement climate change mitigation. It uses local government and local councils as equivalent terms.

Climate change and carbon mitigation are growing issues for Australian local government (Nurse-Bray, 2010; Pillora, 2011). Local government strategies and reports include advice and case studies on greenhouse gas mitigation for local councils (ICLEI, 2008; QLGA, 2009; ALGA, 2010a, b, 2011). During 1997 to 2009, some 238 Australian local councils participated in the 'ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability'¹⁹ *Cities for Climate Protection* (CCP) programme by recording emissions data and analysing the carbon footprint of council operations and local communities. New South Wales has surveyed local government needs in responding to climate change adaptation and mitigation (LGSA, 2006, 2010; Urbis, 2010). However, there is limited research on climate change mitigation actions by local government, apart from case studies of greenhouse gas reduction initiatives by CCP participants and other councils (Atkinson et al, 2007; ALGA, 2009; Hoff, 2010; ACELG, 2011; Pillora, 2011). In Queensland, one report has reviewed mitigation actions by selected south eastern local councils, prior to council amalgamations in 2008 (Burton, 2005, 2007), while a local government manual outlines climate mitigation actions for councils (LGAQ, 2009).

Research on carbon mitigation by local government includes climate change law and liability (England, 2008); methodologies to assess carbon emissions (Hamilton et al, 2008); climate change governance (Nurse-Bray, 2010); and an evaluation of carbon actions adopted by local councils in the CCP programme (Hoff, 2010). Hoff's (2010) review of carbon mitigation actions implemented by CCP councils in Australia and New Zealand found:

- 47% of councils had a climate change action plan; 36% had a cross-departmental plan,
- 94% of councils incorporated their climate change plan into a long term strategic plan,
- 76% of councils prioritised reductions of greenhouse gas emissions in action plans,
- 68% of councils provided climate change education for schools and citizen groups,
- 63% of councils created positions such as a climate change officer/energy manager, and
- 21% of councils had a specific division responsible for climate change actions.

¹⁹ ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability was founded in 1990 as the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives

Prior research examines carbon reduction initiatives adopted by one local council, reports on the outcomes of specific carbon programmes such as CCP (Hoff, 2010), or evaluates organisational responses to climate change by local government within one state (e.g. NSW in 2006, 2009 and 2010). There has been limited comparison of specific carbon mitigation actions adopted by a range of local councils or critical evaluation of climate change governance within councils. A study of Tasmanian council managers found key issues with climate change governance included uncertainty, communicating climate science to ratepayers, and developing institutional arrangements. A climate governance framework for local government thus needed to include three key dimensions: adaptive management, communications, and reflexive practice (Nurse-Bray, 2010). This paper evaluates climate governance within 14 local councils across the metropolitan area of Adelaide, the capital city of South Australia (SA).

This research focuses on climate change mitigation by local government (ACSBD, 2011). Its main aims are to:

- review and benchmark carbon mitigation measures implemented by local councils;
- evaluate motives for carbon emissions measures adopted by different local councils;
- identify key council staff and divisions responsible for climate change mitigation; and
- assess opportunities for local councils in sustainable technologies, renewable energy.

This paper explores the premise that similar to greening businesses, key motivations for ecological responsiveness by local councils are competitiveness, legitimacy, and social responsibility (Bansal and Roth, 2000). It also assesses the adoption of adaptive management, communication and reflective practice in climate change governance (Nurse-Bray, 2010) by Adelaide councils. The next section reviews carbon mitigation programmes by the Local Government Association of South Australia as a context for the survey of Adelaide councils.

2. Local Government Association of South Australia

The Local Government Association of South Australia (LGASA) has proactively led carbon mitigation measures for SA councils (Table 1). Key policy guidelines on mitigation actions by SA councils are outlined in the *LGASA climate change strategy 2008-2012* (LGASA, 2008a), and the *South Australian local government sector agreement – climate change* (LGASA, 2008b). These LGASA mitigation programmes address the climate change and carbon reduction actions in *South Australia's greenhouse strategy 2007-2020* (Government of SA, 2007); State government targets for climate action in *South Australia's strategic plan 2011* updated from 2007 (Government of SA Plan, 2011), and *A renewable energy plan for South Australia* (Government of SA, 2011).

The abatement goals for the State of South Australia include targets for emissions reduction, renewable energy, GreenPower, energy efficiency and zero waste (Table 1). The LGASA has set a target since 2007 for SA local councils to purchase at least 20% GreenPower. Some 38 councils opted to procure 20% GreenPower electricity in 2007 (LGASA, 2007). Carbon reduction goals are also included in: *The 30-year plan for Greater Adelaide*, and Adelaide Green City Sector Agreement (Government of SA, 2009, 2010). Seven Adelaide councils have climate change strategies (e.g. Adelaide City, Norwood, Payneham and St Peters, Onkaparinga, Port Adelaide Enfield, Salisbury, Tea Tree Gully, and Unley) with five included in this current study.

Table 1: Carbon mitigation programmes (LGASA) and greenhouse gas targets, South Australia

Carbon mitigation programmes for councils by LGASA

- climate change survey (2007)
- climate change summit, energy and carbon footprint audit survey (2008)
- renewable energy forum; update on NGERs reporting; (2009)
- Mutual Liability Scheme Climate Change Adaptation Programme (2009)
- briefing papers on carbon offsets for local government (2009/10)
- emissions measurement and management course, discussion paper on sustainable public lighting (2010)
- energy and climate change web survey, report about solar PV on council infrastructure (2010)
- EnergyMark trial report on household energy use (Mendham et al, 2010)
- Solar Councils Innovation Fund; Clean Energy Future update; carbon tax package update (2011)
- carbon tax modelling survey, climate change action plan guide (2011)

Greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction targets for State of SA

- GHG emissions reduction: limiting the state's GHG emissions to 108% of 1990 levels during 2008-12
- Renewable Energy: comprises 20% of the state's electricity production and consumption by 2014, and 33% by 2020
- GreenPower: buy renewable energy for 50% of the government's electricity needs by 2014
- Energy Efficiency: improve efficiency of government buildings by 30% and dwellings by 15% by 2020
- Zero Waste: reduce waste to landfill by 35% by 2020 (SA Plan, 2011)

Sources: Local Government Association of SA (www.lga.sa.gov.au); South Australia's strategic plan 2011 (SA Plan, 2011)

3. Methodology

South Australian local council websites were reviewed for information on climate change strategies, carbon mitigation and offsetting measures (Zeppel, 2011a). Other mitigation actions by local councils were identified from media articles, reports by CCP partners, and the climate change programmes of local government associations (e.g. ALGA, ICLEI, QLGA, and LGASA). Carbon mitigation actions in the Cities for Climate Protection programme were also assessed (Hoff, 2010). These provided the basis for the types of carbon mitigation actions listed in the council survey, along with questions about council motives for emissions reduction actions. The final survey included 28 questions in four sections: your local council; climate change; climate change mitigation; and carbon offsetting. The questions included a check list of climate change actions, open-ended questions on issues or reasons for climate responses, and rating of motives

for carbon reduction actions by councils. A check list of 56 mitigation actions covered energy, water, waste, vehicles, and other council climate change initiatives. Two Sustainability Officers at Queensland local councils with climate change programmes provided feedback on a draft of this climate mitigation survey, with questions about constraints on climate actions by councils added. Information about LGASA carbon programmes and relevant SA government agencies (Zeppel, 2011a) was included in the survey.

The climate change mitigation survey of Greater Adelaide councils was conducted during June to October 2011. Councils were contacted using details on their corporate website. The target group for this survey was environmental or sustainability officers at SA councils. The survey was distributed by email and by post to 20 Greater Adelaide councils, with follow-up phone calls to confirm receipt and speak with environmental staff. An email was also sent to the network for sustainability officers at SA councils. A total of 14 councils (70%) completed the carbon mitigation survey, by email or by post, with one survey completed via telephone interview. Three Adelaide councils declined to participate, as they lacked climate policies or staff covering this area, while three councils did not respond to emails or phone calls. The next section presents results from the survey of 14 Adelaide councils.

4. Results

The responding councils that completed the survey covered coastal, inner city and suburban councils, across the southern and northern regions of the Greater Adelaide region, into the Adelaide Hills. Of the responding councils, ten (71%) had participated in Earth Hour 2011. The council staff completing the survey were: sustainability officers (57%), including a sustainable energy coordinator; environmental officers (28%); and sustainability planners (14%). Hence, the survey respondents were predisposed to pro-environmental actions. Other council staff may have different opinions about climate change and carbon mitigation actions.

The 14 Adelaide councils covered both inner metropolitan and outer peri-urban/rural areas. The number of council staff ranged from 89 to 250 (7 councils); 300-395 (3 councils); 400-465 (3 councils), and one council with over 600 staff. The size of the regional population served by the council ranged from 20,000 to 52,000 people (8 councils), 80,000 to 133,000 people (5 councils), and one council with 160,000 people (10% of state population). The main sources of cash revenue for these Adelaide councils was council rates (100%); state or federal government grants (50%); other council fees (43%); and bank interest, or external contracting (14%). The annual operating budget of the responding councils ranged from \$15 to \$38 million (5 councils), \$62 to \$72 million (4 councils), and \$90 to \$106 million (3 councils). In summary, the 14 Adelaide councils ranged from 89 to 600 staff, had operating budgets from \$15 million to \$106 million,

and served populations ranging from 20,000 to 160,000 people. Council ability to implement climate change actions mainly correlated with their size and capacity (i.e. budget, staff), and the adoption of climate change strategy/policy.

All surveyed Adelaide councils reported damage from extreme weather events, mainly due to drought (71%); heat waves (64%); flash floods (57%); bushfires (43%); river floods and wind storms (36%), and coastal erosion or storm surges (63%). In regard to council insurance for damage to assets, eight respondents said yes (*'but not sea related'*) while five were not sure or thought it could be in a mutual liability scheme. There was a focus on adaptation actions by councils, utilising federal government funding in the Local Adaptation Pathways Programme.

4.1 Climate change and Greater Adelaide councils

All of the surveyed Adelaide councils agreed that climate change was an important issue. Comments by ten councils on climate change impacts included damage to infrastructure (4), managing hazards (3), service delivery (3), council leadership on climate change (2), risk management (2), resilience (1), legal liability (1), and health and wellbeing (1). One coastal council mentioned sea level rise and the greater risk of flooding, with a climate change adaptation plan being prepared for western Adelaide. One environmental officer thought climate change was important *'however it is rarely on the radar of senior management or elected members who are more interested in roads, rates & rubbish.'* Another respondent noted the need for planning and holistic strategies by councils since *'climate change/variability has implications for roads, waterways, open space and buildings.'*

The importance of climate change actions can be gauged by their coverage in council plans. Those council strategies or policies which included climate change were an: Environmental policy (64%), Water management plan (50%), or Waste management plan (50%). Other specific climate change documents were: Climate change risk assessment (43%); Climate change strategy (43%) with one adopted in March 2011; Greenhouse gas or carbon neutral action plan (36%); Climate change adaptation plan (28%); Climate change policy (21%); and Carbon emissions policy (21%). Energy documents were: Sustainable energy action plan (21%); Renewable energy policy (14%); and Peak oil/energy transition plan or strategy (7%). Other climate change strategies were included in environment plans (28%), including a *Healthy Environment Plan*, *Biodiversity Action Plan*, and an *Energy and Water Efficiency Management Plan* that included *'energy, GHG and water objectives and targets.'*

The areas dealt with in council climate change plans included: Energy efficiency/conservation (93%); Renewable energy (86%); Waste reduction (71%); Water conservation/water recycling (57%); More sustainable living (residents) (57%); Sustainable transport (57%); and Sustainable business (industry) (21%). One council included carbon actions for residents and businesses in their *Community Wellbeing Plan*, and *Economic Development Plan*, with another council reviewing climate change issues in their environmental plan for 2011/12. Other climate change areas addressed in six council plans were community engagement, public lighting, adaptation planning, and carbon reduction targets.

The council staff identified as primarily responsible for climate change issues included: Environmental or Sustainability Officers (78%), and Environmental Managers (43%). Others were: the Water and Waste Manager; Energy Manager; Sustainability Planner; and Infrastructure (one each, 7%). One respondent noted climate change projects were assigned to relevant council units but the *'Sustainability Unit has responsibility for coordinating response.'* Respondents identified the council sections responsible for climate change issues as: Planning and Environment/Sustainability (36%); Environment team (21%); Policy and Planning (21%); Water and Waste (21%); Infrastructure Services/Engineering (14%); and Corporate Services (7%). Two councils had a specific Sustainability Unit, or Sustainable Futures Department *'responsible for strategic planning and policy and coordination of Council's overall response to climate change; other departments are responsible for operational activities and initiatives (i.e. implementing the Plan).'* The climate initiatives that Adelaide councils participated in were: Cities for Climate Protection (CCP) (93%); Earth Hour (78%); Climate change workshop (57%); Solar City or other solar scheme (43%); Sustainable Street Lighting programme (43%); National Water Initiative/Water Week (36%); and NGERs report on emissions (28%). Other climate change actions reported by four councils were: Emission reports (not NGERs); ZWSA Resource Efficiency Assistance Programme; and the LGASA Mutual Liability Scheme Climate Change Adaptation Programme.

The sectors targeted by councils for climate change actions were: Households (78%); Community organisations (64%); Businesses (57%); Schools (50%); Developers (28%); Youth groups (21%), and Landholders (14%). One peri-urban council noted: *'we have tried to develop climate change activities with residents, but response rates are low'*, with *'limited active engagement external to the activities of Council (concentration on getting our own house in order).'* Climate change initiatives were mainly funded by: Council operating budget (78%); and State or Federal government grants (50%). A few councils funded carbon actions with: council climate change action fund (14%), one with a climate change response fund established in 2008; or cost savings generated by CO₂ reductions (7%) with a revolving climate action plan fund since 2005; and a

council environmental levy or trust fund (7%). The four councils with carbon action funds had also adopted climate change or energy strategies.

4.2 Carbon mitigation by Greater Adelaide councils

Respondents are strongly agreed (71%) or agreed (28%) that it was important to reduce the carbon emissions of their local council. Eight councils had employed a consultant to assess council emissions, with council staff internally assessing carbon emissions at six other councils. Three councils outsourced their emissions data collection and assessment to Planet Footprint, Balance Carbon and Energy Analytics. The main sources of carbon emissions reported by Adelaide councils, as a percentage of total council emissions, were:

- street lighting (19-60%, mean= 44%)
- energy consumption (32-54%, mean=37.5%)
- water storage and pumping (24%)
- council vehicle fleet (14-24%, mean=17%)
- other emissions (8.5%)

Energy consumption included the electricity used for council lighting, office buildings and facilities, and, in one case, also for wastewater treatment plants, water storage and pumping. Other emissions, reported by one council, derived from fugitive sources, business travel, corporate waste, and paper consumption. In regard to street lighting, one respondent stated the Electricity Trust of SA (ETSA) charged councils more to install and service energy efficient bulbs in public lighting, while another noted: *'we have received advice that reporting requirements for street lighting will sit with ETSA.'* One council commented on the accuracy of their emissions data, noting *'the last CCP inventory was for 2005/06 & these data are out of date & there are questions about their accuracy.'* The same council reported their vehicle fleet emissions in 2011 were about 16%, down from 23% in 2003.

The carbon calculators used to assess council emissions were: NGERs (36%); council spreadsheet (28%) using National Greenhouse Accounts factors; and ICLEI Greenhouse Gas Application (21%). One council previously used CCP software to *'complete inventories of energy & GHG emissions'* but was *'now looking at an alternative that will align with NGERs reporting requirements even though we will not trigger mandatory reporting.'* Key issues for councils in assessing carbon emissions were staff resources, reconciling accounts, formats, and data analysis. To manage accounts, one council had developed *'shared spreadsheets that are used to manage and track payment and energy/water use.'*

The Greater Adelaide councils adopted a wide range of emissions reduction actions (Table 2). The top 30 carbon mitigation actions mainly related to energy efficiency (56%), fostering behavioural change (57%), and water conservation (49%) measures. The behaviour change actions related to providing information for residents, neighbouring councils, businesses and suppliers in reducing emissions, and internal council actions (targets, marketing, and staff). Other mitigation measures by councils were installing solar or heat pump hot water heaters, and roofing insulation, aquifer storage and recovery of reclaimed water (50%), and capturing methane gas from landfills for power (36%). Other carbon actions related to fuel efficient/LPG/hybrid electric vehicles (36-50%), but few used biofuels (14%). One council *'made smaller, energy efficient cars more financially viable in work packages but some staff still preferred larger car's, while 'waste services no longer had to use E10 in council vehicles (as) green waste bins cost extra to pick up.'* Only one council in each case had installed a cogeneration or trigeneration power plant; used reverse osmosis to produce recycled water; or installed mini hydroelectric systems in water facilities. The carbon actions not implemented by Adelaide councils related to water and wastewater treatment as these services are mainly managed by SA Water. Overall, a total of 272 carbon actions were adopted by 14 Greater Adelaide councils (av. 19.4 measures out of 45 actions implemented). The number of carbon actions adopted by councils ranged from 8 to 29 mitigation measures.

Table 2: Top 30 emissions reduction initiatives by Greater Adelaide councils (n=14)

<u>Energy Efficiency</u>	(n=145, 56%)
Install solar photovoltaic (PV) power on council buildings	(100%)
Purchase GreenPower electricity from renewable energy for council facilities	(93%)
Install energy saving CFL bulbs or LED lights in council buildings	(86%)
Install energy efficient computers in council offices/council libraries	(78%)
Install <u>energy & water efficient technology</u> in council amenities blocks#	(71%)
Solar powered public lighting (e.g. walkways)	(71%)
Install timers, daylight sensors or motion detectors on council building lights	(64%)
Purchase energy efficient appliances (e.g. fridges)	(64%)
Install council-owned renewable energy generation systems	(64%)
Install solar or heat pump hot water heaters in council buildings & facilities	(50%)
Install roofing insulation in council buildings & facilities	(50%)
Operate new fuel efficient council vehicles or vessels	(50%)
Drive electric cars or hybrid-electric council vehicles	(43%)
Use of dedicated LPG fuelled vehicles as part of council fleet	(36%)
Capture methane gas from council landfills to generate power	(36%)
Switch off council appliances at the wall to reduce standby power	(28%)
Implemented any other energy initiatives	(28%)
Install energy saving fluorescent or LED lights in street lighting	(21%)
<u>Behaviour Change</u>	(n=57, 22%)
Provide information to residents on reducing their emissions	(86%)
Include emissions reduction targets in council corporate plans	(78%)
Share information with neighbouring councils on emissions reduction	(57%)
Provide information to businesses on reducing their emissions	(57%)
Choose suppliers taking actions to reduce their emissions (i.e. green purchasing)	(57%)
Market the emissions reduction initiatives of your council	(43%)

Train staff or volunteers on your emissions reduction actions	(28%)
<u>Water Conservation</u>	(n=49, 19%)
Practise rainwater harvesting (i.e. capture roof water from council buildings)	(93%)
Practise stormwater harvesting & filter through wetlands or bioretention system	(71%)
Install energy & <u>water efficient technology</u> in council amenities blocks#	(71%)
Produce or use recycled water – Class A+, <u>Class A</u> , Class B, Class C	(64%)
Practise aquifer storage and recovery (ASR) of reclaimed water	(50%)
<u>Waste</u>	(n=8, 3%)
Practise recycling and minimise amount of solid waste	(57%)

Notes: #Action 'Install energy & water efficient technology in council amenities blocks' (10 responses) included in Energy Efficiency and Water Conservation actions. Total Top 30 Actions (n=259): Other carbon actions (1-2 responses): Energy efficiency (15), Water conservation (6)

The top five reasons for councils adopting emissions reduction actions (ranked 1 most important to 5 least important) were:

- council climate change strategy/action plan (1.8)
- demonstrate climate leadership to local businesses/residents (2.4)
- cost savings (2.5)
- differentiate your council as a 'climate friendly' region (3), and
- council resolutions on climate change/energy efficiency (3.2).

Other lower-ranked reasons included certification (e.g. CCP) (4.3), attracting low carbon industry investment (4.5), *SA's Greenhouse Strategy or Act*, and the *LGASA climate change strategy* (5). The main reasons for councils not adopting carbon actions were cost; staff resources; funding; asset ownership; measurement tools, and '*when payback periods are excessive (e.g. more than 15 years).*' One council also noted, '*missed opportunities by staff/work areas not seeing this [climate change] as a priority*'.

The main opportunities for Adelaide councils in reducing carbon emissions were identified as: waste management (50%); green building design (50%); renewable energy-solar, wind, cogeneration (50%); sustainable technologies (43%); water management (36%); eco-efficiency measures (28%); landfills (21%); and carbon offset markets (14%). Future carbon mitigation goals included recovery of waste for ethanol, aquifer recharge projects, and methane gas generation from landfills. One council aimed to '*maximise sustainable design and integration of appropriate technologies*' at all developments.

Other comments about the role of local councils in carbon mitigation included:

- '*Local Government is a leader in this space. More support from Commonwealth and State governments through partnerships are needed.*'

- *‘Council should be focusing on avoiding or reducing their emissions as the offset side of things does not sit well with me.’*
- *‘Our Environmental Advisory Committee has decided to **prioritise our funds into emission reduction and alternative energy generation** for the current year.’*

Survey results indicate the main focus of Adelaide councils is on reducing greenhouse gas emissions through a range of carbon mitigation and renewable energy measures. State and federal government support was also required to assist local councils in GHG reduction goals.

5. Discussion: Implications for Climate Governance by Councils

This study of emissions reduction actions by Greater Adelaide councils compares and highlights responses to climate change mitigation across one metropolitan region in South Australia. LGASA programmes and SA state government targets influence the carbon actions adopted by Greater Adelaide councils, with mitigation measures demonstrating leadership on climate issues to ratepayers and related agencies. Council responsibility for climate change issues was mainly delegated to environmental services, sustainability and planning areas, rather than infrastructure, finance or community development. Comments by environmental staff indicated they were committed to climate change actions, but sometimes lacked support from managers or other council areas.

Asset and finance managers have a strong role in council decision-making and need to be involved in implementing carbon reduction actions. The opinions of sustainability officers in regard to climate change issues may well differ from CEOs, other council managers or elected councillors (Nursey-Bray, 2011). Respondents from Adelaide councils noted the legal liability of councils for climate change actions, but some felt it was not a priority for funding or that staff missed opportunities to address climate change issues across council. Local government associations thus need to provide information on how climate change and carbon mitigation measures should be included in decision making by all sectors within local councils.

Nursey-Bray (2010, p. 173) also found Tasmanian councils were concerned about dealing ‘with the uncertainty surrounding climate change impacts and how to incorporate climate change into day-to-day management or ‘governance structures’. With the vagaries of ongoing climate change funding, Tasmanian council managers felt climate change management ‘needed incorporating within governance regimes in more permanent and sustainable ways’ Nursey-Bray (2010, p 174). Respondents from Adelaide councils also wanted climate change incorporated within council operations. The research presented in this paper also found key elements of climate governance were adaptive management, communication and reflective practice (Nursey-Bray, 2010).

Adelaide councils with climate change strategies and policies were integrating carbon mitigation across council operations, communicating proactive climate actions both internally (i.e. council staff) and externally (i.e. ratepayers), and reflecting on local carbon options. The City of Onkaparinga was a leader in this climate change area. The climate governance framework thus applies to carbon mitigation initiatives adopted by local councils such as energy efficiency, renewable energy, and other emissions reduction actions (Table 3). It includes carbon management actions and practices adopted within local councils and also climate governance networks with key stakeholders (i.e. residents, local groups, and experts). The actions listed for adaptive management, communication and reflexive practice thus provide a framework for assessing climate change actions by other local governments.

Table 3: Climate change governance framework for local councils (Nursey-Bray, 2010)

1. Adaptive Management

- Continually improving managerial practices for climate change (e.g. energy efficiency)
- Build on environmental assessment techniques and environmental management systems (GHG audit)
- Institutionalise climate change framework to implement varied policies, learning over time (e.g. plans)
- Mainstream climate change into existing council strategies and day-to-day business (climate proofing)
- Build more strategic alliances with ratepayers/local groups to trial mitigation and adaptation options

2. Communication

- Communicate climate change/variability using science; need to take proactive action; discuss options
- Communicate feasible climate change options for different groups (ratepayers, staff, councillors) and link/align climate change issue with local interests and agendas (e.g. solar PV power)
- Market climate change mitigation projects and schemes implemented by council
- Involve all interest groups (from community/conservation groups to the Mayor) in low carbon actions
- Add climate change into existing council processes for emergency management, health and safety etc and incorporate climate change guidelines into council policies (e.g. renewable energy)

3. Reflexive Practice

- Reflecting on global, national and state programmes for climate change mitigation by councils (e.g. CCP)
 - Review other low carbon initiatives and practices and adapt these to suit local needs and locations
 - Develop a council data base, web links, seminars on carbon mitigation products and services
 - Work with other local councils on climate mitigation projects and initiatives to save time and money
 - Build regional alliances and networks and allocate council funding to carbon mitigation actions
-

This paper found key motivations for ecological responsiveness by Adelaide local councils in reducing carbon emissions related to legitimacy and social responsibility in addressing State GHG targets, and competitiveness in terms of being a climate action leader (Bansal and Roth,

2000; Zeppel and James-Overheu, 2012). Climate change actions were still mainly funded from council rates. Four Adelaide councils with carbon action funds had adopted climate change or energy strategies, while smaller councils lacked climate strategies or staff. Council ability to implement climate change actions mainly correlated with their size and capacity (i.e. budget, staff), and the adoption of climate change strategies/policies. Hoff (2010) found 45% of CCP councils altered their council organisational structure to include positions or departments responsible for climate change actions. Only two Adelaide councils had specific sustainability units. Further support and funding is needed to assist local councils in developing climate change plans; auditing carbon emissions; and installing energy (e.g. cogeneration) or water efficiency measures. This will enable councils to meet their legal and community liability to reduce carbon emissions. Local councils in Australia are grappling with the financial implications of the federal carbon tax and its impact on council operations. Climate change governance by local councils in Australia will become more important with the implementation of the *Clean Energy Act 2011* and the requirement for councils to audit and report their NGERs emissions over a threshold of 25,000tCO₂-e.

6. Conclusions

This account of carbon mitigation actions by metropolitan local councils highlights climate governance issues and motives for reducing carbon emissions. The main reasons for Greater Adelaide councils to reduce greenhouse gas emissions were climate change plans; demonstrating climate leadership, cost savings, being a 'climate friendly' region, and carbon resolutions. Key motivations for local councils in reducing their carbon emissions are legitimacy (i.e. legislation, GHG targets), social responsibility (i.e. residents), and competitiveness (i.e. cost savings, leadership). A key challenge for many sustainability officers is communicating the need for carbon mitigation actions to all council divisions and managers, and to elected councillors. More research is needed on how local councils are addressing climate change governance and adopting carbon mitigation actions. This includes the key areas of council policies, funding, and staff resources for low carbon initiatives. Constraints to carbon mitigation actions by local councils also need to be reviewed. Crucial aspects of climate governance such as adaptive management, communication, and reflexive practice need to be further assessed within local government. This will highlight the impact of climate change practices on the organisational behaviour and governance of local councils, along with environmental, social, and business benefits from 'climate proofing' councils.

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Assessing the Institutional Capacity of External Agencies in holding Local Governments Accountable in Uganda

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Abstract

The Government of Uganda established external agencies as part of the control mechanisms aimed at promoting accountability in the public sector in general and local governments (LGs) in particular. The two cardinal control agencies include the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) and the Inspectorate of Government (IG), who are mandated to enhance public service through efficient and effective resource management, ensuring adherence to standards and regulations, and promoting responsiveness to community needs. In spite of these institutional controls, a surge of unbearable events involving abuse of authority and misuse of public resources still exists, suggesting significant managerial and capacity handicaps, not only in the internal mechanisms of LGs, but also in the external control agencies.

This paper presents findings of a study conducted to evaluate the institutional capacity of the OAG and the IG in the enhancement of accountability in local governments (LGs) in Uganda. The findings demonstrate deficiencies in institutional capacity across the spectrum of financial, human and material resources, as well as the enabling legislation and lack stakeholder support. The scenario is a recipe for encouraging public malfeasance. The paper makes a strong case for strengthening institutional capacity, through improvements in planning, resource facilitation and collaborative relations among the key stakeholders. It is argued that the establishment of a special anti-corruption court could help reduce the delays and provide appropriate corrective measures in support of accountability.

Keywords: Local government, Institutional capacity, Control, Accountability

Introduction

The competences and commitment of external agencies that are expected to serve as vanguards of public sector accountability have been repeatedly questioned, amid continued reports of local governments' mismanagement and poor service delivery in Uganda. While the reports continue to highlight weaknesses in internal controls, the external agencies of the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) and the Inspectorate of Government (IG) are, in principle, expected progressively to strengthen the internal mechanisms. In the wake of continued blame on the internal mechanisms of LGs, it becomes necessary to "audit the auditors" by undertaking institutional analysis of the external agencies' capacity to execute their mandates.

The performance of any organisation or agency largely depends on the magnitude of the responsibility/tasks before it and the strength of its institutional capacity. The institutional capacity elements include *organisational structural arrangements, human and financial resources, enabling legislation, planning capabilities, and the support from the agency's environment through its different stakeholders*. Regarding the public institutional capabilities to enforce accountability, there is a need for any mandated agency to attain adequate numbers of qualified, motivated and facilitated human resources, and an enabling policy environment. Also of paramount importance also is the ability to undertake meticulous corporate planning, mobilisation of sufficient financial resources, and managing intergovernmental relations (collaboration) with stakeholders.

The above aspects form the main themes of analysis in this article, upon which the capacity of the OAG and IG in enhancing accountability in Uganda's local government sphere was evaluated. The discussion begins with conceptualisation of the notions of *accountability* and *control* as espoused in management (public management). This is followed by highlights of the structure and activities of the OAG and IG, before a substantial examination of the various capacity elements associated with the two institutions is done. The paper draws on a series of key informant interviews in 2008 with senior staff from the OAG, IG, and district offices.

Control and Accountability in Public Management

Control is a critical management function, besides planning, organising and leading/directing. Control as a managerial function and activity seeks to protect against waste and deviation from planned activities and to ensure effective human and material resources utilisation. Control guides human and organisational behaviour towards achieving goals and objectives. While policy and plans may be perfect, this alone cannot guarantee

achievement of policy objectives. Control, thus, aptly feeds the requirements of accountability in the management of organisations.

Control and accountability are critical in fostering public service provision, good governance and development. Accountability is the answerability for performance; or in the case of public sector realm, it is the obligation to expose, explain and justify actions taken on behalf of delivering services to the public (Basu, 1994). Accountability has become the cornerstone of public management because it constitutes the principle that informs the processes in which those who hold and exercise public authority can be held responsible or answerable for their actions or inactions (Aucoin and Heintzman, 2000).

The rationale for control and accountability in public administration and management has been reinforced by the ideals of good governance in which decentralised local governance is seen as a tool to promote democracy and development. But because the local systems in Uganda, as elsewhere in the developing world, lacked capacity to monitor and probe the local bureaucracies, central government institutional mechanisms, including the IG and OAG were established to promote intergovernmental relations and nurture local capacity within the framework of decentralisation. The IG and OAG in Uganda, thus, form part of the monitoring and supervision tools in intergovernmental relations, in respect of the Constitution of Uganda (1995: Article 176), which enshrines democratic decentralisation and development.

The ability to control and enhance accountability largely depends on the institutional capacity of an agency, which is derived from both the inherent/internal resources/systems and the support received from the external environment factors that can strengthen the internal processes in the achieving objectives. Thus, the capacity of the IG and OAG to control and enhance accountability in the context of this article – is viewed from two main perspectives. First is the resources at the disposal of these agencies, which facilitates or inhibits their capabilities to control (execute) the mandates. Second is the support from other agencies, exhibited in the intergovernmental relations, which has either strengthened the institutional capacity (through progressive and collaborative support) or has weakened the capacity to control by creating a dependency or by frustrating the efforts of the IG and OAG.

The above insights are explored in the following sections of this article. It is, however, imperative to first look at the nature of the workload (mandate) and structure of the OAG and IG, which forms a basis for analysing the control systems and capacity profile for these agencies.

Structure and responsibility of the Office of Auditor-General (OAG)

The OAG is charged with the cardinal duty of promoting accountability and good governance in public offices. In Uganda, the OAG is the *supreme audit institution* that is mandated to audit all public accounts and report to Parliament, to enable it to exercise its oversight role over the use of public resources (Constitution of Uganda, 1995: Art. 163 [3]). The OAG is required to conduct *financial* and *value-for-money* audits in respect of any income, or expenditure involving public funds, across all the spheres of government, including the local governments.

The OAG is headed by the Auditor-General as Chief Executive, assisted by the Assistant Auditor-General and an Under Secretary. The office is composed of three directorates and two departments. The directorates include central government, local government and statutory/divestiture. The departments include finance and administration, value-for-money audit, and audit development and quality assurance.

The Directorate of Local Government Audits was specifically established to supervise and coordinate the activities of various regional branches, which audit over 1000 accounts from different LGs. The OAG has established eight upcountry regional branches to ensure thorough and timely audit of all LGs including districts, municipal and town councils, and sub-counties.

While the establishment of regional OAG branch offices is commendable, the eight regional offices were found to be too few to cover the whole country and effectively scrutinise 1060 LGs' accounts, comprising 163 districts and municipal authorities, 897 lower local governments (LLGs) in form of sub-counties and town councils. The Directorate of Local Audits is overwhelmed by the magnitude of local accounts, majority of which are not audited in the stipulated time required by law, due to shortages of staff and financial facilitation.²⁰ The workload schedule of the OAG is voluminous and overstretching their capacity (Table1).

²⁰ Interview, Director Local Audits and Senior Principal Auditor , Office of the Auditor-General, 24th October 2008

Table 1: Distribution of accounts handled by OAG during 2006/2007

Audit Area/ Sphere	Total	Audited	Work-in-progress/ Carried Forward
Local Governments	1060	473	587
Central Government	84	84	-
Statutory Corporations	71	50	21
Projects	99	98	1
Total	1314	705	609

Source: Office of the Auditor General, Policy Statement, 2007

The table indicates an overwhelming number of LG accounts that were carried forward from the previous year (587). This suggests serious capacity shortfalls in human and financial resources and system drawbacks. These shortfalls will be explored later in the paper.

Structure and responsibility of the Inspectorate of Government (IG)

The IG is headed by the Inspector General of Government (IGG), deputised by the Deputy IGG and supported by the Secretary to the Inspectorate (at level of Permanent Secretary) as the Accounting Officer and the head of Finance and Administration Department. For coordination and systematic implementation of functions, the IG is structured into five directorates, headed by directors, and three units headed by senior inspectorate officers. The directorates include – *Directorate of Operations (DOP)*, *Directorate of Leadership Code (DLC)*, *Directorate of Legal Affairs (DLA)*, *Directorate of Regional Offices & Follow-up (DROFU)* and *Directorate of Education and Prevention of Corruption (DEP)*.

The relevance of this structure is that, all the directorates in one way or another work on matters pertaining to accountability in LGs. The DROFU oversees and coordinates the activities of the 10 established regional offices, which deal with complaints from districts. The DEP occasionally engages LGs and civil society in sensitisation programmes to promote accountability, while the DLA leads in prosecuting cases of corruption and abuse of office.

The IG functions and responsibilities are vast and stretch across the central and local government spheres. The IG is obliged to undertake measures to ensure the rule of law in public offices, accountability and integrity among public officials, and transparency in the exercise of administrative functions. The IG carries out investigations in instances where there is alleged corruption and abuse of office or authority, breach of the Leadership Code of Conduct by leaders specified under the Leadership Code Act (LGA), 2002, and where administrative injustice and maladministration are reported in public offices.

In the local government sphere, the IG is mandated to monitor the utilisation of Poverty Alleviation Fund (PAF), probe suspected mismanagement of Universal Primary Education (UPE) funds, School Facility Grants (SFG), Primary Health Care, Water and Sanitation, Feeder Roads Maintenance, Plan for Modernisation of Agriculture (PMA) and Local Government Development Programme (LGDP). Where corruption is found, the IG may prosecute or cause prosecution of culprits, or may undertake varying degrees of disciplinary action on mismanagement of PAF and UPE funds (IG-Report, 2007).

An illustration on the cases before the IG during 2006/2007 reveals overwhelming workload, where 4500 complaints were brought forward from the previous year; and these were added on new complaints totalling 1972, making a total workload of 6472. Of the total workload of 6472, only 1668 were concluded, leaving a balance of 4804 complaints for the period July 2006 - June 2007. This is summarised in Table 2 below.

Table 2: IG's Workload for the July - December 2006 and January - June 2007

	Jul. – Dec. 2006	Jan. – Jun. 2007
Complaints Brought Forward (a)	2,265	2,235
New Complaints Received (b)	875	1,097
Total Workload (c) = a + b	3,140	3,332
Investigated and Completed (d)	759	909
Referred to other Institutions (e)	146	307
Total Complaints Concluded (f) = d + e	905	1,216
Carried Forward (g) = c - f	2,235	2,116

Source: Adapted from: IG-Reports to Parliament – 2006 & 2007

The above reveals that a large number of complaints are not concluded within the reporting period of six months, which suggests a higher workload and serious capacity deficits.

The regional offices of the IG that handle cases from upcountry districts are also overwhelmed by the workload. The figures in Table 3 below indicate the rising trend of cases received at the regional offices outside Kampala – the IG headquarters.

Table 3: Distribution of cases received by district/regional offices of the IG

REGION	July-Dec. 2006	%	Jan.-June 2007	%
Kampala	380	43%	450	41%
Arua	46	5.3%	82	7.5%
F/Portal	69	7.9%	88	8.0%
Gulu	25	2.9%	60	5.5%
Jinja	47	5.4%	57	5.2%
Hoima	29	3.3%	30	2.7%
Kabale	83	9.5%	119	10.8%
Masaka	39	4.5%	67	6.1%
Mbale	51	5.8%	40	3.6%
Mbarara	71	8.1%	66	6.0%
Soroti	35	4.0%	38	3.5%
TOTAL	875	100%	1097	100%

Adapted from: IG-Reports to Parliament 2006 & 2007. The table represents overwhelming workload at regional offices that mostly handle LGs' matters.

Human Resources Capacity

The high level of workload described above, points to the need for the IG and the OAG to have appropriate quantity and quality of human resources to execute statutory mandates. The increasing number of local authorities created as new districts in recent years has not been matched with the staffing levels at the regional offices. In a span of only two years, **2008 – 2010**, over **30** new districts have been created in Uganda by carving out and putting together sub-county territories of existing districts. It is observed that:

The creation of new districts and many more lower local governments has placed a strain on the resources of the OAG to the point where the majority of audits in local government, especially at sub-county level are not audited and backlogs are growing.²¹

The staffing situation of the OAG as represented in Table 4 shows deficiencies, with **73** vacant positions in the various units. However, this number does not represent the actual staff shortfalls, as **394** is only a ceiling set by the Ministry of Public Service, which is far below the staffing levels required to deal with the magnitude of workload.

Table 4: OAG's staffing situation as at 30th June 2008

Directorate/ Department	Approved	Filled	Vacant
AG's office	4	4	0
Central Government Accounts	88	78	10
Local Government Accounts	145	136	9
Statutory Authorities	50	39	11
Value-for-Money Audit	20	7	13
Finance & Administration	38	15	23
Support Staff	49	42	7
Total	394	321	73

Source: Office of the Auditor-General

²¹ Interview, Director Local Audits Auditor-General's office, 24th October 2008

One of the critical and highly technical units, Value-for-Money Audit, had only 7 vacancies filled, yet its work determines the real net-worth of service delivery in LGs, against the colossal sums often spent on local programmes including the PAF, PMA, UPE and LGDP. Insufficient staff numbers have led to a high officer/workload ratio, which explains the existing backlog of cases especially at the regional IG offices.²²

Other human resource capacity problems include: a high rate of employee turnover, especially in critical resource areas of lawyers, accountants, auditors and investigators, and poor pay that makes it difficult to attract and retain prosecutors in IG's office, and thus amateurs often handle high stake cases and mess them up.

The reiterations from district officials who were asked to evaluate the IG and OAG's work, aptly describes the poor human resources situation of the IG and the OAG:

*There is a big problem with the IG's staff turnover. These days they have very young and fresh graduates. In Iganga I had the experience of teaching them how local governments function, and yet these are the people supposed to monitor and evaluate what was going on. I found them very "green" about many issues. I think the IG needs better qualified staff in accounting to probe financial accountability and engineers to make proper value for audit on buildings and roads.*²³

*You are coming to investigate a CAO and you send a junior officer. We have a team-leader for the OAG here; we have worked with her for sometime, but we were all surprised that she recently graduated from her first degree.*²⁴

Nonetheless, there is some effort by the IG and the OAG to build capacity through training programmes in form of induction courses for new recruits, refresher training and skills development. The IG for example has benefited from skills training in surveillance and investigation techniques, transparency and fraud detection, combating corruption in the delivery of infrastructure services, leadership and change management, and result-oriented management.

The problem though, is that many training programmes are often short-term and spin-offs from donor projects, and they rarely address the serious institutional human resources capacity needs. Yet, the donors often, and unilaterally so, withdraw or switch funding to other 'priority' areas, which makes capacity building rather, sporadic.

²² Interview, Deputy Inspector General of Government, 6th October 2008.

²³ Interview, Chief Administrative Officer Luwero District, 7th November 2008.

²⁴ Interview, Chief Finance Officer Luwero District, 7th November 2008

It is noteworthy, that despite the willingness on the part of many staff, especially in the middle -lower management levels to undertake training to boost their qualifications, the IG and the OAG do not offer funding for long-term training.²⁵ Many employees from the OAG have undertaken professional/chartered courses and Master's degrees, but have had to pay for themselves, sometimes having to hide from their bosses.²⁶ This limits opportunity for skills development and employee motivation, which undermines institutional capacity to foster accountability.

Finance and Material Facilitations

The IG and OAG receive financial and technical assistance from the central government's consolidated fund and development partners. For example, the implementation of the OAG Corporate Plan (2006-2011) receives donor support from the Irish Aid, Norway, ADB, and the World Bank. The OAG's IT strategic plan receives support to introduce the new risk based financial audit methodology, along with the teammate audit management software, and several training programmes (OAG-Policy Statement, 2007).

Despite financial support, the IG and the OAG continue to face several operational problems emanating from inadequate financial resources to handle the operational costs of investigations, prosecutions, verification of declarations, education and public awareness; and other aspects of the Corporate and Development Plan (CADP). Table 5 shows part of the funding variance in the IG totalling Shs 836,953,744²⁷.

Table 5: Variances and funding gaps in finance and administration of the IG-CADP (Shs)

	Activity	Corporate Plan Budget	Ministry of Finance Budget	Shortfall
1	Recruitment of 10 staff to improve service delivery	8,379,600	-	8,379,600
2	Training 100 staff in various speciality/skills	709,024,150	419,550,000	309,474,150
3	Outsourcing of skills and services	3,154,593,994	2,652,534,000	502,059,994
4	Facilitation of travel	138,792,000	121,752,000	17,040,000
	Total			836,953,744

Source: Inspectorate of Government Corporate and Development Plan (IG-CADP, 2004-2009)

As earlier noted, the IG and the OAG have regional offices that continue to be overwhelmed by an increasing number of LGs in the wake of new districts creation. All these regional offices operate in rented premises, which do not only constrain the limited budget outlay, but also render it cost-ineffective in the long run. The regional offices were ill-equipped; having

²⁵ Interview, Director IG-Regional offices and Follow-up, 6th October 2008

²⁶ Interview, Senior Principle Auditor, OAG 24th October 2008

²⁷ US\$1=approximately Ugandan Shs 2,000

either an old vehicle or none, inadequate office equipment and poor records storage facilities. Table 6 demonstrates material shortfalls in one of the IG's directorates, worth Shs186,600,000.

Table 6: Logistical gaps in the IG's Directorate of operations

	Item	Required	Available	Short-fall	Cost of shortfall
1.	Double Cabin pick-ups – 4 WD	9	6	3	180,000,000
2.	Video Cameras	2	0	2	3,000,000
3.	Photo Cameras	4	0	4	800,000
4.	Tape Recorders	6	2	4	800,000
5.	TV Screens	2	0	2	2,000,000
Total					186,600,000

Source: Inspectorate of Government (IG-CADP, 2004-2009)

Regarding the OAG, the agency proposed a total expenditure of Shs. 9,470,000,000/- for the financial year 2007/2008, which was viewed as a bare minimum to audit 1,314 institutions including: 84 central government ministries; 1,060 local governments; 71 State corporations; and 103 projects. To train staff and carry out 30 audit inspections, only Shs.7,740,000,000/= was provided as per the ceiling set by the Finance Ministry (OAG-Policy Statement, 2007), creating a shortfall of Shs. 1,730,000,000/=. It was no surprise that the OAG was only able to complete 705 audits out of the overall total of 1,314 during 2006/2007 (as indicated in Table 1).

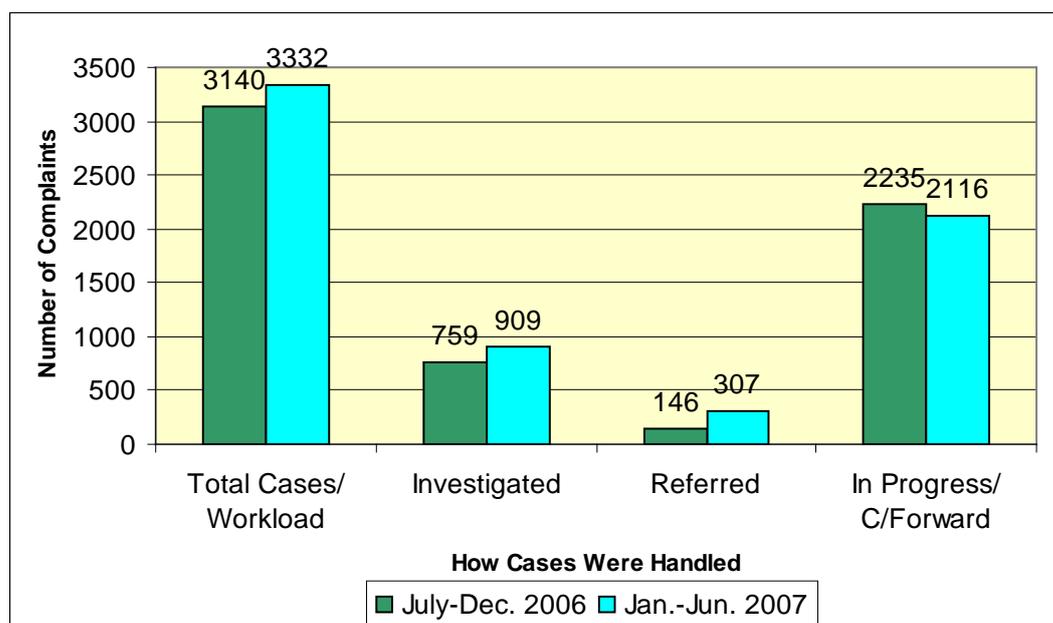
Records from the OAG indicate that staff salaries are not spared by the budgetary cuts from central government. While the OAG required Shs. 2,300,000,000 to pay salaries of 394 staff members, only Shs. 2,010,000,000 was provided by the Finance Ministry, leaving a funding deficit of Shs. 290,000,000 (OAG-Policy Statement, 2007).

The OAG has not been able to audit the activities undertaken in districts relating to the use of poverty alleviation funds (PAF), to which it is mandated. The PAF was set up to provide one route of attaining the objectives of the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP). The Auditor-General acknowledged this in his policy statement (OAG-Policy Statement, 2007).

Due to the large number of projects undertaken under PAF in all local governments, including Sub-counties, Town Councils, Municipalities, Districts and Central Government Ministries and Departments, the OAG has found it difficult to satisfactorily cover all the areas due to inadequate resources.

An examination of how the investigation cases before the IG were handled during the periods July-December 2006 and January-June 2007 reveals serious capacity gaps.

Figure 1: Handling of cases by IG: July - December 2006 & January - June 2007



Adapted from: IG-Reports to Parliament, 2006 and 2007

Figure 1 shows that a large number of cases, 2,235 (71%) and 2,116 (64%) for periods July-December 2006 and January-June 2007 could not be concluded owing to capacity limitations, emanating from finance, human resources and collaboration inadequacies. Only 759 (24%) and 909 (27%) for the two periods, respectively, were investigated and concluded. Such backlogs and the related capacity deficiencies undermine accountability in LGs.

Parent and Enabling Legislation

Conventionally, all organisations are miniature replicas of the laws and regulations that create and maintain them. The legislative framework sets the jurisdictional rhythm of any organisation, in terms of functions, powers, privileges, relationships, and resource capacity. Thus, legislation becomes a major tool in analysing the institutional and functional capacity of any agency.

The study identified good and elaborate pieces of enabling legislation available to the IG and OAG to foster accountability in LGs. These include:

- The Constitution of Uganda, 1995;
- The Inspectorate of Government Act (IGA), 2002;
- The Public Finance and Accountability Act (PFAA), 2003;
- The local Governments Act (LGA), 1997;
- The Local Government Finance and Accounting Regulations, 1998;
- The Leadership Code Act, 2002;

- The Public Procurement and Disposal of Assets Act (PPDAA), 2003;
- The Prevention of Corruption Act, 1972 (as amended in 1989); and
- The Public Service Standing Orders, 1988.

The above pieces of legislation mirror the spirit of empowering the IG and OAG to execute their mandates. The law establishes the OAG as the *supreme audit institution* of Uganda with the responsibility to scrutinise, verify and report to Parliament on the propriety and regularity of the manner in which public funds are used. Likewise, the IG has powers to investigate or cause investigation of any offence or breach of public authority and may prosecute or cause prosecution of any such offenders to eliminate and foster the elimination of corruption, abuse of authority and of public office (Constitution of Uganda, 1995 (Art. 225[1]); IGA 2002 (s.8). The law also seeks to protect the independence of the IG and OAG, as they are not supposed to be subject to the direction or control of any person or authority; but only responsible to Parliament (Constitution, 1995: Art. 227; IGA, 2002: s10) and (Constitution, 1995: Art. 163[6]; PFAA, 2003: s33 [2]), respectively.

Nonetheless, the challenge is in the operationalisation and observance of the law. Compliance with the law is important because, just like in the principles of exercising justice, "it must not only be said to be done, but must be seen to be done". Despite the array of legislation, the legal regime does not seem to offer an environment that helps in deterring offenders. According to the Deputy Inspector General of Government (IGG), "the law is apparently very lenient and it does not provide deterrent sentences to perpetrators of white-collar crime that the Inspectorate prosecutes".²⁸ The law affords the magistrates a wide discretion to determine sentences and the option of a fine is often imposed. The convicted persons are thus made to pay small amounts of money as fines, which creates no deterrence to corruption.

For example, in a court case (**Uganda vs Balinda**) where the accused, an agent of Kampala City Council (KCC) was contracted to collect rates he solicited and received a bribe of Shs 500,000/=, and was sentenced to one and a half years in prison or pay a fine of Shs 30,000/= (approx. US\$15). He paid the fine and walked home (IG-Report, 2007: 62). Another case (**Uganda vs Tabaruka James**) involving a public officer who was charged and convicted of corruption and abuse of office for soliciting and receiving a bribe of Shs 2,000,000/=; the court sentenced him to either two years in prison or a fine of Shs. 300,000/= (US\$150). He paid the fine and walked away (IG-Report, 2007: 62). Such weak consequences associated with poor sanctions and actions tend to condone misconduct. According to Pauw

²⁸ Interview, Deputy Inspector General of Government, 6th October 2008.

et al. (2002: 339), when the “perpetrators of corruption believe that, even if their misdeeds were discovered, the repercussions would not be strong, they can commit unethical deeds with impunity”.

Another problem in implementing the law concerns the interpretation of the powers of the IG, which have been variously challenged in the Constitutional and Supreme Courts. In the case of Mohammed Kezaala (Jinja Town Mayor) vs. the IGG and others, Miscellaneous Application No. 28 of 2009, and another case involving Mukono District Chairman Engineer Mulondo. The court reinstated the duo who had been removed from office on orders of the IGG, on the account that the IGG contravened the principles of natural justice and overstepped her power jurisdiction. The court decisions imply that, while the IG may have strong legislative capacity, its powers have to be exercised within the limits and caution on respecting the rights of local government agencies, and within the spirit of intergovernmental relations.

Regarding the OAG, there has been a failure to comply with the law as auditing of LG accounts and presentation of reports has not been done within the statutory time of end October. Accounts of LLGs of 2003/2004 were not audited by end of the financial year 2006/2007, three years after the statutory period, mainly because the OAG lacked adequate human resources and late disbursement of funds from central government (OAG-Policy Statement, 2007).

Table 7 provides a summary of status of compliance by the accounting officers in submitting accounts to the various OAG regional branch offices.

Table 7: Status on submission of accounts by accounting officers as at 31st October 2007

BRANCH	NO OF LGs	COMPLIANCE		NON- COMPLIANT	
		NUMBER	%	NUMBER	%
Fort portal	20	15	75	5	25%
Masaka	19	8	40	22	60%
Mbarara	22	22	100	0	0
Jinja	18	14	80	4	20%
Mbale	20	10	50	10	50%
Arua	17	-	-	-	-
Soroti	17	12	70	5	30%
Gulu	12	11	98	1	2%
Kampala	18	14	80	4	20%
KCC	1	5(of 6)	90	1	10%
TOTAL	164	111	68%	53	32%

Source: Directorate of Audit (Local Government Accounts) OAG

It is observed that accounting officers from HLGs who submitted accounts in compliance with the statutory time of 31st October 2007 were 111 (68%) out of 164. Accounts from 53

(32%) HLGs were not been submitted to the OAG for audit as per the statutory time of 31st of October.

Support from Other Agencies/Stakeholders

The success in the battle against the ills of public sector ineptness largely depends on collaboration and support from stakeholders at national and local levels. The nature of the functions of the IG and the OAG prescribe that they must, inevitably, operate in liaison and support of other agencies and stakeholders. The IG and the OAG need to collaborate with institutions like the Presidency, Parliament, Judiciary, Police Force, Directorate of Public Prosecutions (DPP), Criminal Investigations Department (DPP), local government authorities, and civil society.

The leading support to the IG and the OAG is from international development partners, through financial and technical support. For example, the African Development Fund (ADF) provided a grant of 9 million Units of Account (UA 9,000,000) to finance the Institutional Support Project for Good Governance (ISPGG), which earmarks accountability and building institutional capacity to improve public service delivery through cross-cutting reforms in governance (OAG-Policy Statement, 2007). Other project support to the OAG include the Financial Management and Accountability Project (FINMAP 2005/06 – 2009/10) financed by DFID, the European Commission, IDA, the governments of Ireland, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and Japan.

The major constraint faced by the IG and the OAG is that some institutions that are supposed to be partners in fostering accountability, delay or completely ignore the IG's and the OAG's recommendations. The IG is required by the Constitution of Uganda, 1995 (Art. 231) to submit to Parliament at least once in every six months, a report on its performance and make recommendations pertaining to performance of public institutions. The IG also forwards part of its report to local government authorities, where matters concern them. In principle, Parliament and such authorities are supposed to discuss these reports and implement the recommendations.

However, Parliament and local authorities have not been enthusiastic enough on this. Parliament hardly discusses such reports, let alone following on the recommendations contained.²⁹ The reason often given to the IG is that "Parliament is very busy and occupied by equally important business".³⁰ This rather lukewarm enthusiasm towards the IG and OAG reports on the part of the Parliament does not only serve to demoralise the effort of

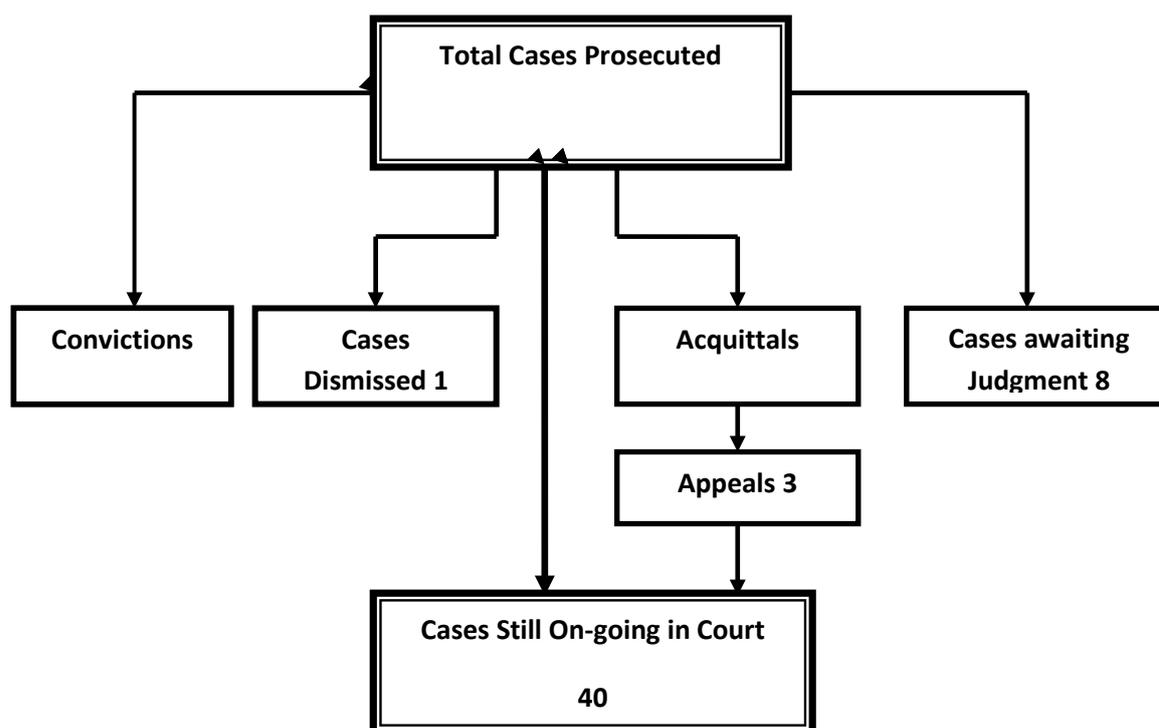
²⁹ Interview, Deputy Inspector General of Government, 6th October 2008

³⁰ Interview, DIGG, 6th October 2008

such watchdog institutions, but also squanders the opportunity to better public sector management. The need to consider reports timely and exhaustively by the relevant authorities is underscored by Hanekom and Thornhill (1986: 115) who argue that “if the compilers of reports know that they are to be analysed in detail, they are often encouraged to provide a faithful review of their activities”, and the reverse is also true.

The study revealed that, negative attitudes, corruption and intransigence in the institutions that are supposed to be partners in fighting graft frustrate the IG and the OAG. Some institutions/officials take unnecessarily long or just ignore to take action on queries raised by the IG and the OAG, against those implicated.³¹ The CID and DPP often fail to pursue a great number of criminal cases, even when the IG and OAG have preliminarily unearthed substantial evidence against offenders³².

Figure 2: Progress of prosecution cases handled by the IG from July 2006 – June 2007*



*Cases did not necessarily commence in this period. Each case might have more than one charge
Adapted from: IG-Reports to Parliament, 2006 and 2007

Deficiencies in institutional collaboration also arise in prosecution of court cases. Court cases take a long time to be disposed offconcluded and this adversely affects prosecution, as witnesses get overtired, lose interest in cases, face intimidation, and some even die before ruling is delivered (IG-Report, 2007). Oftentimes, eExhibits are often lost from the courts

³¹ Interview, Director IG-Regional offices and Follow-up, 6th October 2008

³² Interview, Deputy IGG and Director IG-Regional offices, 6th October 2008

and witnesses may disappear. The delays also extend to the appellate process in the Court of Appeal. Records of proceedings from trial courts and judgment take long to be availed to the IG to formulate grounds of appeal and prosecute the appeals (IG-Report, 2007). The fFigure 2 below illustrates the court dilemmas.

Figure 2 shows that for more than a year, out of a total of 52 cases prosecuted by the IG, only 12 had been concluded (as convictions, dismissals or acquittals), and eight cases awaited judgment in the courts. A total of 40 cases were still on-going, suggesting deficiencies in offering support to the IG, from courts and other stakeholders.

Jurisdictional Limitations

Jurisdictional limitations provide another challenge. While the IG and the OAG can investigate, audit, query and pass verdict on the performance of any public entity, they often have no powers to overturn the results of poor administration and managerial malfeasance. Bernt and Owen (2000) argue that, even in highly acclaimed Western democracies like Canada, the provincial ombudsmen can only afford remedial recommendations, with relatively weak mechanisms to enforce them. At best, they can forward reports to higher authorities in government. This means that the enforcement of IG and OAG recommendations sometimes relies on the voluntary will of other governmental bodies, who may chose to ignore them, after all.

Corporate Planning

Contemporary management practice stresses the need for organisations periodically to examine their operating environment so as to respond timely and appropriately to the needs of the organisation and the clientele. With planning, the organisation exhibits the capacity to forecast and influence the course of future events for survival and sustainability. A corporate plan is also a performance instrument that takes stock of past experiences and builds upon them to aspire for better outcomes in the future. An elaborate, sound and viable corporate plan, thus, becomes a major indicator and tool in analysing the institutional capacity of an organisation.

The IG and the OAG have engaged in corporate planning, which shows future prospects in their role of fostering accountability and effective public management. The study reviewed the OAG's corporate plan 2006 – 2011, which earmarks, among other things to: undertake structural transformation; promote financial capacity; operational independence; improve monitoring processes and management information systems; HR retention; strengthen research, development and quality assurance. This effort demonstrates a proactive approach

to strategically improve the OAG institutional capacity and performance.

However, the focus of the OAG's corporate plan hardly took care of the need to promote collaborative relations with stakeholder agencies. Yet the need to streamline cooperation and relations with non-governmental organisations, private sector organisations and civil society is crucial to securing stakeholder support. For example, the private sector provides services to the public through contracting-out or through public-private partnerships. Private sector agencies are often culpable in conniving with public officials to flout tendering regulations and giving dismal services to the public. The NGOs also play a crucial role in monitoring and evaluating the quality of service delivery in LGs. Thus, failure to enlist them is a serious omission in planning.

On the other hand, the IG's Corporate and Development Plan (2004 – 2009) addressed important issues of future institutional capacity, including: restructuring and streamlining of IG operations and systems; undertaking needs assessment and developing HR; mobilising resources; expansion and strengthening IG regional presence; sensitisation and education; making periodic integrity surveys and system studies; enhancement of coordination and collaborations.

The drawback to IG's corporate plan, however, is that while it lays down core objectives, performance indicators and targets, it offers little detail on the specific activities and tasks to be undertaken, or their corresponding time-frames. It is apparent that the IG plan's successful implementation heavily relies on outside partners and donors whose funding is often sporadic and may not be guaranteed.

Nonetheless, the research noted that both Corporate Plans from the IG and the OAG link very well with the national development priorities as enshrined in the poverty sector-wide approach of the PEAP. The premising on the PEAP offers a vantage position in attracting partner support.

Conclusion

The institutional analysis demonstrates that the external control agencies of the IG and the OAG exhibit mixed fortunes of institutional capacity. Despite the continued donor support and the high expectations of better outcomes from the IG and the OAG in pursuit of enhanced accountability and effective public management, these agencies continue to be encumbered by a torrent of financial, human and material resources limitations, as well as deficiencies in the enabling legislation and support from various stakeholders. The

deficiencies cause a backlog of cases every year, which is a recipe for encouraging public malfunction and a future threat to losing public confidence in these institutions.

The battle against the ills of public sector ineptness requires stronger and committed collaboration and support from different stakeholders. This calls for improved support from Parliament, the CID, the DPP, local authorities and the courts of law to augment the IG's and the OAG's capacity. The delay to concluding court cases, which adversely affect the functioning of the IG, can hopefully be solved with the establishment of a special anti-corruption court. Given the sophistication of the means to obscure fraud and corruption, the IG and the OAG staff must be equipped with advanced and specialised investigative training to keep ahead of fraudulent practices. The corporate plans of the IG and the OAG represent a well-thought desire and effort to foster accountability and effective public management, but they should rekindle a proactive approach to strategically build and rejuvenate collaborative relations with other stakeholder agencies to augment their institutional capacity.

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Constitutional Challenges of Creating New Local Government Areas in Nigeria

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Abstract

Local government is purposely established by law to provide grassroots development. In federal states, it is usually created by law of the federating units, and in unitary states it is created by central government. However, since the entrenchment of local government as a third-tier level of government in the 1979/1999 federal constitutions of Nigeria, there have been a lot of difficulties in creating new local governments. This paper examines the dynamics of this structure and the challenges posed to the orderly creation of new local government areas in Nigeria. The paper adopts secondary methods of data collection and analysis. It finds that the conflicting constitutional provisions which vest in the state and federal governments powers to create new local government areas have created many controversies in the polity. It recommends that the creation and statutory finance of local government councils in Nigeria should be expunged from the federal constitution.

Keywords:

Federal Constitution, New Local Government Area, National Assembly, House of Assembly, Federal Statutory Allocation.

Introduction

According to the United Nations Office for Public Administration (Ogunna 1996:1), local government is a political sub-division of a nation or (in a federal system) a state, which is constituted by law and has substantial control of local affairs including the powers to impose taxes and work towards prescribed purposes. The governing body of such an entity is elected or otherwise locally selected. It may be seen as a political authority which is purposely created by law or constitution to administer public affairs of local communities within the limits of the laws/ constitution that created it. It is a unit or level of government created by

law or constitution to provide grassroots opportunity for political participation and provision of certain basic services.

In Nigeria, local government is the third tier level of government and as stated in the Guidelines for Local Government Reform, 1976, it is a level of government exercised through representative councils established by law, with specific powers within defined areas. These powers should give the councils substantial institutional and financial powers to initiate and direct the provision of services and determine and implement projects, so as to complement the activities of the state and federal government in their areas and, through active participation of the people and their traditional institutions, to ensure that local initiatives and response to local needs are maximized (Guidelines for Local Government Reform, 1976:1).

It should be noted that in Federal States such as the United States of America, Switzerland, Canada, Germany, India, Australia, Nigeria (before the Local Government Reform, 1976), local government is created by the laws of the constituent units of the Federation usually known as states, provinces, cantons or regions. In unitary states, such as Britain, France, Israel, New Zealand, local government is created by laws of the central/ national government.

In Nigeria, with the introduction of *Guidelines for Local Government Reform*, 1976, and the subsequent promulgation of the 1979 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the creation of a new local government areas/council became a national issue requiring the involvement of the federal government, state government, and any existing local government councils. Under civilian rule, this tends to make the creation of new local government areas very cumbersome and complicated, and has even resulted to legal battles in the Supreme Court of Nigeria between some state governments and the federal government. A classical example is the case *A.G. Lagos State vs A.G Federation* (2004) (The News June 13, 2005:19-32). This tends to hamper harmonious and co-operative inter-governmental relations in the country.

It was only under Military rule that federal military government easily and single-handedly created new local government areas/councils through promulgation of Decrees for creation of New Local Councils.

Constitutional Entrenchment of Local Government in Nigeria

Even though Nigeria was amalgamated in 1914, the first national legislation on local government administration, the Native Authority Ordinance of 1916, was enacted in 1916

under the governorship of General Sir Fredrick Lugard. This Ordinance which replaced all indigenous pre-colonial systems of local administration empowered the governor to appoint a Native Authority for any area for local administration. The Native Authority system (Indirect Rule) incorporated traditional authority and institutions, and it revolved around traditional rulers who alone or in collaboration with others constituted a Native Authority. Where none was in existence, the British created warrant chiefs, particularly in the Eastern region, to bring the people under a central authority. The main duty of the Native Authority was the maintenance of law and order (Ogunna,1996).

The Richards Constitution of 1946 restructured the country into three regions namely, Eastern, Northern and Western Regions, and the regions assumed responsibility for the reorganisation of local government system. The Eastern Region in exercise of its power over local government under the Richards Constitution, embarked on the reformation of the Native Authority System in 1948. This resulted to the enactment of the Eastern Nigeria Local Government Law, 1950. This introduced a three tier system of local government (county, district and local councils) in the region. The Western Region followed suit and enacted its Local Government Law, 1952 and the Northern Region enacted a Native Authority Law, 1954 (Ogunna,1996).

With the adoption of the Federal System in 1954, each region continued to enact separate legislation to administer local governments. However after the emergence of Military rule in 1966, several radical changes were introduced in the administration of local government system in the regions and later states. (Nigeria Local Government Yearbook, 1998: IV, 1, 2).

The 1976 Local Government Reform and Local Government in Nigeria.

The groundwork for the constitutionalisation of local government in Nigeria was the 1976 Local Government Reform. As the then Chief of Staff, Supreme Headquarters, Brigadier Shehu Musa Yar'adua stated in the Forward to the Guidelines for Local Government Reform (1976: Forward:1)

..... the Military Government was essentially motivated by the necessity to stabilize and rationalize Government at the Local level. This must of necessity, entail the decentralization of some significant functions of the State Government to Local level in order to harness local resources for rapid development. The Federal Military Government has therefore decided to recognize local Government as the third tier of governmental activity in the nation. Local government should do precisely what the word government implies i.e governing at the grassroots or local level (Guidelines for Local Government Reform,1976,Forward:1).

The decision of the Federal Military Government to reform the local government was consequent upon the myriad problems that bedevilled the previous local government systems in the country. The Forward observes that the

Defects of the previous local government systems are too well known to deserve further elaboration here. Local Governments have over the years suffered from continuous whittling down of their powers. The state governments have continued to encroach on what normally has been exclusive preserve of local governments. Lack of funds and appropriate institutions had continued to make local government ineffective. Moreover, the staffing arrangements to ensure a virile local government system, had been a divorce between the people and government institution at their most basic level (Guidelines for Local Government Reform 1976: Forward: 1-2)

It was to reverse this ugly condition of local governments in Nigeria, that necessitated the 1976 reform agenda, in order to make local government an effective and efficient instrument for mobilization of human and material resources for national development and a crucial element in the Federal Military Government`s political transition programme.

The highlights of the landmark 1976 local government reform agenda include;

1. The first holistic reform by the Federal Government of local Government throughout in Nigeria;.
2. Introduction of a uniform system of local government in all states of the Federation;
3. The funding local government by Federal Government through statutory allocations from the Federation Account;
4. Recognition of local government was recognized as a third tier of government;
5. Preparing the ground for the entrenchment of local government in the 1979 Constitution of Nigeria;
6. Creation of single-tier all-purpose local government councils all over the country;
7. Designation of local government council jurisdictions as Local Government Areas;
8. Prescribing a population size of between 150,000 and 800,000 people for local government councils except in special cases.
9. Streamlining local government services in line with the service conditions as obtained in the state and Federal government services. The Local Government Services Board and staff training programme were also introduced.
10. Democratising local government, which this drastically weaken the exalted position of traditional rulers within the system.

11. Creation of full-time local government chairman and supervisory councilors and payment of a fixed salary to councilors instead of sitting allowances (Guidelines for Local Government Reform, 1976)

The 1979 Constitution and Local Government in Nigeria

A constitution is “a set of rights, powers and procedures regulating the structure of, and relationships among the authorities and the citizen” (Idike 1995:8). It is a body of broad, fundamental laws, a ground-rule regulating the behaviour, conduct and relationships between and among public authorities and the populace. A constitution may be written or unwritten, rigid or flexible. Nigeria, being a federal state, has written constitutions of which the 1979 constitution was particularly important.

The return to national legislation on local government in Nigeria came with the return to civilian rule under the 1979 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The departing Federal Military Government led by General Olusegun Obasanjo enshrined the landmark provisions of the 1976 Local Government Reform into the 1979 Constitution. The Constitution recognized local government as the third tier of government in the country. Extracts are given below:

Extracts: Section.7, Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1979 &1999)

- 7 (1) The System of local government by democratically elected local government councils is under this constitution guaranteed; and accordingly, the Government of every state shall ensure their existence under a law which provides for the establishment, structure, composition, finance and functions of such councils.
- 7 (2) The person authorized by law to prescribe the area over which a local government councils may exercise authority shall define such area as clearly as practicable and
 - a. ensure, to the extent to which it may, be reasonably justifiable, that in defining such area regard is paid to-
 - i. the common interest of the community in the area,
 - ii. traditional association of the community, and
 - iii. administrative convenience
- 7 (3) It shall be the duty of a local government council within the state to participate in economic planning and development of the area referred to in subsection (2) of this section and to this end an economic planning board shall be established by a Law enacted by the House of Assembly of the State.
- 7 (4) The Government of a state shall ensure that every person who is entitled to vote or be voted for at an election to a House of Assembly shall have the right to vote or be voted for at an election to a local government council.
- 7 (5) The functions to be conferred by law upon local government councils shall include those set out in the Fourth Schedule to this constitution.

- 7 (6) Subject to the provisions of this constitution
- a. The National Assembly shall make provisions for statutory allocation of public revenue to local government councils in the federation, and
 - b. The House of Assembly of a state shall make provisions for statutory allocation of public revenue to local government councils within the state,

With regard to the number and names of local government councils, Section 3(2) of the Constitution states:

- 3 (2) Each state of Nigeria named in the first column of part 1 of the First Schedule of this Constitution shall consist of the areas shown opposite thereto in the Second Column of that Schedule.

It should be noted that Part 1 of the First Schedule to the Constitution listed names of local government areas in each state of the Federation. Also item 30 in the Exclusive Legislative List in Part 1 of the Second Schedule to the Constitution barred the Federal Government from winding up local government councils directly established by a law enacted by a House of Assembly of a State.

The 1979 Constitution's provisions on Local Government seem contradictory. Although the Constitution did not expressly prevent the creation of new local government areas, the fact that the First Schedule of the 1979 Constitution listed names of local government areas which were established in 1976 suggests that the number of local government councils cannot be increased without a Constitutional amendment as provided in Section 9.

The term 'establish' as used in section 7(1) seems incontrovertible that the states have legal responsibility for creation of local government (Gboyega, 1980:69), but procedurally, it can be imputed that the states' actions in this regard were wrong and therefore a violation of a very vital legal process necessary for the creation of local government councils. Their actions as stated by Idike (1996:10) were *ultra vires* (beyond state powers) and the newly created local government councils were null and void and rightly wound up.

This state of affairs has generated two schools of thought. The first school includes Omoruyi (1985), Adamolekun (1983) and Olowu (1982) who in Ogunna (1996:149) opine that the number of local government councils for each state was entrenched in the Constitution and could not be altered except by Constitutional amendments. According to Omoruyi in Ogunna (1996:14-150) "The 1979 Constitution provides statutory guarantee for the existence of local government as a third-tier of government and that a central organ, the National Assembly, has a role to play in establishing and rationalizing local governments".

The second school of thought which includes Gboyega (1980) Smith and Owojaiye (1981) Nwabueze (1983), and the State Governors of the Second Republic, “argued that under Section 7 of the Constitution, state governments were empowered to create local governments” (Ogunna, 1994:149). This informed the decision of the Second Republic State Governors to increase the number of local government councils for selfish and political reasons.

These contradictory provisions in the Constitution imply that

State Governments possessed the power to create and control local governments but these powers were limited by the provisions of the 1979 Constitution. This, in effect means that the Constitution recognizes that local government as a third level of the government in Nigeria with an added implication of the Federal Government having a significant role to play in local government affairs (Ogunna, 1996:150).

The 1999 Constitution and Creation of Local Government in Nigeria

The 1999 Constitution with regard to establishment, composition, structure, finance and functions of local government councils, has similar provisions with the 1979 Constitution with minor variations. Section 7 (1-6) of the two Constitutions were the same, but Section 3(6) and 8 (3, 5 and 6) of the 1999 Constitution differ from the 1979 Constitution with regard to the number of local government councils and creation of new local government areas respectively.

Extracts: Sections 3 and 8, Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999)

- 3 (6) There shall be seven hundred and sixty-eight local government areas in Nigeria as shown in the Second Column of Part 1 of the First Schedule to this Constitution and six area Councils shown in Part II of that Schedule.
- 8 (3) A bill for a law of a House of Assembly for the purpose of creating a new local government area shall only be passed if:
- a. A request supported by at least two-thirds majority of members (representing the area demanding the creation of new local government area) in each of the following, namely-
 - i. The House of Assembly in respect of the area and
 - ii. The local government councils in respect of the area, is received by the House of Assembly;
 - b. A proposal for the creation of the Local government area is thereafter approved in a referendum by at least two-thirds majority of the people of the local government area where the demand for the proposed local government area originated.
 - c. The result of the referendum is then approved by a simple majority of the members in each local government council in a majority of all the local government councils in the state, and
 - d. The result of the referendum is approved by a resolution passed by two-thirds majority of members of the House of Assembly.

Section 8 (3) apparently gives the powers to create new local government areas to the state government through the State House of Assembly.

However, Sections 8(5) and 8(6) required the involvement of the Federal Government through the National Assembly in the process of creating new local government areas in the country.

Extracts: Section 8, Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999)

- 8 (5) An Act of the National Assembly passed in accordance with this section shall make consequential provisions with respect to the names and headquarters of states or local government areas as provided in Section 3 of this Constitution and in Parts 1 and II of the First Schedule of this Constitution.
- 8 (6) For the purpose of enabling the National Assembly to exercise to powers conferred upon it by subsection (5) of this section, each House of Assembly shall, after the creation of more local government areas pursuant to subsection (3) of this section, make adequate returns to each House of National Assembly.

Section 8 (5 and 6) seems to be a mere formality with regard to the role of the National Assembly in creating new local government areas in Nigeria. However, the reality on the ground proved otherwise. This covert contradictory and contentious provisions clearly manifested themselves when some state governments such as Lagos, Ebonyi, Katsina, Nassarawa, Niger, Yobe, under the 1999 Constitution exercised their constitutional powers to create new local government areas. The most celebrated case was between Lagos State Government and the Federal Government over the former's creation of 37 new local government areas in 2002. These were in addition to the 20 listed local government areas in Part 1, First Schedule of the 1999 Constitution without the National Assembly acting as stipulated in Section 8(5) and 8(6). As aptly stated by Obianyo in Alli (2005:187).

The different interpretations being given by the two parties to Section 8 (5) and 8 (6) as to whether Lagos State has satisfied or fulfilled the provisions of the Constitution in relation to the afore-stated Sections has led to a Constitutional crisis. This crisis is significant in view of the refusal of the Federal Government to release the Federal allocation to Local governments in Lagos State on grounds of violation of the 1999 Constitution.

In April 2004, President Olusegun Obasanjo announced during the meeting of the Federation Account Allocation Committee (FAAC) that

No allocation from the Federation Account should henceforth be released to the local government councils of the above mentioned states (and any other that may fall into that category until they revert back to their local government areas specified in Part one of the First Schedule of the Constitution)(*Obianyo,2005:187*).

The affected states were Lagos, Ebonyi, Kastina, Niger and Nasarawa.

The President's action generated a lot of controversy and the critical question was whether he acted constitutionally in stopping the statutory allocation from the Federation Account to these states because they created new local government areas.

It is pertinent here to note the Constitutional provisions on the Federal Statutory allocation to the local government councils as provided in Section 162(3)(5)(7) and (8) of the 1999 Constitution

Extracts: Section 162, Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999)

- 162(3) Any amount standing to the credit of the Federation Account shall be distributed among the Federal and State Governments and the local government councils in each state on such terms and in such manner as may be prescribed by the National Assembly.
- 162(5) Any amount standing to the credit of Local government councils in the Federation Account shall also be allocated to the states for the benefits of their local government councils on such terms and in such manner as may be prescribed by the National Assembly.
- 162(6) Each state shall maintain a special account to be called "State Joint Local Government Account" into which shall be paid all allocations to the local government councils of the state from the Federation Account and from the Government of the state.
- 162(7) Each state shall pay to local government councils in its area of jurisdiction such proportion of its total revenue on such terms and in such manner as may be prescribed by the National Assembly.
- 162(8) The amount standing to the credit of local government councils of a state shall be distributed among the local government councils of that state on such terms and in such manner as may be prescribed by the House of Assembly of the state.

It is important to note that the Federation Account and any amount standing therein do not belong to Federal Government of Nigeria but to the Federation, and thus the three tiers of Government (Federal, State and Local) are of right statutory beneficiaries, and no tier has power to deny another its own share. A combined reading of Sections 3,7,8,162 and Parts I and II of the First Schedule of the 1999 Constitution, indicates that the Federal Government acted *ultra-vires*, illegally and unconstitutionally in withholding Federal statutory allocations to the Constitutionally created and recognized local government areas.

The decision of the Supreme Court of Nigeria in the celebrated case instituted by *the Attorney-General of Lagos State vs. the Attorney-General of the Federation* in 2004 supported this view (The News, June, 2005). The judgment noted that the Lagos State Government prayed the Court (Supreme Court) to determine

Section. 1 whether or not there is power vested in the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (by executive administrative action) to suspend or withhold for any period whatsoever the statutory allocation due and payable to the Lagos State Government, pursuant to the provision of Section 162(5) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999.

The Supreme Court on Friday 10th of December 2004, held that

- (a) The Federal government has no power either by executive or administrative action, to suspend or withhold for any period whatsoever, the statutory allocations due and payable to Lagos State government pursuant to the provision of Section 162(5, 8) of the 1999 Constitution.
- (b) Such withholding of due allocations is unlawful and contrary to the provisions of the 1999 Constitution.

The Chief Justice of Nigeria (CJN), Justice Uwais (as he was then) maintained further that the creation of new local government areas or councils is supported by the provision of the Constitution (Obianyo, 2005:188)

The News(June,2005:19-32) notes that other Justices of Supreme Court such as Uwaifo, Tobi, Kutigi ruled thus; It does not appear to me that there is any power conferred on the President to withhold any allocation on the basis of a conceived breach of the Constitution (Uwaifo). Tobi asks “does the President have right to stop the release of funds to the councils? I think not”. He observes that

Section 162(5) of the Constitution or any other Section for that matter does not provide for the stoppage of allocation from the Federation Account to the Local government councils of Lagos State or any other state”. Kutigi rules that “Nowhere in the Constitution is the President expressly or impliedly authorized to suspend or withhold the statutory allocations payable to Lagos State pursuant to Section 162(5) of the Constitution, on the ground of complaints made against Lagos State by the Federal government in this Section or any ground at all. If the President has any grievance against any tier of Government, he should go to court. He cannot kill them by withholding their allocations (The News, June 13, 2005: 19-32).

On the main concern of this paper, which is the challenge of creating new local government areas under the 1979/1999 Constitutions, the Supreme Court in 2004, held that by virtue of the Lagos State creation of New Local Government Areas Law No. 5 of 2002 and as amended on October 6, 2003, the Lagos State government is constitutionally empowered by Sections 7(1) and (4) and 8 (3) of the 1999 Constitution to create 37 new local government areas in addition to the existing 20 local government areas, and to conduct elections of the chairmen and councillors into the new local government councils, which Lagos State Government did on 27th March, 2004.

The Court further held that the 57 newly created local government areas are constitutional, even though they were inchoate in view of the fact that the National Assembly had not made the consequential listing of the new local government areas as required by Section 8(5) of the Constitution. However, Justice Uwaifo observed that by virtue of Section 8(3) and Section 8(6) of the Constitution, the National Assembly has no basis to refuse the consequential listing of the new local government areas in the Constitution. The Court orders the federal

government to release the withheld fund to the Lagos state government for onward distribution to the twenty local government councils.

Relying on the aspect of the judgment which stated that the new 37 Local government areas were inchoate, President Obasanjo refused to release the fund, arguing that the 37 new local government areas were unconstitutional and the old 20 local government areas no longer exist because their boundaries have been altered by the Lagos State Government upon the unconstitutional creation of 57 local government areas.

It is the considered view of this writer with due respect, that the view of the former President is wrong and illegal. It was a clear case of disobedience to the order of Court of competent jurisdiction. This is contempt of Court and a clear manifestation of executive lawlessness. The right course of action by the president would have been to file an action in the Supreme Court to challenge the constitutionality of the new local government areas, but he chose the resort to self-help, thereby undermined the rule of law and overheated the polity.

It should be noted that the attitude of the former president in this matter depicts double standards and bias against Lagos State. This is so because the president did not withhold the statutory allocations to other states that created new local government areas. They simply changed the names of the local government areas to 'Development Areas'. Lagos State did the same, yet her case was different.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The decision to entrench Local government in the Federal Constitution of Nigeria as a third tier level of Government and other provisions of Local Government seem to be a reactive measure to resolve the myriad problems encountered by local government before the 1976 Local Government Reform. This decision contradicts the standard practice in other federal states, where matters of local governments are left to the state, regional, provincial or canton government to legislate and superintend. In Nigeria, the resultant effect of entrenchment of local government provisions in the constitution, leads to is the constitutional crisis arising from creation, funding and even functions of local government, and the attendant drawbacks to the country. The constitutional entrenchment of local government in Nigeria particularly with regard to creation of new local governments tends to have more negative than positive effects. A classical example of this ugly effect is the celebrated case in 2004 of the Supreme Court of Nigeria between the Lagos State and Federal Governments over the creation of new 37 local government areas in addition to the 20 named in the Constitution without consequential listing by the National Assembly, and the consequent withholding of the

Federal Statutory allocations to the 20 LGAs in Lagos State by former President Olusegun Obasanjo. This caused a lot of hardship to the local government workers and residents.

Therefore it is a considered recommendation of this paper that local government affairs should be expunged from the Federal Constitution and be left to the state governments to handle as is the practice in the country before 1976 and in other federations. This recommendation is considered apt because the underline issue fueling the Constitutional crisis over creation of new local government areas is the Federal statutory funding/allocation to Local Government Councils. The saying that 'he who pays the piper dictates the tune' comes into serious play here. The more the local government areas in a state, the more the statutory allocations to the state. This makes creation of new local government areas under the 1999 Constitution very difficult because no state would like be left behind in the race to create/proliferate new local government areas as was the case in the Second Republic under the 1979 Constitution, and have more funds/allocations from the Federation Account.

Let each state government create number of local government areas required for its area, and the amount standing in the Federation Account as provided in Section 162 should be shared between the Federal and State governments in accordance with Sections 162 (2) and 162(4) of the constitution.

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Working Relationships for Sustainability: Improving Work-Based Relationships in Local Government to bring about Sustainability Goals

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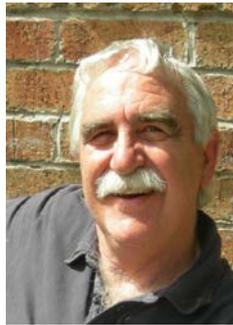


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Abstract:

There's no escape: we are always in relationship. Being aware of this matters. Doing something to build constructive relationships for sustainability, matters even more.

This paper considers the connection between good relationships and effective sustainability work in local government. It draws on the collective experiences of four practitioners who have worked over many years in, with or for local government and argues that a good deal of project success is contingent upon the development of positive relationships with stakeholders, contractors, communities, businesses, colleagues, partners and other agencies and agency officers.

Relationships can help or hinder project process, progress and outcomes. This paper identifies some approaches for building quality relationships and uses examples to highlight these strategies. These include: recognising that developing and maintaining resilient relationships and high quality communication is a critical foundation for success; designing projects with explicit relationship outcomes; and allocating time, money and other resources to support the development of effective relationships.

1. Introduction

Humans are tuned for relationships (Abram, 1997). Humans developed in relationship with everything around them over many thousands of years; we are who we are through our relationships with each other, organisations, systems and processes, events, experiences, other species, the inanimate elements of Earth, resources and ideas. We are *always* in relationship.

The authors share a strongly held view that sustainability³³ is all about relationships. The social dimensions of a more sustainable future are about connections between people. And the environmental dimensions of sustainability require people to work together to make change (Cox, 1995 and Brown et al 2004).

This paper draws on the experience and perspectives of four practitioners who have worked on sustainability projects in state government, local government and tertiary institutions, and as project managers and consultants to local governments and other organisations; their work is primarily to do with environment, sustainability and community engagement.

The main purpose of this paper is to put the issue of relationships on the agenda for the sustainability sector and to explore questions related to the extent to which we value quality relationships in our work.

We propose that a focus on relationships needs to be at the core of thinking about sustainability, because relationships impact on behaviours. Since problems continue to emerge and evolve, so too must relationships. We argue that failing to invest in relationships can have tangible negative impacts on policy and implementation for sustainability (Rogers, 1970, p287).

This paper draws attention to some common situations where there may be structural and cultural barriers that prevent relationships being given due attention. We draw on theory to make sense of some of these experiences, and to suggest new ways that relationships can be valued in working towards sustainability.

2. Why relationships are important for sustainability

Local government plays, and must continue to play, an increasingly important role in helping local communities (householders, businesses, landowners, developers) respond to the challenges of sustainability (Wild, 2006). It is the level of government best placed to

³³ In this paper we use the word sustainability interchangeably with 'sustainable development', which reflects common use in Australia – see section 2 for details.

appreciate and respond to local issues; it is the level best able to build, maintain and facilitate good relations in and across the community (NSW Division of Local Government, 2009). In taking on this role, local government is able to provide excellent models of sustainable practice in its own operations.

Capra (1982 p 290) suggests that sustainability is all about relationships and that a sustainable community is aware of the multiple relationships among its members. Nourishing the community means nourishing those relationships. Mutually enhancing relationships are important, said Thomas Berry (1998).

What do we mean by sustainability?

In this paper we use the term ‘work for sustainability’ to refer to work that is being undertaken to value and contribute to the objectives of sustainable development through supporting social, natural and cultural capital in an equitable way and to meet the needs of future generations.

By sustainability we mean addressing environmental issues to ensure that we maintain our ‘natural capital’ (including biodiversity) as well as our ‘social capital’ i.e. sustaining human populations into the future in a way that is equitable (inter and intra generational equity) and Maintaining quality of life (Brown 2004). This involves considering quadruple bottom lines³⁴ in decision making, and regarding a healthy economy as only part of a healthy community.

Sustainability requires ongoing changes in how we think about situations³⁵. It is a cyclic process of enquiry, decision making, action and reflection in the presence of information about values and impacts. Single projects, no matter how large, do not solve sustainability problems, only engaged people do. It is the thinking about and learning from the project by people that contribute to further positive change.

New ways of relating to resources and climate require new ways of seeing the world and our place in it. These kinds of changes may be easier to make and to motivate if we have access to peers and communities that are working towards sharing similar challenges and interests.

³⁴ Triple bottom line (TBL) provides a methodology for councils to report across three dimensions of performance; environmental, social and economic, and has been quite widely explored by the Australian local government sector (e.g.: Jigsaw Services, 2004). The ‘quadruple bottom line’ concept builds on this idea and includes four dimensions: environmental sustainability, economic or fiscal sustainability, social or community sustainability and civic leadership or corporate governance (see for example Liverpool City Council n.d.). Some councils have interpreted these four pillars to be environmental, economic, social and cultural (e.g.: City of Norwood, Payneham and St Peters 2012).

³⁵ Key concepts include: human wellbeing, quality of life; future generations, (intergenerational equity); equity within this generation (intra-generational equity); precautionary principle; conservation of biological diversity, equity and balance.

What kinds of relationship are we talking about?

As practitioners working towards a more sustainable future we are working with and through our relationships – with community, with one another, with people in institutions. The vital relationships for success in achieving sustainability outcomes in projects are those between and amongst project staff and stakeholders including:

- Officers and managers from local, state, commonwealth agencies
- Contractors and other business personnel
- Not for Profit organisations
- Schools and other formal educational facilities
- Target audience for the project/s.

Each of these cases involves two or more people who share policy or programme objectives, and seek to achieve their ends through influencing the other through dialogue. Their training and experience may be in environmental science, policy development, strategic planning, activism, hands on environmental restoration practices, education programme design (or similar) and yet the means by which they are brought together is through a professional relationship.³⁶

These relationships may be fleeting or ongoing; they may be defined through official roles; and yet may be unclear with respect to other parameters; they may be shrouded with hostility and mistrust; or perhaps there may be a sense of mutual interest in reaching favourable outcomes. Relationships – like projects and the issues they seek to address – are dynamic; they need to evolve accordingly.

This broad contextualisation of relationships reflects our deliberate attempt to embrace honestly and consider the wide range of relationships that exist in our professional spheres, and include this full suite within the bounds of our discussion.

Box 1 – Good relationships are important to sustainability outcomes because:

- Making substantial and ongoing social change often requires a willingness to ask questions and learn from others. This process is much easier within supportive relationships.
- At the end of the day, it is people who get things done (or who get in the way of getting things done). It is people together who bring passion, commitment and progress to challenging problems. Movement toward sustainable outcomes happens more effectively when people are pulling in the same direction.
- For sustainability outcomes to be met, we need to generate a shared understanding of situations and aspirations, and we can only do that through quality relationships. Without good

³⁶ At this juncture it should be noted that the situation is often more complex than the examples indicate. Often a number of relationships are being worked up at any one time and group relationships are as vital as one-on-one interactions

relationships, we don't have good outcomes for everybody.

- Relationships help extend our boundaries of care. In relationship, we learn we are interdependent, more than our 'skin encapsulated ego' (Watt, 1957). Sustainability outcomes result from acknowledging and acting on that interdependence across all aspects of the quadruple bottom line. Outcomes themselves are not sustainable without ongoing relationships. Otherwise, we're making snapshots not a movie.

Building relationships in sustainability initiatives - Whose responsibility is it?

Within any sustainability initiative, the project manager has responsibilities in mediating, facilitating and supporting good relationships. But it is not just the project manager who holds these responsibilities: all project stakeholders need to ensure that good relationships are established and maintained. It is the project manager's responsibility to facilitate this conversation and understanding within the project community. Project managers can set expectations and offer guidance; they need to be aware that people are watching them for clues about how to behave in relationships with others. Establishing a healthy culture as part of the project community can help win the hearts and minds of clients, staff, passionate community members and elected officials (de Souza Briggs, 2003).

Relationships within a project are many and diverse, and they are the responsibility of all project participants. Sustainability requires understanding and action on the view that we have a relationship to everyone, everywhere, 'every when'. We do have to work to get the scale and nature of the relationship right. And it's important to remember that relationships don't just happen. They require attention and care. They need to be acts of creation every day.

3. Do we value relationships in our work?

Rhetoric about the importance of relationships abounds among those interested in sustainability in local government. It would be rare for someone working in this sector to talk down the value of high quality working relationships and how integral they are to achieving sustainable outcomes. But the truth is that relationships are not always valued, worked at, adequately funded and/or given sufficient time to develop and mature in many sustainability projects.

There are a number of reasons why relationships are undervalued and at times break down. They range from a lack of shared understanding about why relationships between people are crucial to the success of a sustainability project or programme, to the quest for quick and quantifiable sustainability outcomes at the expense of the human connections. Between these two extremes, relationship-building takes time and some see this as a waste of time, whilst

others lack the communication skills and commitment that are essential for quality relationship building.

At times relationships are not built because people just don't get on, or they have very different life views and values. When this results in conflict rather than cohesion, it requires extra effort, and even mediation to enable people to work together to find common ground.

Unfortunately many examples exist where relationship building has not worked.³⁷ The following snapshots are provided to illustrate some of the ways in which we undervalue relationship building:

- Two neighbouring Councils conduct a joint project to restore the riparian zone along a creek that crosses their local government areas. One of the Councils works constructively with its community to establish vegetation restoration groups along the creek and encourage a strong local commitment to place. The other Council does not actively support community action. Local residents are disenchanted by the lack of support they, and the project, receive.
- A Council continues to have high staff turnover at an officer level sustainability position. Each new staff member must 'learn from scratch' who the key players in the community are, and what the relationships are between each group and with each group and Council. Often more pressing matters like project deadlines and deliverables compete for time. Community members are frustrated that every time they get to know a staff member and have begun working fruitfully together, and shared their considerable local knowledge there is a new person to get to know.
- A State Government agency conducts a major consultation to seek the views of local government staff about a draft policy. Despite a number of promises to the contrary, the consultation document, which contained a summary and analysis of stakeholder views, is not made public to those involved in the process. This has significant impact on relationships between the agency and its local government partners.

Perhaps some of these examples resonate with your experience.

Another common scenario is when a grant-funded project employs a project manager working within a set timeframe for implementing a project. The project officer (or team)

³⁷ Note: These are hypothetical examples, informed by many and various actual situations over the past decade in countless councils. No one particular Council or community group is referred to; any similarities are purely coincidental.

needs to work alongside people in the funding body, the Council staff and councillors, other agencies and with subcontractors/consultants and people in the community. Because grant-funded projects are time-limited, good relationships with all of these people can mean the difference between outstanding success and dismal failure. While a substantial amount of environmental focussed funding is directed in these projects towards ‘on-ground’ outcomes, we suggest that when these projects fall down it is in part because of poor relationship management.

Some of the literature in this field focuses on providing techniques for change management and skills required to build engagement (eg: DSE, 2005). It rarely talks in detail about the need to recognise the time and effort that is required to work on the relationships; to enable trusting relationships to be developed with new staff, existing staff, senior management and the community; nor to develop ‘knowing’ that is required as a precursor for willingness to share, change or adapt. It does not help people to map their relationships and plan them effectively and generally undervalues the need for high quality relationship building processes.



Workshop: Perth WA, 2008. Participants mapping relationships with other agencies
Photograph: Grahame Collier

4. Examples from local government practice – some different approaches

The following three case studies represent different approaches to building relationships in sustainability. Readers will find some aspects of each case study of more interest than others, and some cases more directly applicable to their work than others. Each case study however, does provide a tangible example of what local governments are doing to improve, extend and validate relationships in project management and design and in the workplace.

Case Study 1: Relationships with community-Parramatta City Council Residents' Panel

This case study is an example of an organisational culture which values relationships for sustainability and demonstrates quality participatory practices.

What is the Residents Panel? The Resident's Panel at Parramatta City Council³⁸ provides the vehicle for Council to have an ongoing relationship with its community. People on the Residents Panel have their say on matters that relate to a wide variety of areas, such as the environment, social Issues, economic Issues, housing Issues, Council services and the future direction for the City of Parramatta.

Panel members are involved in:

- Completing Surveys – using mail, phone and also email based
- Attending Focus groups – in person or online
- Being involved in In-depth interviews
- Attending public meetings and workshops.

Currently there are over 2,000 people on the Panel. Each has nominated areas of interest and is contacted by Council regularly. Additional panel members are being sought constantly and at each consultation, panelists are invited to bring family, friends and neighbours with them. As far as Panel membership is concerned no distinction is made between property owners and renters.

These relationships are not just built on a project-by-project basis, but are fostered over time through the creation of, and participation in, the Residents Panel. Members of the Residents Panel are involved in every important consultation that Council conducts. Their input helps Council in its understanding of community issues and how Council might approach these.

Why does this particular relationship work? This way of building relationships works because it is built on the needs and interests of the community and is strongly supported by Council. Each consultation is delivered through the Residents Panel so that there is certainty of ongoing contact. Panel members are given the opportunity to provide input and gain feedback about what has happened to that input. People on the Panel can also opt in and opt out, as they wish, from a specific consultation process.

Members of the Resident's Panel are also provided with necessary information for consultations. For example, a consultation on the future outlook and design of the CBD may require maps, drawings and visuals to be supplied to members so that can express their view.

One of the authors of this article recently worked with Council on a major consultation for the development of a sustainability plan. All consultation occurred through focus groups of Panel members. Members of the community were well informed and their level of contribution was of high value. Panel participants can see that their ideas have been implemented; for example the Parramatta CBD Loop Bus (a free bus service provided around the Parramatta CBD) came from a Panel meeting. One challenge for Parramatta City Council is in gaining sufficient young Panel members.

What helps the Panel process work? Through the Panel, Council is able to better understand the needs and aspirations of the community and involve members of the community in decision making processes. It also helps to increase transparency and accountability in decision making and build capacity in local residents to affect Council decisions.

Contact details: Community Relations Unit, Parramatta City Council, NSW Australia

³⁸ www.parramatta.nsw.gov.au

Case Study 2: Wollongong, Shellharbour and Kiama Councils - Sustainable Illawarra

This case study demonstrates both intra-institutional relationship arrangements for sustainability and how building of relationships with community participants during the development of the project ensures that the project meets the needs of community stakeholders.

*What was Sustainable Illawarra?*³⁹ Sustainable Illawarra was a joint sustainability initiative involving Wollongong, Shellharbour and Kiama Councils, with support from the NSW Government's Environmental Trust. The project involved three separate project components - stormwater reuse projects, institutional change and community sustainability education. The project was implemented over three years from August 2007- 2010. Relationship building was at the heart of the programme and this case study focuses on the community education component of the project.

What relationships were built? The framework for the three Councils working together to deliver the Sustainable Illawarra project was created via a Memorandum of Understanding. Wollongong City Council was identified as the lead Council and the Sustainable Illawarra Project Manager and project officers operated from this location. Delivery of the project was overseen by a steering committee of senior managers from the three Councils, and provided direction and approval processes. To draw on the expertise of environment officers from across the three Councils, working parties were established to develop and implement the Sustainability Begins at Home community education component of the project. Council staff joined one of four working parties (biodiversity, water and energy, waste and better buying, and sustainable food) and each met on a monthly/bi-monthly basis. Over the course of the project over 30 staff from the Councils' environment teams were involved in the design and delivery of the community sustainability education initiatives. This required substantial collaboration and highly positive relationship building and maintenance skills. The community was engaged in the development stages of the project primarily via a community survey undertaken with 900 residents. The programme was varied throughout in response to community feedback and workshop evaluations.

The project engaged 9,355 residents (3.3% of the 283,000 population) through the 124 Sustainable Illawarra workshops, walks, tours and major events. It supported workshop participants to share the skills and knowledge they gained at Sustainable Illawarra workshops with an average of seven others, expanding the influence to 73,580 residents (26% of the regional population). Seventy six percent of workshop participants identified that the workshop significantly increased their knowledge and confidence. All surveyed workshop participants identified positive changes they had undertaken at home.

Why did the relationships work? There was a very strong commitment from all staff involved in this project to maximise the opportunity to create and deliver quality sustainability education initiatives to the community. Regular communication was critical to building working relationships and also a challenging aspect of the project delivery, with multiple staff from three different Councils involved.

Following the completion of Sustainable Illawarra, Council staff members continue to draw upon the relationships built through the project. As an example, the three Councils are working together to implement a Ride to Work Week initiative, and are utilising tried and tested promotional strategies to engage the community in this event. The project final evaluation report provides much more detail into the relationships built, activities undertaken and recommendations from the Sustainable Illawarra team.

Contact details: Alison Mellor, former Project Manager Sustainable Illawarra, NSW Australia, can now be contacted at Shellharbour Council.

³⁹ All data drawn from the Sustainable Illawarra Final Evaluation Report which can be obtained from the Local Government and Shires Association Website at www.lgsa-plus.net.au/resources/documents/Sustainable_Illawarra_Final_Report_September_2010.pdf

Case Study 3: Relationships in a region - Wellington, Blayney, Cabonne and Central Tablelands Water Strategic Alliance (the WBC Alliance)

This case study demonstrates intra-institutional arrangements for sustainability outcomes, Councils recognising the importance of relationship management and the benefits that flow from a project manager who sees relationship management as a core aspect of her role.

Why does this particular relationship work? This alliance, formed in 2003, comprises three regional Councils and a water authority in the western part of New South Wales who over the past three years have benefitted from a dedicated staff member.⁴⁰ Leadership is critical to the success of the WBC Alliance. It is demonstrated by a common agreement between the Mayors, Deputy Mayors and General Managers as to its purpose, goals and the resources they put into it. Working on and in the Alliance, and the benefits it brings, is part of the regular activities within and between the Councils. The lynchpin of its success is the investment that the Executive Team made in bringing in an Executive Manager for the Alliance. Her focus has been relationship management. She has extended the Alliance from agreements between the Executive Team to all levels of Council being involved in developing and coordinating advisory and working groups. The Executive Manager has respect from the members, has credibility, is cooperative and is enthusiastic about the Alliance itself. She sees relationship management as an essential skill to support those she works for and with.

The Executive Manager uses a combination of relationship management and a project management approach to the collaborative work they do, setting realistic timelines and clear responsibilities and outcomes. This avoids false expectations and wasting time. The Alliance also has a clear operating structure running across all the member organisations and across all staffing levels with the different Councils.

What benefits does this relationship model bring about? While the Alliance was originally formed as an alternative model to amalgamation, it now demonstrates benefits across all aspects of Council responsibilities. Activities span from developing a mutual sustainability charter to managing climate change and gaining funding for regional environmental works, through to efficiency gains, demonstrating financial savings and increasing skills and knowledge across the professions (including in asset management), Development Application processing, GIS systems and conducting internal audits). The Alliance is a positive example of sharing knowledge and experiences within local government.

What makes it work? Accountability within, and for the Alliance, is embedded into the contracts for General Managers. Accountability and performance measures on collaboration are included in the position descriptions of Senior Management. Demonstrating the high value put on collaborative approaches through the Alliance, one Council has even extended responsibility for collaboration into all staff position descriptions. The lynchpin for all the networks in the Alliance; the advisory group, professional teams and executive, is the Alliance Executive Manager. She, in turn has put in place clear yet simple governance arrangements to ensure that all parties are involved and kept up to date with their Alliance work and its outcomes. This Alliance is a positive example of acknowledging the importance of relationship and systems management to reap rewards.

Contact details: <http://wbcalliance.nsw.gov.au> or contact Donna Galvin at the WBC Alliance, NSW Australia

⁴⁰ This case study was prepared after telephone interview with Executive Manager and author's personal experience of the WBC Alliance

These case studies demonstrate that relationship building requires focus, time, energy, listening and a commitment to ongoing conversations. It is essential to achieving the extent of change we are seeking in society. It is vital and it reaps rewards. All of the case studies demonstrate different approaches to the process, but each is underpinned by the recognition that relationships can make or break the success both at the time of delivery and into the future.

Each of these case studies indicates willingness by Councils to listen and vary an approach and/or a programme based on what is heard. These Councils recognise and respect the knowledge that community members and businesses have and bring to the table. Without this acknowledgement, people engaged in the relating process lose faith and energy. These case studies show what can be achieved when Councils have listened and learnt.

The effort taken to build relationships is demonstrated in these case studies. The sum of the outputs is greater than the amount of input required; programmes have integrity and are more easily sustained into the future. Credibility can be increased and, importantly for capacity-building programmes, maintained into the future.

Relationship-building requires a champion or two (Taylor 2009). Although not explicitly detailed in the actual descriptions of the case studies above, each project had a driver and it was that person and their team (in some cases) that built the relationships required to make the programme work. Often too, they were the champion of the process within their Council. They brought people along with them, showed the benefits, fought the battles and reported on the gains, because they saw the value of building and managing relationships for sustainability.

Techniques and approaches to fostering healthy relationships in work

Clearly there are a range of changes that can be made to better value and improve relationship management in our work. In the previous sections we described these and we note that they are broadly encompassed within the following scope:

- Incorporating relationship management for sustainability into **inter-institutional arrangements** such as between different levels of government or groups of Councils working in collaboration.
- Developing, valuing and managing relationships within an **organisational culture**. For example, such a culture includes the roles of leaders in modelling the value placed on relationship management.

- Supporting **project managers** to specifically identify, develop and manage relationships directed towards sustainability outcomes.
- Promote the role and responsibility we all have as **individuals** participating in programmes to work on relationships. For example this includes facilitating changes in communication processes that are used.

It is best when all those involved in sustainability initiatives share a commitment to using techniques and learning skills required to build and maintain ongoing relationships.

Managing sustainability initiatives sometimes requires expertise in negotiation and conflict resolution; skills in assertiveness and active listening are of real value (see for example Barnlund, 2008, Berko, Wolvin and Wolvin, 2010). Even when there is no conflict or markedly different values, views or working styles, building rapport is essential to establishing and maintaining relationships. Relationships are enhanced through non-judgemental communication; that is, active listening and the temporary suspension of judgement, so that quality communication can occur. Strategies for building good rapport can be as simple as attending to basic conventions of good communication: using a person's preferred name when speaking with them, listening carefully and actively, explaining words and expressions that may be unfamiliar, not using jargon, explaining what you already know, explaining clearly any specific position you may have, and summing up the discussion when appropriate (Kabatnick and Cullen, 2004).

Within this Section we present some suggestions and approaches for how the sector can better attend to relationships in work, across these four broad spheres. This is not a comprehensive list of guidelines, because that is beyond the scope of our focus, but they should be seen as tips for integrating a higher priority for relationship building and maintenance, within our work (Appelbaum 2005).

Building significant relationships between organisations at all levels is an important factor in project success. Through *inter- institutional arrangements* we can:

- ✓ Ensure resources are adequate for the establishment of relationships and agreed understandings of the project processes and goals. Develop planning frameworks, funding applications and/or reporting frameworks that include KPIs related to relationships.
- ✓ Establish formal committees (for example Project Steering Committees) with agreed terms of reference, so each member is clear about the relationship roles, responsibilities and working parameters of the committee. Encourage the establishment of smaller working groups so that people get to work together on specific tasks.
- ✓ Allow time in the early meetings for all participants to get to know each other. Extend the opportunity for relationship building at each meeting, both through formal meeting processes – for example sufficient discussion time – and through informal time – morning tea/lunch etc. Encourage quieter members of the group to speak and manage the group so it is not dominated by one or two voices.
- ✓ Validate and support the relationships that are built through the committee and its processes. Ensure that all key stakeholders are engaged within each project and initiative, and consider formalising relationships through MOUs or letters of agreements as required.
- ✓ Build in a process that ensures that any relationship issues/conflicts that emerge can be discussed and resolved quickly and effectively.

Through changing *organisational culture* to support the time and energy invested in creating relationships with the community and stakeholders we can:

- ✓ For grant-funded roles, work hard as host Council(s) to welcome the project manager, providing induction into the ways of local government, regular opportunities for personal contact and establishing systems that will raise awareness about the project with key staff, influencers in the community and senior management.
- ✓ Ensure that senior staff and elected representatives within local and state government agencies value and support the time and energy it takes to set-up, manage and extend quality relationships that are focussed on producing ongoing sustainability outcomes.
- ✓ Recognise the challenges in trying to cost relationships and their benefits and acknowledge their yield is more likely to be a long term rather than a shorter term, although poor relations can derail projects. Provide guidance to project officers and/or applicants on the time they might expect to spend building project relationships.
- ✓ Provide training for staff and/or successful recipients on conflict resolution and restorative practices.
- ✓ Include a project relationship dimension in staff performance criteria. Support training for staff on restorative practices and relationship management. Recognise and reward staff achievements in relationship management.

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The project manager is crucial in the facilitation of the relationships within all successful sustainability projects. In their role, the *project manager* can:

- ✓ Ensure the project planning process includes sufficient time at the beginning to build the relationship. This can include discrete tasks such as: stakeholder mapping, initial interviews with stakeholders, consultation on/review of the project brief with stakeholders (DSE, 2005).
- ✓ Get a sense of personal strengths and needs in relationship management. Seek training where necessary.
- ✓ Make a flow chart of relationships early in complex projects. Recognise each one and where they can add value / pose a risk to project outcomes. Be proactive in developing working, professional relationships with others in the project.
- ✓ Appreciate there are real people in this project with needs, feelings, fears, priorities... that are likely to be different to yours. Avoid personal 'put downs' and directing anger aggressively at others. There is no place for these behaviours in constructive, positive relationship building.
- ✓ Develop an evaluation plan at the outset of the project with project stakeholders. Build relational outcomes into the evaluation plan.
- ✓ Clarify roles and responsibilities. Then clarify them again. Keep checking this.
- ✓ Set up agreed communication processes, for all stakeholders even those one or two steps removed from the process. Keep reviewing these – are they still working? Keep lines of communication open.
- ✓ Set up a process for dealing with disagreement. Central is a commitment to working together. Discuss decision making and feedback processes explicitly in the group or relationship. Consider bringing in an independent third person to mediate where relationship breakdown occurs. Identify someone with skills and experience in facilitation or conflict resolution, and experience working in charged emotional situations
- ✓ Be aware that, at times, attitudinal change within organisations is required in order to see the community as partners in a project and work with them to build and maintain the relationships required.
- ✓ Celebrate successes in the project. Recognise and acknowledge good working relations

All individuals involved in sustainability initiatives can:

- ✓ Acknowledge early on that all participants have a responsibility for managing interpersonal relationships within that project or programme. Seek to achieve mutually enriching and trusting relationships.
- ✓ Remember that building respectful and trusting relationships is the highest order priority for successful projects. Utilise the skills of active listening, conflict resolution and mediation designed to establish win/win relationships.
- ✓ Recognise that others view the world and projects differently. Try to appreciate these different perspectives, attitudes and values in your own actions and planning. Discuss the similarities and differences with stakeholders. Make an effort to hear and understand the views of others. This requires active listening and a respectful attitude to their views; the more removed their views are from yours, the harder you have to work at understanding what motivates them. Listen hard and then look for common ground and work from that point forward.
- ✓ Avoid taking a 'not speaking' position – there is no time for playing 'no speaks' if relationships are to be built. Whatever happens, it is essential that communication continues to occur. If your views are not yet formed and you need more time to respond, then say that, rather than staying silent which may be construed as negativity.
- ✓ Consider that when views are oppositional, often a graduated response is required. This means that in the early stages of communication about an issue, rather than each side stating strong positions from the outset, there is an attempt made to build rapport and understanding. Spend time identifying 'like rather than difference' and making contact as people rather than about the issue. Move from this point to gaining a better understanding of what underpins individual views and then onto more in-depth statements of the views themselves.
- ✓ Acknowledge that rational argument does not always win the day. Not surprisingly in many conflict situations, both sides believe their argument is rational.
- ✓ State your position assertively when necessary: stating your own position rather than negatively attacking their position. Communicate clearly and in non-judgemental ways. Seek to achieve rapport, trust and confidence through and in communication processes.

7. Recommendations and Conclusions

In order to enhance the focus on relationship building in sustainability initiatives, we recommend that:

1. Funding bodies value and support the time it takes to set up, manage and extend quality relationships focussed on producing ongoing sustainability outcomes. For example, this can occur through funding application and reporting frameworks (such as adding Key Performance Indicators related to relationships), giving guidance on the time applicants might expect to spend building project relationships, providing training to successful recipients on negotiation and conflict resolution skills.
2. Senior staff and elected representatives within local and state government agencies also value and support the time it takes to set up, manage and extend quality relationships that are focussed on producing ongoing sustainability outcomes. They can demonstrate this to staff by adding this dimension of programme delivery to staff KPIs (performance criteria), through induction training and ongoing professional development, and through including it in project planning.
3. As a part of effective planning, project and programme managers take time to map, identify and facilitate the crucial relationships required for the success of their projects.
4. Organisations demonstrate respect for and recognition of the knowledge, skills and contribution that stakeholders bring to Council-led sustainability projects and that this is required during planning, rollout and evaluation phases.
5. All participants in a sustainability programme or project have shared responsibility to work on interpersonal relationships within that project or programme. Project managers or co-ordinators need to take an active role in facilitating this process.
6. Skills in developing and maintaining relationships be recognised as a core component of professional development and personal reflection.
7. Recognise that our different value sets or perspectives can create disagreement or conflict, and that we must work with them respectfully to bring about sustainability outcomes.

In conclusion then, we contend that relationship management is a pivotal, yet frequently undervalued, variable in the progress and processes of sustainability programmes. We believe that developing and maintaining resilient relationships is a critical foundation for project success.

In highlighting relationships, we have also identified some approaches and case studies that might help both to raise the profile of the importance of relationship-building and relationship-maintenance. We hope that, by highlighting these firmly in the context of sustainability outcomes, we have encouraged some thinking about the emphasis given to interpersonal matters in project design, delivery and evaluation. We believe specific attention to these aspects is vital for those working in our sector.

While this paper has outlined an assortment of ideas for approaching and improving relationships in our work, it is by no means comprehensive, nor intended as a definitive 'solution' to the issue. Instead, we invite practitioners, managers, funding bodies and members of the community to consider how they might better attend to and value relationships in their project work.

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SEA: Comparing Open Perspectives on Planning Sustainability in Sardinia (Italy) and Torbay (Devon)

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1. Introduction

If Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to be effective and fulfil in the spirit of its governing EU Directive 2001/42/EC, cooperative and inclusive attitudes are essential. Cooperation should involve institutions, planning authorities and agencies which are involved in environmental assessment procedures. Inclusion implies favouring and catalysing local communities' participation, that is participation of the public, in the planning/ assessment process.

This paper discusses crucial aspects of SEA through a comparison of two case studies: the SEA of the *Torbay Local Transport Plan 2006-2011* (LTPT) published by Torbay Council, and the *Masterplan of the Port of the City of Cagliari, 2010* (MPPC) published by the Autorità Portuale di Cagliari in Sardinia, Italy, to provide evidence and lessons of good practice for both the UK and Italy. These include the assessment of:

- i. the *endogeneity* of the SEA process' with respect to the planning process;
- ii. the *sustainability* and *participation* approaches;
- iii. the way available alternative planning *options* are compared;
- iv. the definition of the *monitoring* process.

The paper is based on an analysis of the written plans and their SEAs rather than a wider trawl of sources, on the basis that the plan preparation process should be explicit within the plan.

In Italy, implementation of the Directive is based on the Law enacted by decree No. 2006/152, which in the conceptual approach requires careful attention to both the general planning/assessment objectives, which have to be inclusive and incremental, and to participation in the process of key-actors, which has to be effective and easy in terms of its *ex-ante* and ongoing steps.

In Sardinia (an island of about 24,000 km² and 1.6 million inhabitants, located west of the Italian mainland near the French island of Corsica), the regional government issued a *Guidelines Manual* (Regione Autonoma della Sardegna 2010) to ensure that an inclusive and incremental SEA process is implemented, and to set out rigorously defined steps for an authority pursuing an SEA (i.e.: a Sardinian city or province). The aim was to ensure participation of all potentially interested subjects, including public agencies, profit and non-profit enterprises, social and non-governmental organisations, and citizens, and to speed-up plan approval and adoption, which take place once the SEA preparation process is over. Unfortunately, the application of the Manual is still far from being effective.

All Port Authorities in Italy have a statutory duty to propose a Masterplan which becomes operational once it is approved by the National Council of Public Works. The Masterplan of the Port of Cagliari (MPPC) was approved in 2010¹, and it defines the rules on land use and on the organisation of public services and infrastructure of the area of the Port of Cagliari. The Port Authority of Cagliari rules over a coastal area which extends up to 30 km along the seashore, including part of the territory of three municipalities (Cagliari, Capoterra and Sarroch). The Port extends along a frontage of 30 km, with a 8-square-kilometer area. The Port is divided into two parts: the historical Port and the *Canal Port*. The historical Port is for commercial and passengers traffic. Transshipment and RO/RO traffic take place in the Canal Port, located to the Western side of the Port. The Port is well integrated into the historical fabric of Cagliari at a 100-meter distance from the historical centre of the city, close to the main railway station and seven kilometres m away from the airport.

In Torbay, according to the *2006 Environmental Report of the SEA of the Local Transport Plan* issued by the Torbay Council (2006; Devon, South-West England),

The goal of sustainable development is to enable people to satisfy their needs and enjoy a better quality of life without compromising the ability of future

¹ Statement #43/2010 of 4 August 2010 by the National Council of the Public Works.

generations to satisfy their needs. Strategic Environmental Assessment assists in promoting sustainable development by integrating sustainability considerations into the plan making process (p. 8).

This approach is consistent with:

- i. the United Kingdom's strategy for sustainable development, *Building a Better Quality of Life* (UK Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions 2000), which defines four main objectives for the implementation of sustainable development: social progress which recognizes the needs of everyone; effective protection of the environment; prudent use of natural resources; maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment;
- ii. UK Statutory Instrument 2004 No. 1633, "The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004," which implement Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and Council on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment (the "Directive"), as regards plans and programmes relating solely to any part of England, and
- iii. following UK government documents: *The Strategic Environmental Assessment: Guidance for Planning Authorities* (UK ODPM 2003); *A Draft Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive* (UK ODPM 2004); *A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive* (UK ODPM 2005); *Strategic Environmental Assessment Guidance for Transport Plans and Programmes* (UK Department for Transport 2004).

All local transport authorities in England outside London have a statutory duty to produce a Local Transport Plans, and the *Torbay Local Transport Plan 2006-2011* (LTPT) set out the vision for integrated transport in the area and priorities for investment and funding to improve roads, public transport, and facilities for walking and cycling in the area over the 5-year period. The plan was published in March 2006. The LTPT is implemented by means of four five-year plans (concerning: i. the improvement of accessibility, ii. the improvement of air quality, iii. reducing traffic congestion, iv. improving road safety) and four project schemes to address the most striking road traffic problems (Torbay Council 2006, pp. 79).

The paper is divided into five main sections. After the introduction, section two compares the urban contexts of Torbay and Cagliari, and justifies the choice of these cities for the discussion in this paper. Section three analyses the relationship between SEA and plans (LTPT, MPPC) with respect to *endogeneity* of SEA, *sustainability*, and *participation*. Section four examines the definition of planning alternative options and the monitoring process. Finally the conclusion explores the fundamental differences between the two

SEAs—Torbay's LTPT and Cagliari's MPPC. In Torbay, since the LTPT ran largely in parallel to its SEA it was very effective in generating a qualitative improvement for the LTPT, while in Cagliari the MPPC was defined before the SEA process started which thus had limited impact on the MPPC.

2. Cagliari, Sardinia and Torbay, Devon

Cagliari is the main Sardinian conurbation and a regional capital city, where all the main offices of the regional administration are located (Figure 1). Furthermore, Cagliari is the main city in Cagliari Province, which includes the whole territory of Southern Sardinia. The main Sardinian University, with a student population of about 40,000, and the most important Sardinian Law Court are located in Cagliari. Cagliari has been named as one of the main nine Italian metropolitan areas by Italian Law No. 1990/142. It is therefore a site where a new metropolitan province could be established if the regional administration wishes, and the importance of Cagliari as a key Italian conurbation has been officially recognized at national level.

The Sardinian regional government has primary jurisdiction for land-use and urban planning, according to its constitution, and thus may define Sardinian public planning policies. In fact, the Sardinian region is to some extent autonomous with respect to national planning policies. For all these reasons, the metropolitan area of Cagliari can be considered a significant and well-defined urban environment in which to analyse SEA policies, one which is sufficiently internally developed and integrated, and isolated from external influences as well.

Torbay Council is a unitary authority comprising three towns: Torquay (63,998 inhabitants in 2001), Paignton (48,251), and Brixham (17,457). Torbay is the English Riviera, one of the most important tourist resorts of England (see Figure 2). Torbay is characterized by high density development, like the inner areas of Cagliari. This has perhaps been forced by the area's natural constraints due to its surrounding geography and steep topography, which makes further development within the towns problematic, while the sea forms an absolute barrier to growth to the east. The nature designations which surround the towns also restrict further growth. The economy of Torbay has traditionally been based on tourism, the fishing industry at Brixham and in recent years the high-tech industry, both relatively low-wage economic sectors. There is also concern that these industries are stagnating and there is a marked need to adapt to address this issue.

Despite its peripheral location Torquay and Paignton are well served by rail, although the Service between Newton Abbot and Torquay could be improved. However the road links into Torquay from Exeter in particular are in need of improvement with a bottlenecking for

traffic particularly at Kingskerswell causing heavy congestion. The proposed South Devon Link Road (to address this congestion) is largely outside the Torbay Unitary Authority Council area and is subject to SEA by Devon County Council.

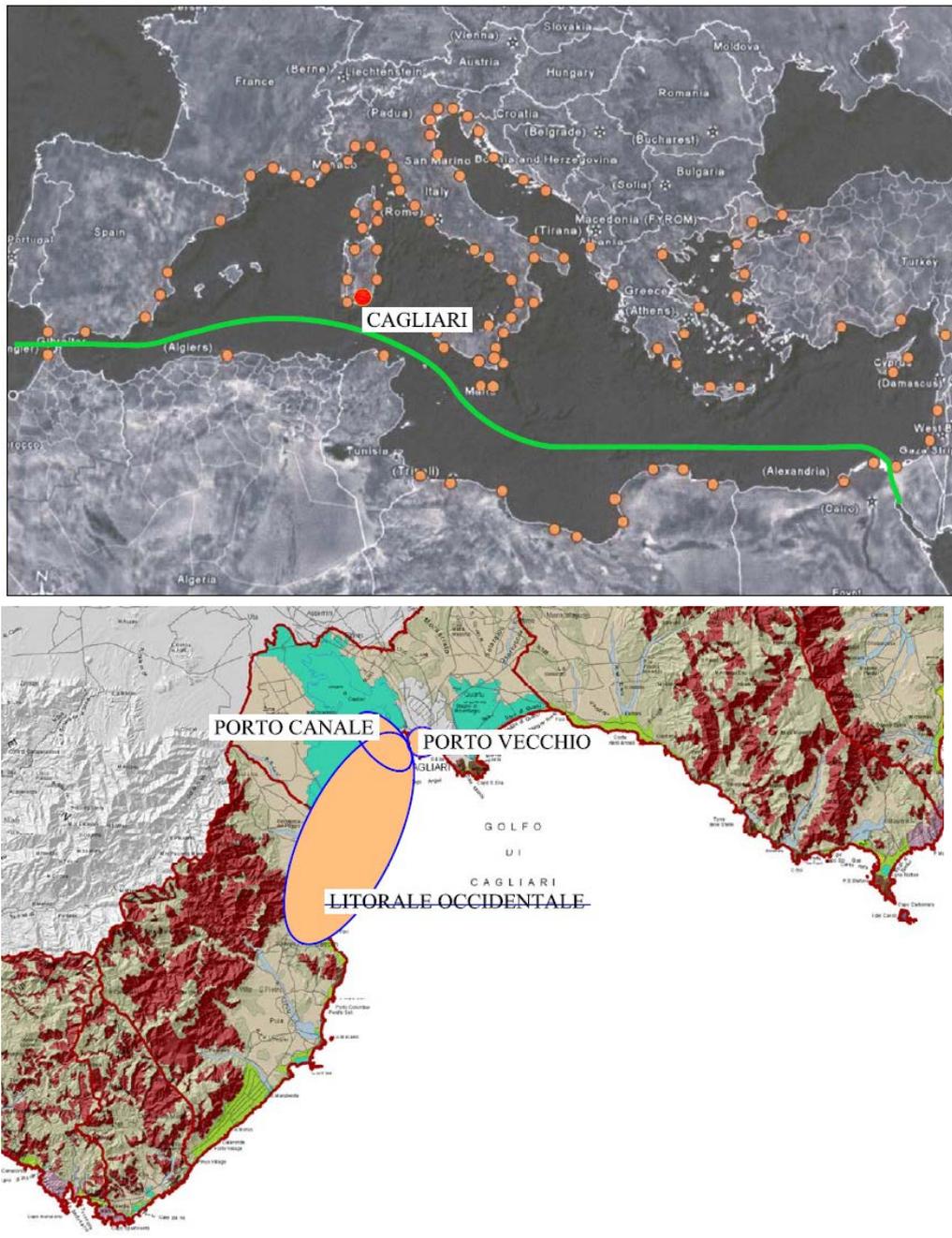


Figure 1. Cagliari, location and the layout of the Port (from the Table 1 of the MPPC, viewed 28 June 2012, <http://www.porto.cagliari.it/images/prp/PRP_TAV_01.pdf>): “Porto Vecchio” is the historical Port; “Porto Canale”, the so-called *Canal Port*, is for transshipment operations; “Litorale Occidentale”, the so-called *Western Seashore*, is for RO/RO operations and for the location of the ships of the Port Fire Department.

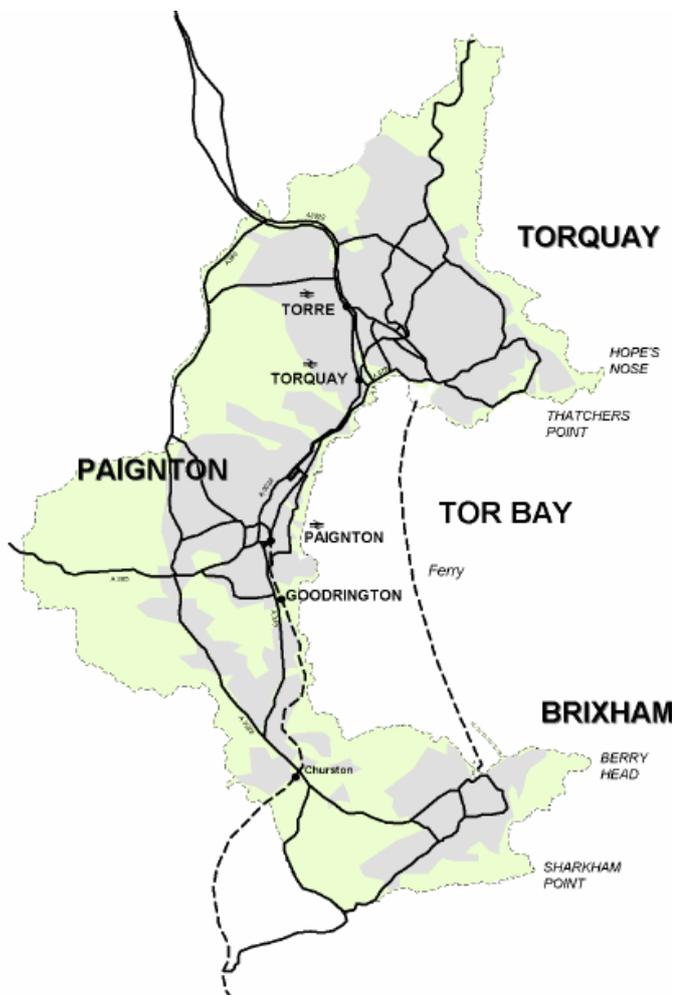


Figure 2. Torbay, location and transport links (Torbay Council 2006, pp. 26; 29).

The choice of Torbay and Cagliari as case studies is motivated as follows. Cagliari and Torbay are both medium-sized conurbations (both of them have less than two hundred thousand inhabitants). Torbay is governed by a unitary authority, which is in charge of local government and transport. A unitary authority, the Autorità Portuale di Cagliari (the Cagliari Port Authority) rules over the Port area.² Among the tasks of the Authority is the definition and implementation of land-use policy and city planning in the Port area. Cagliari and Torbay are quite peripheral with respect to their national administrations, politically and geographically, but both are quite central with respect to the regional administrations (Devon and Sardinia). Moreover, there is a strong practice of city planning and local services in both conurbations, and consolidated legislation on SEA. For these reasons, an analysis of how SEA was applied in Torbay and Cagliari in order to assess how the two plans related to the organisation of a system of local services could be very useful to give information on similarities and differences between the Italian and English approach to SEA. What we draw from this comparison could be effectively utilized to develop future comparative studies on the implementation of SEA of city planning in England and Italy.

The LTPT and the MPPC are two plans concerning public transport in relatively small metropolitan areas. Both of them rely on public investment for their implementation, and on the involvement of a number of smaller towns, which gives them a supra-municipal character. In both cases, one of the main questions concerning all SEA-related aspects is represented by the relationship between the sea and the mainland. What we consider as the most important issues concerning the SEA process in the rest of this paper have the same urban dimension in the two cases.

If we analyse *endogeneity*, we will see (in the following section) that in both cases this issue concerns how three municipalities (Torquay, Brixham and Paignton in case of the LTPT; Cagliari, Capoterra and Sarroch in case of the MPPC) implement their planning processes taking (or not taking) account of the parallel SEA processes, and how the governance of the SEA-plan processes develops, in both cases under the supervision of a supra-municipal authority. The sustainability issue is related to very similar environmental components, as it can be seen in the environmental reports of the SEA's of the LTPT (Torbay Council 2006, p. 100 and ff.) and of the MPPC (Autorità Portuale di Cagliari 2010, pp. 338 and ff.), and the participatory aspects are quite similar in terms of quantity of involved people. The monitoring processes and the issue of the definition of the planning alternatives are quite homogeneous as well, since the territorial dimension of the impacts on the environmental

² Article. 8 of Italian Law No. 1994/84 states that the President of the Port Authority is nominated by the Italian Ministry of Transport and Navigation. This Law concerns the "Redefinition of the legislation on the port areas".

components is almost the same, while defining alternatives implies the projection of new scenarios concerning the metropolitan transportation network in both cases.

3. Endogeneity, sustainability and participation

The MPPC goals, and related planning decisions and actions, were defined before the SEA process started. The MPPC had a very long history, which started in the second half of the 1990s and reached its seventeenth revision in 2007 (Autorità Portuale di Cagliari 2007). The SEA process was only activated following the response of the Italian Ministry of the Environment and of the Protection of the Territory and of the Sea to a query by the Port Authority of Cagliari which asked if SEA had to be implemented for the MPPC (Autorità Portuale di Cagliari 2010)³. As a consequence, there is no evident connection between the goals of the MPPC and the goals defined by the SEA. The general and specific goals of the SEA are so abstract and generic that they could be consistent with many urban contexts located close a coastal area. The list of these goals includes, for example: considering the opportunity of signing “Green Contracts” which establish ecological criteria with the firms which operate in the Port area; improving and optimizing the irrigation system for the city parks and open spaces in order to prevent waste of water resources; efficient management of solid waste collection; increased use of energy from renewable sources in order to reach 30% of the total energy consumption within five years; etc. (Autorità Portuale di Cagliari, 2010, pp. 243-244). In other words, the goals in the SEA for the MPPC would be valid for almost any urban plan in Italy or Europe.

The reason for this lack of contextualization is that, since the SEA process was applied to an already-defined plan by the Port Authority, which was the same Authority responsible for the implementation of the SEA process, the Authority did not want to reopen a debate on the MPPC, which had emerged from long and cumbersome discussions between many public and private stakeholders. This case is good example of a general characteristic of the Italian (and Sardinian) SEA processes for regional, city and land-use plans—that the SEA is almost always applied retrospectively to a process which started a long time ago, and so plans are not proceeding together with their environmental assessment. As a result, the SEAs often set out environmental protection goals which are not context-specific, and, as such are not useful in pursuing the main objective of the EU Directive, i.e.: “*to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans [...] with a view to promoting sustainable development*” (art. 1). Thus, the Italian SEA processes often show lack of

³ This response is registered as No. DSA–2008–0012770 of May 12, 2008, by the Direzione Salvaguardia Ambientale [Direction for Environmental Protection] of the Italian Ministry of the Environment and of the Protection of the Territory and of the Sea.

endogeneity, since they do not integrate local environmental considerations into plan preparation. By doing so, with reference the Directive, these SEA's may fail to promote sustainability, by not integrating environmental considerations into the plan preparation processes.

The SEA of the LTPT suggests a very different attitude towards both *endogeneity* and sustainability. The five main goals of the LTPT are generated from the SEA process, suggesting that the SEA process is integrated into the plan.

These goals are as follows:

- i. improving accessibility;
- ii. improving air quality;
- iii. decreasing traffic congestion;
- iv. increasing road safety;
- v. assisting in achieving the aims of the Torbay Community Plan and the delivery of its key initiatives, supporting economic and social development initiatives in Torbay through the provision of good access by all modes, minimizing the environmental impact of transport in Torbay and supporting environmental improvements wherever possible (Torbay Council 2006, pp. 31-32).

Table 1. SEA objectives and LTPT schemes: an example (Torbay Council 2006, p. 65).

High level objective	Detailed question: does the policy / proposal...	Explanation of the detailed question	What appraisal will look for	Relevant Plans, Programmes and Strategies reviewed
SEA Topic Climatic Factors				
3. Reduce vulnerability to the effects of climate change e.g. flooding, disruption to travel by extreme weather	3.1. Minimise the vulnerability of the transport infrastructure to climate change	Transport infrastructure such as bus routes are regularly flooded	Schemes within flood risk areas Awareness of flooding issues within LTP	Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change 1997 Environment 2010: Our Future Our Choice (EU Sixth Action Programme), 2001
	3.2. Reduce the contribution of transportation to greenhouse gas emissions including the use of low/zero carbon fuels		Objective and schemes to encourage the use of low/zero carbon fuels in Torbay	A sustainable Future for the South West: The Regional Sustainable Development Framework for the South West of England, SWRA, GOSW, 2001

Why these goals are endogenous with respect to the SEA process is explained if we look at the connections between the objectives related to the SEA topics and the planning schemes, together with the systems of actions which implement the planning goals (Torbay Council 2006, pp. 63-74; Table 1).

Table 1 shows that the high-level objective related to *Climatic Factors*, defined as *Reduce vulnerability to the effects of climate exchange e.g. flooding, disruption to travel by extreme weather*, is connected through the appraisal, to (fourth column):

- i. LTPT schemes within flood risk areas;
- ii. awareness of flooding issues within the LTPT, and
- iii. objectives and schemes to encourage the use of low/zero carbon fuels in Torbay.

All these appraisal references consist of actions included in the schemes of the LTPT, summarized later on in the SEA report (Torbay Council 2006, pp. 79-92).

The same procedure is adopted for the rest of the SEA topics, that is, air quality, biodiversity, economic factors, landscape and heritage, population and human health, social inclusiveness, soil, water. Thus, a detailed integration of the SEA objectives into the plan schema and *vice versa* is evident, where the planning proposals have considered the *traits d'union* between the LTPT and its SEA.

The *endogeneity* of the SEA with respect to the LTPT is supported by participatory process through which the SEA was developed. Sustainability relies on incremental and participatory processes, since “*by undertaking the SEA it is possible to look at the LTP during its development and examine how it will contribute to the aims of sustainable development. Opportunities to enhance the contribution to sustainable development can be identified, for example, by recognizing aspects where the strategy may compromise sustainable development, and possible amendments to the strategy to resolve any problems*” (Torbay Council 2006, p. 16).

Torbay Council recognizes that the participatory process should help seeing and addressing problems in integrating sustainability and local development goals. Many different experts, stakeholders and representatives of public and private bodies were brought together in a large consultation process, run during September and October 2005, whose results are detailed in the SEA report (Torbay Council 2006, pp. 20 and ff.). A general and important characteristic of how these results are incorporated into the SEA process is that every observation, objection, and criticism which comes up in the scoping phase is annotated, but

also associated to an action which addresses the issue.⁴ It appears that Torbay Council's approach to participation is consistent with by the UK's Statutory Instrument 2004 No. 1633, which implements the EU Directive.⁵

A possible caveat of this SI is that it is not clear how to involve the potential participants who are not part of the public or private organisations which the proceeding administration identified as eligible to be part of the participatory process. In other words, the potential participants who do not belong to these bodies may not see their participation guaranteed by the procedure, which may eventually entail a loss of information and quality in the plan.

In the MPPC, the operational part of the MPPC focuses on determining land uses in the "The Port of Cagliari" area, including planned works on the seabed (excavation and dredging), and identification of future projects subject to environmental impact assessment procedure (Autorità Portuale di Cagliari 2010, pp. 249-273). Neither of these actions or rules is cross-referenced to the (decontextualized) sustainability goals, while all of them are considered connected linked to the MPPC goals.

The MPPC treats participation very differently. Since participation is a formal requirement of the Italian Law enacted by Decree No. 2006/152, which implements the EU Directive in the Italian legislation, the MPPC has to consider participatory moments, which consist mainly of formal correspondence between the Port Authority and several public and private organisations which may have interest in the MPPC, and which may contribute scientific and technical knowledge and to the feasibility of the plan. Unfortunately, the outcome of this formal consultation is that there are notes in the SEA report which certify that the Port

⁴ This is how the SEA report defines the participatory process (*ibid.*, p. 19): "The SEA Directive requires authorities to identify the public affected or likely to be affected by, or have an interest in a plan, including relevant non-Government organizations. Consultation will take place with the same group identified as consultees for the Scoping Report. Therefore copies of this report will be sent to English Heritage, English Nature, The Environment Agency and The Countryside Agency. Copies will also be sent to members of the Torbay Strategic Partnership, members of the Transport Stakeholders Group, relevant Council Directorates, Councilors, our neighboring Local Authorities, Devon County Council and the South West Regional Assembly. Additionally an electronic version (see link below) will also be available for the public to comment upon and this will be advertised."

⁵ SI 2004, No. 1633, 13 (2) states what follows. "As soon as reasonably practicable after the preparation of the relevant documents, the responsible authority shall:

- (a) send a copy of those documents to each consultation body;
- (b) take such steps as it considers appropriate to bring the preparation of the relevant documents to the attention of the persons who, in the authority's opinion, are affected or likely to be affected by, or have an interest in the decisions involved in the assessment and adoption of the plan or programme concerned, required under the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Directive ("the public consultees");
- (c) inform the public consultees of the address (which may include a website) at which a copy of the relevant documents may be viewed, or from which a copy may be obtained; and
- (d) invite the consultation bodies and the public consultees to express their opinion on the relevant documents, specifying the address to which, and the period within which, opinions must be sent."

Authority got in touch and tried to consult various public and private organisations, but no significant questions raised were addressed in the SEA process.⁶

4. Alternative planning options and the monitoring process

According to the LTPT's SEA (Torbay Council 2006, p. 77), the strategic alternatives within the plan were further developed since the publication of the scoping report and subsequent consultation. Even though no alternative local transport plan was identified, changes within the LTPT to the proposed five-year plans for improving air quality, congestion, accessibility and road safety were made although not discussed in the LTPT. These are appraised using a plan/no plan scenario, “where ‘no plan’ means how the current situation would progress without the five-year plan” (Torbay Council 2006, p. 77). So, the question of alternative planning options is considered quite superficially within the LTPT. The same issue is simply neglected in the MPPC's SEA report, where a paragraph is titled “Sintesi valutativa ed analisi delle alternative” [A synthesis of the assessment process and analysis of the alternative options] (Autorità Portuale di Cagliari 2010, pp. 295-296), but if you read the text there is nothing about possible alternatives.

The lack of a serious alternative planning options analysis may be due to the incomplete *endogeneity* of the LTPT's SEA, which started a couple of months later than the plan. This timing mismatch might have discouraged the Torbay Council from serious design of planning alternatives, which would have been time-consuming. The total lack of *endogeneity* was certainly the reason why the Port Authority of Cagliari did not consider alternative options at all.

In contrast, both the LTPT and the MPPC treat the issue of monitoring the plan implementation rigorously. As the LTPT's SEA report states, “*Monitoring the environmental outcomes of a plan should make it possible to identify the needs for any future corrective action and to establish how well the plan complies with SEA objectives.*” (Torbay Council 2006, p. 100) This concept is implemented through the definition of a strict connections between a set of environmental indicators, SEA topics, planning goals and therefore planning schemes. The role of the indicators is to allow the Torbay Council to detect, in real time, if and how changes to the ongoing planning policies should be implemented. Table 2 shows an extract of the monitoring table of the SEA of the LTPT.

⁶ The participatory process is described very concisely in the SEA report: see Autorità Portuale di Cagliari, 2010, pp. 329-331.

Table 2. An extract of the SEA of the LTPT monitoring table (Torbay Council 2006, p. 101).

Higher objective	Indicator	Baseline data (year)	Target available? (year)	Source	How often monitored	comments
Control air pollution to a level which does not cause damage to natural systems and human health	Journey time around the Bay	17.4 mph (mean) (2004/05)	25 mph (2010/11)	Council surveys	Annually	Data available from Strategic Transport Team
	Number of AQMAs (Air Quality Management Areas)	1 AQMA (2004/05)	0 AQMA (2010/11)	Mandatory Indicator Air Quality Monitoring data	Annually	Data available from Environmental Health

The monitoring effort of the MPPC aims at identifying those indicators which may give a good picture of the environmental context of the Port of Cagliari, but it fails to consider the relations between planning strategies and actions, and the health status of the environment (Autorità Portuale di Cagliari 2010, pp. 338 and ff.). So, the monitoring table is quite similar to Table 2, except for column 1. It is hard to understand how the monitoring process of the MPPC could be effective, if the monitoring plan does not state how the environmental status is connected to the planning schemes.

5. Conclusion

The question of *endogeneity* of the SEA process with respect to the plan development process is dealt with very differently in the Italian and English cases. In the former, the plan was almost completely defined when the SEA started, and *endogeneity* was totally neglected. This enormous contradiction between the EU Directive and its practical implementation in Italy (the Sardinian experience is unfortunately consistent with what happens in the rest of Italy with reference to regional and urban planning processes) is possibly due to the late implementation of the Directive in the Italian legislation⁷. There are several recent plans, e.g.: the regional and city plans of the Region Emilia-Romagna, where the gap is shortened between the plan and the SEA process, and the SEA and plan definition processes can proceed together, at least to some extent. The recently-issued *Guidelines Manual of the regional administration of Sardinia (Regione Autonoma della Sardegna 2010)* is an important reference point for inclusive, incremental and participatory SEA in the context of Italian planning processes.

⁷ The chapters of the Italian Law enacted by decree No. 2006/152 which implement the Directive were established in a proper way only in 2008 and 2010 (Law enacted by decree No. 2008/4 and 2010/128).

England implemented the Directive on time (2004), and the question of endogeneity was taken into account properly. The LTPT's SEA bears witness to this, since the SEA process is assumed as a very important reference for the plan definition. It is highly significant, from this point of view, that the SEA report complains that *“The main obstacle to conducting this SEA was the late beginning of the SEA process. With hindsight it is easy to see that the SEA should have begun in July 2004 rather than January 2005. The Environmental Report should have gone out for public consultation with the LTP2 in July 2005, rather than in March 2006.”* (Torbay Council 2006, p. 25) This indicates the extent to which Torbay Council is aware of the importance of *endogeneity*, since a very short timing mismatch (a few months) is signalled as a negative point. The new version of the LTPT shows an almost perfect correspondence between SEA and plan processes. *Endogeneity* of the SEA process seems inherent, even though the new LTPT was not in force at the time of writing (Devon County Council and Torbay Council 2010).⁸

With reference to participation, the analysis suggests that the English approach is site-specific and oriented to incorporate the participants' contributions into planning decisions. The Port Authority of Cagliari seems not to rely on a real improvement of the quality and effectiveness of the plan coming from a participatory process. On the other hand, the issue of the involvement of the public is not addressed even in the LTPT. This issue is fundamental in order to implement sustainability in the SEA and planning process, as the European Commission states in its guidelines (European Commission Environment 2001). Dissemination of information and fairness of the decision processes, which are most likely to be ensured by awareness and participation of the local community in defining and implementing public policies, are certainly important in generating the most socially desirable outcome. The role of the public administration would be instrumental in developing a process of this kind for the futures of the Port of Cagliari and of the transport system of Torbay.

Moreover, the presence of real alternative planning options would make it easier for the public to understand what is at stake. Alternatives must be presented to the local community and public hearings on the outcomes and implications must be held. Tentative rankings of alternatives should be discussed and criteria defined, which should prove more-or-less decisive in determining the rankings. The pros and cons of different alternatives' have to be

⁸ The new LTPT will be in force between April 2011 and March 2026. It has been studied and will be implemented by a partnership which includes the Devon County Council and the Torbay Council. A detailed description of the plan and SEA process is available on Internet (Devon County Council and Torbay Council 2010).

made as clear as possible, and further consideration and discussion of the main issues must be encouraged, even though they may delay the implementation of the final plan.

Finally, the importance of the monitoring process is not understated in either SEA report. However, Torbay Council is more effective than the Cagliari Port Authority in identifying connections between plan and SEA goals and the health of the environment. It seems unlikely that an effective monitoring process could eventually be developed without awareness of this connection. This seems to be consistent with the fact that Torbay Council indicates that “sustainability monitoring reports will be published as part of the LTP Progress Reports”, while this kind of indication cannot be retrieved in the SEA report of the MPPC. A common characteristic of the two monitoring processes is that there is a significant lack of data, since in both cases there are a number of indicators for which no data are currently available.

The substantial failure of the SEA of the MPPC indicates that *endogeneity* is fundamental for the SEA to be useful and successful, even though the other aspects should not be neglected in the SEA implementation process.

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Review of the Commonwealth Local Government Good Practice Scheme

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GPS - Highlights

The final (third) phase of the Commonwealth Local Government three year capacity building programme, the Good Practice Scheme, funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) came to an end in late 2011. The programme partnered councils and local government associations from six targeted Commonwealth countries - Jamaica, India, South Africa, Sierra Leone, Pakistan and Ghana - with their counterparts in South Africa, India and the UK with the objective to exchange good practice and generate innovative solutions to challenges faced by local governments.

A total of 34 projects were active during the Scheme's lifetime and contributed successfully to having a positive impact on the ground for local communities. The dissemination of the project activities through national workshops in partnership with national local government associations meant that the successes and lessons were shared with local governments throughout the countries concerned.

A new focus of the third phase of the GPS was to promote south-south partnerships: six of these partnerships were set up, three of them being tripartite, two having a northern hemisphere partner, with the remainder, both dual and tripartite, being south-south.

Despite partners' diverse cultural, socio-economic circumstances and administrative practices, this methodology of technical support and exchange of ideas allows partners to share and compare their challenges and reflect on own approaches. The south-south partners, with varying cultural beliefs, learnt that cultural practices should not be ignored in advancing new initiatives: traditional norms and practices are a way of life for the majority of communities especially those in the agricultural, small scale farming sector.

CLGF Project Officer Rachael Duchnowski looks back on the Scheme's successes and challenges.

Good Practice Scheme – Goals

The overarching objective of the Commonwealth Local Government Good Practice Scheme (GPS) was to contribute towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals at the local level; there were four expected outputs:

1. Increased capacity of local authorities to plan and deliver services, through successful implementation of CLGF-funded projects focussed on the following nationally agreed themes, relevant to the achievement of the MDGs;
2. Measurable and/or assessable improvements in individual and/or departmental/local authority management efficiency and effectiveness delivered through the GPS projects;
3. National local government associations possess effective knowledge management systems and dissemination networks working nationally - and internationally through CLGF;
4. Utilisation of expertise of local government practitioners in partner countries to improve local government performance more widely.

Each target country had a specific theme, chosen by their local government association or equivalent in discussion with CLGF; in Jamaica it was strategic planning for service delivery, in India, governance and service delivery. Both Ghana and South Africa focussed on local economic development (LED), while Sierra Leone chose waste management and Pakistan strengthening governance.

Forging and sustaining effective partnerships has been at the heart of the programme. More than 80% of all projects forged formal partnerships with local organisations, through contractual arrangements, shared services, funding agreements and memoranda of understanding, and the projects have also resulted in strategic partnerships between councils, and with key stakeholders that previously had very little contact with local government, such as private sector companies, regional development agencies, and NGOs.

Strategies to support local government in LED

Both Ghana and South Africa focused on LED (Local Economic Development). Each project tackled the theme differently but in accordance with their national policy at the time. In Ghana, the National Poverty Reduction Strategy gives district assemblies a mandate to tackle local poverty and improve standards of living, whilst in South Africa LED is a statutory function and of local government, working with the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) and the government department responsible for local government, amongst others.

Both countries are placing increasing emphasis on the importance of improving the capacity of local government to deliver this work more effectively, however, their ability is limited as a result of lack of capacity and understanding of what can be completed on often inadequate budgets. It was evident that in Ghana prior to the Good Practice Scheme, the participating assemblies had little or no engagement with LED as a discipline and their role as potential enablers of economic growth within their communities was unrecognised and unfulfilled. In South Africa Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) were weak due to the historic legacy of apartheid, and local government's role in LED, especially in rural areas, was also limited. In some cases the project partners reported that there was either no or very limited baseline data on LED, which reflected the lack of formal engagement in the LED sector.

As a result of gaining understanding of the conditions that were presented, the projects in both countries sought to develop strategies as well as tangible results to assist local governments in addressing the challenges before them. Ghana saw significant achievements in urban and rural areas, ranging from development of a community centre, creation of a federation of small businesses for the exchange of good business practices and networking, development of a business newspaper which is self-financing and able to fund further LED initiatives, and using sport as a way to integrate economic and social development, training unemployed young people in football coaching as a result of this training several have been able to secure paid coaching jobs.

The Mfantseman Municipal Assembly and Kent County Council project created a community centre, offering training in a number of different and practical trades, business support services, and mentoring. Mfantseman used its position as the local authority to coordinate a number of public sector organisations that staff and support the centre. The training generally focused on three areas; capacity-building for public sector workers such as: management skills for teachers, trade skills for entrepreneurs such as painting and hairdressing, and business training such as financial management also for entrepreneurs, and to date in excess of 300 residents have received training from the community centre. Their work with businesses has been complemented by a business starter pack kit, distributed at the centre, that gives a comprehensive overview of the processes and planning entrepreneurs need to go through in order to start and manage a businesses in Mfantseman and assists the assembly in monitoring business take up rates, maintaining communication with the business community and measuring the efficacy of their interventions.

The rural partnership in Ghana was a project between Upper Denkyira West District Assembly and Hampshire County Council, the project has successfully integrated LED into the priorities and practices of the assembly, creating relationships with stakeholders at the

local and regional level, and developing services for local businesses in the process thereby strengthening the capacity of the assembly to develop and deliver LED initiatives. The institutional impact included the embedding of economic development within assembly's medium term development strategy, training for senior assembly staff, the design and implementation of an inward investment strategy and the formation of a business led Sub-Committee for Productive and Gainful Employment (SPGE) supported by the assembly with an action plan and mandate, a good practice model that is now being dissemination through the local government association, due to interest from other local authorities. They also launched the Abora Palm Oil Processing Plant that generates income for the assembly, accessing capital through EU funding, and employing the local community. The outcomes of these activities resulted in a close working relationship with the Regional Development Agency in any and all LED projects, where before there was no contact, closer working relationships with the private sector around creating employment opportunities and identifying skills gaps, where there was none and leveraging this relationship for private sector support towards community development projects.

A community consultation-based approach

In developing the projects and the methodology project participant's first main priority was to ask 'what is their starting point?' In South Africa this was done through various means such as community consultation, engaging with local businesses (informal and formal), universities and other similar bodies, farmers and other relevant stakeholders. Community consultation was a central part of all of the South Africa projects, with a particular focus on strengthening the municipalities' relationship and understanding of their respective local business communities and consulting with communities on the kind of LED support they would like to see the municipalities providing. A range of different methodologies from community meetings, events, surveys and direct marketing were used.

Successful outcomes in South Africa Included: the development of a credit union; improving the sustainability of SMMEs through increased capacity to bid for and win local tenders, and increased capacity for the municipalities to support SMMEs to enable them to meet this objective; agricultural diversification and how the municipalities can support this; and, supporting municipalities to promote inward investment.

In India project participants engaged their target communities through various methods outlined below:

- In Rajkot, before their GPS project, no one in the Rajkot Municipal Corporation (RMC) engaged in any community development work; as part of their tripartite project with Leicester City Council and the Ludhiana Municipal Corporation, 100 households were surveyed through a door to door questionnaire. Workshops were held, community planning exercises, and wider campaigns were all used to maximise community consultation.
- All the partnerships have actively sought to engage with disadvantaged and or underrepresented groups in their respective wards. In Aurangabad and Kohima, the focus was on women, school children and self-help groups in the community. In Bhubaneswar, further campaigns ensured that different sections of the society, from celebrities, business establishments to residents associations and street vendors associations were represented and influenced the cleanliness drive undertaken by the Corporation. In Rajkot local school teachers were recruited to act as advocates as well as facilitators for RMC's community education work and sensitisation.
- In Aurangabad, the project between Aurangabad Municipal Corporation and Birmingham City Council took a further step by recognizing local women by registering their Self Help Groups with the Corporation.

Capacity building is an important part of the GPS, thus project outcomes included institutional development, staff and councillor training, on the job work experience, and mentoring and shadow working. Senior councillors were involved in all the projects to help ensure the long term sustainability of the outcomes.

Practitioner to practitioner learning

In Sierra Leone the Scheme funded three local authority pilot projects with local councils on waste management and one National Association of Local Government (NALG) project with the Local Councils Association of Sierra Leone. The waste projects broadly had the following aims:

- To develop financially sustainable, safe, solid waste management strategies for participating districts.
- To sensitise residents in the council's wards to more environmentally sustainable methods of disposing of waste.

The practitioner to practitioner learning was used to:

- Design, plan and implement Waste management strategies that are responsive to the needs of the local community and environmentally sustainable.
- Build strong relationships with local stakeholders, partners councils, marginalised groups, civil society and other spheres of government
- Develop management and governance structures to ensure their approach to waste is financially sustainable, value for money, and appropriate to the needs of their service users.

Waste management services were devolved from central government management to local authorities, along with other key basic services in the Local Government Act of Sierra Leone (2004). Despite on-going commitment from central government to decentralisation and supporting decentralised services, local authorities are often under resourced and under capacitated to effectively manage waste services.

Projects implemented in Sierra Leone showed mixed results in terms of measurable improvements in service delivery. A key constraint was the lack of capital funding within the Good Practice Scheme. Where capital funding was available, e.g. through complementary activity by other donors, such as with the Warwickshire and Bo project who achieved matched funding via UNDP, improved service delivery was demonstrated.

The projects did however successfully have a wider impact and significance for local government through their impact on national policy. This was achieved thanks to the high level engagement from senior Ministry to local staff and politicians, the Local Councils Association of Sierra Leone, other relevant government ministry officials such as health and sanitation and other public sector bodies and donors. This has been accomplished through the projects individually via their partnerships, but also through the dissemination process which engaged all local councils in Sierra Leone.

The resulting impact of the projects has been that the national local government association has determined waste management as its first lobbying priority, the Ministry of Local Government has welcomed the recommendations from the projects and the dissemination workshop, and local councils have all benefitted from the learning from the projects and are actively sharing the documentation produced by the projects. The discussions held at the national dissemination workshop produced key recommendations agreed by all the councils that set a clear direction for the needs of councils in Sierra Leone in waste management and how they want to move forward collectively in building their capacity, sharing their services, and communicating messages to the general public.

In addition to the partnerships between UK councils and Sierra Leone councils, local partnerships with other public sector bodies have also formed. Bo and Makeni worked closely with relevant central government ministries, and the partnership between Bo and Makeni itself is notable as previously the relationship had been strained and there was very little cooperation between the two. But the most significant partnership for Bo has been with Mercy Hospital Research Laboratory with whom a formal agreement was signed to share GIS data mapping information. The mapping was undertaken by the research lab and Bo has been able to utilise this to provide for the first time ever clear maps of their wards, and the waste needs of these communities, which has had a direct impact on how the council plans for waste management.

Building capacity and sustainability

It was critical to the GPS that the projects focused on building sustainable solutions. This was done through building capacity, developing systems and governance arrangements to improve local service delivery, particularly focusing on services to poor and disadvantaged communities. In many cases this involved undertaking significant reviews, stakeholder consultation, and policy development. Due to funding restrictions the majority of GPS projects ran for two to two and a half years, therefore it was essential that projects developed effective and clear monitoring and evaluation strategies, to continually assess the impact that the project has had in the years to come.

The use of different approaches to tackle challenges and ensure maximum impact is key, especially if training of practitioners is involved. For example, the project between Vhembe District Municipality and Gondal Municipality used the master trainer approach to build capacity. By forging closer links with the university and local colleges, the municipality has helped to spread the learning across the district. The Municipality has signed a Memorandum of Understanding to help sustain a focus on training and agricultural outreach and the training partners have clearly defined their respective roles to avoid duplication and to promote coordination.

Due to the buy-in of senior elected representatives municipalities have either embedded their LED work into their Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) or have used the project to implement priorities already articulated in their IDPs. In at least four cases (Mbombela, eThekweni, Steve Tshwete and Vhembe) the project has resulted in new policies or processes to enable more effective governance and management arrangements e.g. the consortium agreement in Vhembe, and the involvement of the Economic Development Forum in political decision making around LED in Mbombela.

Some lessons learned

Being flexible and adaptable to the environment that you are delivering your project is essential to successful delivery. The methodology for the project, between Hastings Borough Council and Western Area District Council, was originally focussed on communicating messages about responsible waste disposal but following the first visit to Sierra Leone it was evident that a more practical approach was also needed. Ideas developed by the partnership and community groups involved recycling, composting and anaerobic digestion on a local basis and received widespread support from WARDC and community leaders. An Interim Sustainable Waste Management Strategy has since been developed, along with a Phase One Implementation Plan which focuses on the practical development of demonstration units for composting, anaerobic digestion and recycling. The communication and marketing proposals have also been refocused to include education and communication through schools in Hastings, Sierra Leone and work with twinned schools in Hastings UK.

In some instances partnerships were not always as easy to develop as it was first assumed. In developing these partnerships it proved to be beneficial for projects to focus on developing relationships also with the other public sector bodies as well as with their partners.

A fundamental component of the GPS was to be responsive to the needs to local government. In Pakistan for example, due to the suspension of locally elected leaders, the planned local government projects were unable to go ahead and instead the only project to continue was the partnership between the four provincial local government associations. With assistance from the Local Government Association of England and Wales, the four associations implemented a targeted national campaign strategy, lobbying key decision makers, mounting legal challenges in court and mobilising committees through national rallies and various media outlets. The impact of this has been a clear and recognised role for the NALGs in the public debate on local democracy, with documented international support and engagement with diaspora networks.

The close of the GPS saw at least 500 local government stakeholders, both central and local as well as other key players in the field come together for country based dissemination workshops. These workshops were an important part of the overall Scheme. They were designed in such a way that it allowed projects to not only share the outcome of their project, but also to ensure that the lessons learnt had a benefit beyond the councils that were directly involved, thereby creating a greater overall impact in the countries concerned than just the councils who were directly involved in the projects. The workshops resulted in strategic

policy recommendations to improve national policy making on LED, waste management and strategic planning, as well as allowing participants to have a chance to network.

CLGF is hoping to develop its capacity building work with members through strengthened regional programmes that will take into account the lessons learned from the GPS and is currently seeking funding to do this. Following consultations with members and discussions at the recent CLGF Board meeting in Belize, new programmes will have a greater regional focus and more attention to knowledge sharing to capture and disseminate good practice.

More information about the Good Practice Scheme and individual projects can be found on CLGF's website at <http://www.clgf.org.uk/about-the-gps/>.

Regional Transition Groups and Regional Collaborative Groups: a Voluntary Approach to Structural Reform in Western Australia¹

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The Western Australian Minister for Local Government, the Hon John Castrilli MLA announced on 4 February 2009 strategies for local government reform based on a voluntary reduction in the number of individual councils.

Western Australia has a professional and well managed local government sector that is characterised by diversity in size, revenue and remoteness.² However, Western Australia is effectively the last state in Australia to experience major structural reform in the sector. Local government reform in WA is currently being implemented as a voluntary, industry led process.

Local government in Western Australia

Western Australia	2009/2010 financial data
Area	2,560,336 km ²
Population (2011 est.)	2,349,325
No. of local governments in State*	138
Total local government revenue	\$3,166,000,000
Total local government employees	14,908 (FTE)
Capital city	Perth
Capital city Population (2011 est.)	1,738,807
No. of local governments in capital city	30

Source: Local Government information returns to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, collated by WA Local Government Grants Commission; 3218.0 Regional Population Growth, Australia Australian Bureau of Statistics, * includes number of local governments in Perth metropolitan area

¹ The information in this paper has been largely derived from the author’s involvement in supporting the implementation of the voluntary reform process across local government in Western Australia. The views expressed in this paper are solely the views of the author and do not represent the views of the Government of Western Australia.

² Local government is not recognised in the Commonwealth of Australia Constitution, but the establishment and regulation of a system of local government is a function of each State Government.

Local Government	Smallest	Average	Largest
Area	1.5 km ² (Shire of Peppermint Grove)	18,420 Km ²	371,696 km ² (Shire of East Pilbara)
Population	115 (Shire of Murchison)	16,500	205,961 (City of Stirling)
Revenue	\$1,700,132 (Shire of Nungarin)	\$22,776,418	A\$173,853,106 (City of Stirling)
Employees (Full time equiv.)	9 (Shire of Cue)	107	751 (City of Stirling)

Source: Local Government information returns to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, collated by WA Local Government Grants Commission.

Many of Western Australia's existing local governments were established over 100 years ago. The role and demands of local governments have changed dramatically since then, and there have been considerable changes in society, technology and the economy, but the structure of local government has remained virtually the same. Various reports and inquiries have identified major structural, financial and operational constraints on the way in which local governments operate. The current reform programme has been developed to assist the sector to address these constraints, to create fewer but stronger councils that will better service WA communities into the future.

The reforms seek to build a local government sector with the capacity to operate best practice and to deliver optimal services to communities throughout Perth and regional Western Australia into the next 100 years. This encompasses effective planning and decision making, and enhanced ability to engage in partnerships with State and Commonwealth Governments and the private sector.

The reform program has various components, focusing on structural reform and capacity building that are being implemented concurrently to achieve the Government's vision of fewer, stronger, regionally focused local governments that are sustainable for the long term.³ Reform of Western Australia's local governments is expected to bring a range of benefits to local communities, industry and the State. A process of regional business planning is being undertaken by reforming local governments. This process will identify the benefits of structural reform specific to each area; however general benefits of the reforms are expected to include:

³ <http://dlg.wa.gov.au/Content/Community/LGReform/WhyReform.aspx>

- Ongoing savings achieved from fewer staff, reduced duplication, reduced operating costs and streamlined systems and processes.
- Once-off savings realised through rationalised property, plant and equipment.
- Increased capacity to attract State and Commonwealth Government funding and work with the private sector to leverage large projects.
- More equitable revenue raising resulting in a fair distribution of services across the whole community.
- Enhanced ability to provide a greater range and improved quality of services as well as major infrastructure for the community such as community centres, libraries, waste services, and sports facilities.
- Enhanced ability to attract and retain professional staff as well as employ specialist staff with expertise in key areas such as economic development or environmental management.
- Better utilisation of plant and equipment including graders, loaders, tractors, trucks.
- Greater capacity to undertake community support and engagement strategies to maintain and strengthen communities.
- Better access to technology, increased productivity and economies of scale
- Improved long term integrated planning, including management and maintenance of assets.⁴

RCGs and RTGs – a voluntary approach to structural reform

As part of the voluntary reform process in late 2009, local governments were requested to present to the Minister for Local Government their proposals for progressing reform. The reform submissions received did not, in the Minister's view, reflect the reality of the need for change in the sector, and did not adequately progress reform. There were commitments from just 11 local governments to amalgamate, while attempts to progress structural reform by a further 26 local governments were impeded by a lack of support from neighbouring councils. As a result, and in order to promote optimal reform outcomes, the Minister asked the State Department of Local Government (DLG) to re-engage with the sector on the basis of two regional models. The author contends that the State's approach to reform through these regional models create a point of difference to the approach to local government reform applied elsewhere in Australia.

⁴ Local Government Reform Steering Committee Report, May 2010. Available here; <http://dlg.wa.gov.au/Content/LG/LGReform/CommitteesWorkingGroups/SteeringCommitteeReport.aspx>

The Regional Transition Group (RTG) and Regional Collaborative Group (RCG) models were developed by DLG for the local government sector in recognition that the challenges and complexities faced in implementing reform varied across the regions of the State.

- A Regional Transition Group is a partnership agreement between two or more local governments⁵ to work together to complete a Regional Business Plan (RBP) with a view to amalgamating. Development of the RBP, which is essentially a cost-benefit analysis and evaluation of the potential outcomes of an amalgamation and costs of transition, is overseen by a board comprising an elected member from each of the participating councils.⁶ The RBP process provides local governments with time to build trust and understanding and engage the community, providing an opportunity to conduct due diligence before committing to a final decision on whether to proceed with an amalgamation proposal to the Local Government Advisory Board.⁷
- Regional Collaborative Groups (RCG) were offered as an option for areas where vast distances between towns mean amalgamation is not a priority and perhaps not the preferred option, due to the particular challenges of serving a range of differing sized communities widely dispersed over vast distances.⁸ In an RCG, the local governments work together on a RBP to examine the benefits of extending shared service arrangements, through a well-structured approach.

The State Government has provided considerable assistance to the RTGs and RCGs to facilitate the reform process, including:

- a Regional Business Planning template (developed by KPMG on behalf of the DLG),
- grant funding to RTGs and RCGs to engage consultants to work with participating councils to complete the Regional Business Planning template,
- a shortlisted panel of approved consultants,
- funding for project officers (in some cases) to help the groups work through the business planning process, and
- a case manager from the Department of Local Government to liaise with and assist each group.

⁵ These Groups were formed through agreements, where the Department of Local Government, as a funding provider, was a party to the agreement, but it is not a participant in the group's governing board.

⁶ Regional Transition Group (RTG) Information Sheet. Available here; <http://dlg.wa.gov.au/Content/LG/LGReform/CommitteesWorkingGroups/RTC.aspx>

⁷ The Local Government Advisory Board has a statutory role in conducting a formal inquiry process into the proposal, before making a recommendation to the Minister for Local Government. There is then scope for the community to request a poll on the proposal, and there are certain provisions around binding and non-binding poll results.

⁸ For example, the resource rich Pilbara region of WA is comprised of four local governments with a combined population of less than 50,000 occupying a land area greater than 500,000 square kilometres.

Another key thrust of the State Government's reform agenda is capacity building. The RTGs and RCGs also receive funding to implement and / or enhance strategic planning, asset management and long term financial planning across the local governments in the regional group. Given the limited resources available, funding is being prioritised to those participating in the regional groups.

The reform process is supported by a State-level Local Government Reform Implementation Committee chaired by the Director General of the DLG, and working groups, developing resources such as a Human Resource and Change Management guide and integrated strategic planning, asset management frameworks and guidelines.

Progress on reform

Department of Local Government representatives travelled extensively around the State and met with local governments in early 2010 to outline and discuss the two regional models. By the end of March 2010, 65 local governments had indicated they were willing to participate in reform. Subsequently the number grew to 72.

From a base of 142 local governments in 2005, there are currently 138 councils. With the activities of the 5 RTGs (with between two and five member councils) there was the potential to reduce the number of local governments to 124. Two of the RTGs have been terminated, as the participating councils did not consider the potential benefits to be sufficient justification to proceed with an amalgamation proposal. The RTG process continues in three other areas. Five RCGs, with between two and ten member councils, were progressing and at least one RCG is now working through implementation of RBP outcomes. It was anticipated that other local governments would adopt the RBP process and funding support being offered, however this has not transpired due to continuing fear of the potential for reform. Progress has been slow due to the time required to undertake the RBP process, which includes community consultation elements.

Commentary

It might be said that local government reform is more effective when it is voluntary. While there is a clear need for local government reform in WA, many local governments remain reluctant to consider the prospect of change. The State government's initiative to fund the regional business planning process to evaluate the benefits of reform has been introduced as a circuit breaker. Under this process, local governments can examine the potential benefits of a change, but importantly they can still opt out of an amalgamation proposal if it is not deemed to be in the interests of the community. One mayor of a metropolitan council told the author that his *council had always said no to amalgamation, but the council didn't really know what*

it was saying no to. The RBP process outlined above is designed to determine the answer and empower the council and community, for at the end of the day the local government or its community can still say no. That is effectively what has occurred in two of the RTGs at the end of the RBP process.

In relation to collaboration, most councils have to a greater or lesser extent been working together for years, but the RCG model is designed to extend and formalise these arrangements. Already participants are seeing the potential to attract greater resources to the region, particularly from the Federal and State Government. Local governments in the Pilbara region, have initiated streamlined planning processes through the Pilbara Regional Council and this further facilitates State and private investment including the Pilbara Cities Project. Similarly the Kimberley local governments are currently investigating options to share management of a housing and construction factory, working in partnership with private sector bodies to address housing shortages impacting the region.

It is too early to see the full outcome of this process across the State, but given the difficulties with facilitating local government reform in other countries, the regional business planning process through Regional Transition Groups and Regional Collaborative groups is a model worthy of consideration.

The Department of Local Government, working with the State Minister for Local Government's vision, will continue to encourage participation in voluntary reforms through provision of advice and assistance and targeted strategies to promote structural reform across a vast and diverse State.

Rural Sustainability and Local Governance in Canada from a Two Wheeled Prospective

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Local Governance and Sustainable Rural Community Development: A Comparative Study of Canadian and Australian Experiences

Professor John Martin

Dr Alistair Walker

Having already contributed to a research paper issued in this edition of the Commonwealth Journal of Local Governance, Professor John Martin has found time to cycle with a small entourage across the vast landscape of Canada studying its rural sustainable communities. John is accompanied on his journey by his wife, Annie Guthrie and fellow researcher Alistair Walker, all native Australians.

The journey plots its course from Pemberton, just north of Vancouver and will end in St John's, Newfoundland at the end of August, a marathon journey of 7500km, the equivalent distance between Bangkok and Sydney.

John's journey studying and comparing rural communities and their sustainability in both Canada and Australia can be followed on www.sustainablecanadiancommunities.com, while Alistair has chosen to update the cycling journey www.canadothis.com and Annie to log the trip by uploading video clips to document the daily experiences as they unfold www.visualjourneyacrosscanada.com

The study aims to discover and research what Canadian and Australian rural communities have in common. In both countries, rural communities are located in federations similar in structure and function, with provinces/states having considerable authority over these places. Governments are often challenged to provide equitable services to all places, especially in rural communities. Yet these communities continue to survive often facing the most challenging demographic, economic and environmental circumstances. In this comparative research, John and Alistair will ask what it is about these places, people and institutions that sustain them over time addressing the key issue of how their past, current economic fortunes, social networks and public institutions work together to ensure their sustainability.

Why not log on now and follow their journey and share their experiences across the vast and varied landscape of Northern Canada!