

# **On the Promises of Devolution: Overcoming the Constraints of Natural Resource Management in a Village in Tanzania**

**Iben Nathan**

*Forest & Landscape Denmark, Copenhagen University, Rolighedsvej 23, 1958 Frederiksberg C,  
Email: [in@life.ku.dk](mailto:in@life.ku.dk)*

**Jens Friis Lund**

*Forest & Landscape Denmark, Copenhagen University, Rolighedsvej 23, 1958 Frederiksberg C  
Email: [jens@life.ku.dk](mailto:jens@life.ku.dk)*

**Quentin Gausset**

*Institute of Anthropology, Copenhagen University, Øster Farimagsgade 5, 1353 Copenhagen K,  
E-mail: [quentin.gausset@anthro.ku.dk](mailto:quentin.gausset@anthro.ku.dk)*

**Susanne Koch Andersen**

*Munksøgård 7, 4000 Roskilde. E-mail: [s\\_koch\\_andersen@hotmail.com](mailto:s_koch_andersen@hotmail.com)*

**Abstract:** *This article is concerned with the hypothesis that devolution, understood as entrusting local government with significant domains of autonomous discretionary power, will lead to the equitable and efficient management of natural resources. The paper focuses on the three domains of power conceived by some theorists as critical in the management of natural resources, namely making rules, implementing rules, and resolving disputes in relation to these rules. Based on a case study of a village in Tanzania, the article identifies some of the main constraints the village council encounters concerning the efficient and equitable management of common lands, and discusses whether devolution is the solution for overcoming these constraints. It is concluded that the role and functions of higher levels of government in decentralised natural resource management are essential and require due consideration beyond the point of arguing for more autonomy to local government.*

**Key words:** *Devolution, Natural Resource Management, Forest, Common Lands, Tanzania*

## 1. Introduction and background

During recent decades, many developing countries have embarked on decentralisation reforms in relation to natural resource management (Agrawal 2001). These reforms have taken various shapes depending on the history and political and economic climate of the different countries.

### 1.1. Decentralisation and natural resource management

In many countries, decentralisation has taken the shape of *deconcentration* in which the management of natural resources has been handed over to local administrative branches of central government (Ribot 2004, Miller 2004). In India, different models have been applied including joint forest management schemes (JFM), where forest resources are managed jointly by local branches of the central government and participatory committees at the village level (Sundar 2001). In Nepal forest resources have been *delegated* to forest user groups, being associations created specifically for natural resources management in isolation from local government but receiving support from the forest department (Hobley 1996). In other countries, *devolution* has occurred as rights and responsibilities for managing natural resources have been handed over to elected local governments. Tanzania is one of the countries having embarked on devolution in combination with other strategies for natural resource management. For instance, the 1998 National Forest Policy considers local government the key actor in the management of village forest reserves (GOT 1998). Devolution also plays a focal role in the present plans of the Government of Tanzania to fully integrate a national participatory forest management programme into the local government system under the local government reform programme (White and Mustalahti 2005)<sup>1</sup>. At the national level implementation efforts have resulted in a rapidly increasing coverage, and it is estimated that 3.7 million hectares, or around 10 per cent of the total forest area in Tanzania, was under some form of decentralised forest management in 2006 (Blomley and Ramadhani 2006).

In Tanzania, as well as in many other countries, the reform processes have been fed by the theoretical assumption that devolution leads to the equitable and efficient management of natural resources.<sup>2</sup> Devolution is often associated with equitable management because decisions are taken by representative down-

wards accountable local bodies (Ribot 2004), and because moving decision making processes closer to people enables them to affect those processes directly (World Bank 1997, Grindle 1982). Devolution is associated with efficient management because people are more likely to respect decisions they have been involved in taking (Larson 2003, Chambers 1994), and because local management bodies can get immediate feed back from affected people and adjust policies and implementation processes accordingly (Rondinelli and Cheema 1983).

Some scholars point to potential drawbacks of decentralisation, arguing that local communities are ridden with conflicting interests and prone to capture by local elites (Agrawal and Gibson 1999, Bardhan and Mookherjee 1999). Others argue that even perfectly representative and downwards accountable local authorities may ignore minority interests (Wunder 2001). When it is profitable, collective decision-makers are likely to exploit natural resources rather than conserve them especially if they do not bear the indirect costs. This is the case, for instance, when deforestation by upstream users leads to downstream flooding if the benefits to the community as a whole are greater than without over-exploitation, or when the present needs are urgent and costs of exploitation accrue later (Ribot 2004, Larson 2003).<sup>3</sup>

Despite the risks and drawbacks, scholars investigating decentralisation and natural resource management broadly agree that downwards accountable and representative actors must be entrusted with significant autonomy for devolution to result in the efficient and equitable management of natural resources (Ribot 2004, Ostrom 1999).

After having examined the literature on decentralisation in Africa, Ribot concludes that few cases exist where the institutional arrangements necessary for true decentralising reforms have been established and thus, where the strategy of decentralising natural resource management can be tested directly (Ribot 2002 and 2004). As argued in section 2, Tanzania is no exception in this regard (see also Wily 1997).

The aim of this article is, nevertheless, to contribute to the debate about decentralised natural resource management by investigating the hypothesis that devolution, understood as entrusting local govern-

ment with significant domains of autonomous discretionary power, will lead to the efficient and equitable management of natural resources. As the hypothesis cannot be tested directly, it is approached by taking the following two steps: The first step is an empirical investigation of the constraints encountered by the village council in relation to managing common lands in Majawanga, a village in Tanzania (section 3). Some of these constraints are similar to the drawbacks of decentralisation mentioned above. The second step is a theoretical discussion of devolution as a strategy for overcoming each of these empirically relevant constraints (section 4).

### ***1.2. Common wood lands in Majawanga - a village in Tanzania***

Majawanga is a village in Tanzania situated in Kilosa District in Morogoro Region bordering Dodoma Region. The village belongs to Gairo Ward and Gairo Division which are administrative units of Kilosa District. The natural vegetation in the area is dry Miombo woodland (Frost 1996).

Majawanga has approximately 360 households divided upon six sub-villages. All the households belong to the agro-pastoralist Kaguru tribe, which is the most common in Morogoro, and which dominates the northern part of Kilosa District. The second largest tribe in the area is Masai. Conflicts between the two tribes are common in the southern part of Kilosa district, but less so in the northern part where Majawanga is situated.

Almost all the inhabitants of Majawanga depend on agriculture, and most of them face poverty related problems such as falling agricultural yields, lack of land for cultivation, lack of alternative income earning opportunities, and lack of fresh water (Ngaga and Mugasha 2003). All villagers depend on access to woodland areas, especially for fuel wood and grazing opportunities, but also poles and grasses for construction, honey, fruits, and medicine (Andersen 2005). The woodlands on neighbouring village lands are a source of income for some Majawanga households, because there is demand for timber, firewood and charcoal from the larger towns (GOT 1997). Finally, the woodlands are exposed to agricultural expansion because of population increases and falling agricultural yields (Ngaga and Mugasha 2003, GOT 1997).

Majawanga was established in 1972 as an Ujamaa village<sup>4</sup> by clearing 300 acres of forest land. At the time of establishment, the village council reserved land for cultivation, residence, and common purposes including two common woodlands and a tract of common land for grazing, called Madali. At that time open access to the common lands for forest products and grazing opportunities prevailed. The common lands still exist with the same purposes, but are depleted and have diminished. Nevertheless, herders from other villages still bring their livestock to the woodlands in Majawanga for grazing, watering and salt lick opportunities, as a salty stream runs through the woodlands. Likewise, the villagers of Majawanga depend on access to forest products from woodlands outside the village (Gervin 2003). But degradation takes place in the neighbourhood too. As a result, the villagers of Majawanga, like people elsewhere in the region, use increasing amounts of time to gather fuel wood and other forest products, which means less time for productive work (AFREDA 2004). The future supply situation for Majawanga and surrounding villages is uncertain.

As a response to the increasing wood scarcity, some villagers in Majawanga have started growing trees on private lands (Gausset *et al.* 2006). For people without access to sufficient amounts of land, and for those who rent land from others, this is not an option; land poor people need whatever space they have for the cultivation of food crops, and it is usually prohibited to grow trees on rented lands (Gausset *et al.* 2006). Contrary to the wealthiest households in Majawanga, the poorest usually do not have access to means of transportation such as an oxcart to transport wood from sources further away from the household, and hence must walk. Although the majority of villagers in Majawanga have stakes in the common woodlands, the poorest are most dependent on equitable and efficient management of these lands.<sup>5</sup>

While there still is, in principle, more or less open and equitable access to the common woodland areas in Majawanga for all the inhabitants, these are in reality too depleted to meet the needs of the villagers for firewood, grazing opportunities and other important forest products. The existing management system does not appear to have been very efficient in terms of ensuring sustainable supply of forest products to the villagers.

### **1.3. How are the common lands in Majawanga managed?**

In the Village Land Act of 1999, the Government of Tanzania (GOT) laid down that all land in Tanzania belongs to the State (GOT 1999). The classification of land determines the management system. In Majawanga, all land is classified as village land. Through the Village Land Act, GOT delegates the responsibility for managing village land to village councils, who manage this land as “a trustee on behalf of all the villagers” (GOT 1999). In Majawanga it is the State which owns the common lands, and the village council which is the formal manager. But does the fact that common lands in Majawanga are depleted disqualify local government in relation to natural resource management? According to theory, the answer will depend on the degree to which local government is entrusted with significant domains of power and is downwards accountable.

### **1.4. Conceptual and analytical framework**

This article provides an input to the debate about devolution and natural resource management by discussing the hypothesis that devolution, understood as entrusting local government with significant domains of autonomous discretionary power, will lead to the efficient and equitable management of natural resources. As mentioned above, the hypothesis will be approached in two steps. The first step is an empirical investigation of the constraints encountered by the village council in relation to managing common lands in Majawanga. The second step is a theoretical discussion of devolution as a strategy for overcoming each of the empirically relevant constraints. The question is whether it is likely that increased autonomous discretionary power will assist the village council to overcome the identified constraints.

Domains of autonomous discretionary power can take different forms (Ribot 2004). The contemporary debate about management of natural resources and common lands is often inspired by Hardin (1969) and Ostrom (1990, 1995) and attaches much importance to rules. Agrawal and Gibson (1999) argue that efficient local management of natural resources as a minimum requires the authority and control by local actors over three critical domains<sup>6</sup>:

1. Making rules about the use, management, and conservation of resources

2. The implementation of the rules that are created; and,
3. The resolution of disputes that arise during the interpretation and application of rules

This article focuses on the village council’s authority over the three mentioned domains. The concepts power, authority and control will be used interchangeably to designate an actor’s ability to affect the outcome of a decision independently of other actors and their interests.<sup>7</sup>

Formal legal transfers of power to local government do not necessarily lead to actual increases of power (Ribot 2004). Accordingly, a distinction will be made between formal power, as defined by legal documents, and actual power. One factor often considered decisive for village council’s actual power is financial capacity, i.e. whether powers come funded, non-funded, or include the right for local actors to acquire funds themselves (Ribot 2004). This article will follow this point of view taking a look at the village council’s financial capacity.

In addition to financial capacity, this article will look at the constraining factors caused by the relations, basically relations of power, between the village council and (1) higher levels of government; (2) other villages and village councils; and (3) the Majawanga villagers.

“Efficiency” is sometimes defined narrowly in terms of how economically inputs are converted into outputs while “effectiveness” is defined as whether the purpose of the project has been achieved or how likely it is to be achieved (Danida 1993). As focus of this article is on constraints for management, and furthermore is based on the rationalist assumption that overcoming these constraints will lead to (more) efficient and equitable management, such detailed definitions are not needed here. Instead, the concept “efficient natural resource management” is defined broadly as a management system, which is capable (in financial and in other terms) of ensuring the sustainability of the resource. “Equitable management” is defined broadly, too, as management that does not systematically favour particular groups of people on behalf of others.

If devolution is to result in equitable and efficient management of natural resources, then local govern-

ment must not only have significant discretionary powers. It also has to be representative and downwards accountable (Ribot 2004). The concept accountability is used in many different and not always transparent ways. In this context, it will suffice to define accountability as the imperative to make actors (in this case village council) answerable for their behaviour and responsive to the entity from which they derive their authority (ADB 1995). Local governments usually derive their authority from at least two entities: Central government and the local population. Theory about devolution tends to focus on “downwards accountability” understood as accountability towards the local population. To some scholars, downwards accountability is ensured by having free and fair elections. Others require that mechanisms are in place to enforce accountability during the lifetime of a government or administration. Such mechanisms range from audit covenants to community meetings, training organisations and other measures aiming to increase awareness and demands from the local population (Kafakoma *et al.* 2005, Sorabjee 2001, ADB 1995). Yet others see accountability as linked to concrete and appropriate rewards and sanctions (Borrini-Feyerabend *et al.* 2004). Since the focus here is on discretionary powers, an investigation of whether the village council in Majawanga is actually downwards accountable in all these regards is outside the scope of this paper. Nevertheless, the importance of downwards accountability will be dealt with in the discussion.

### **1.5. Methods**

The article is based on an empirical study of the constraints in managing common lands encountered by the village council in the case of village Majawanga. Majawanga was selected as research village for Petrea, a research programme on people, trees and agriculture in Africa running from 2001-2005 financed by the Danish International Development Assistance (Danida). The fieldwork on which this article is based was carried out in Majawanga in April-May 2004. The methods applied included semi-structured interviews, quantitative base-line surveys, GIS, consultations of documents and observations at district, ward and village levels. Key respondents were selected among secretaries, elected chairmen and members of local government as well as public officers at different levels of the local government system. Interviews were carried out with villagers of Majawanga. Various documents were consulted

including account books, plans, minutes, official maps, bylaws, and national acts. Observations were made in the common lands of Majawanga to investigate their condition, utilisation level and (lack of) management practices, and at a meeting in the village assembly. The article also draws on the efforts of several other Petrea researchers who have carried out studies in the same village using different methods including GIS. For a description of some of these methods see Gausset 2005.

Applying a case study approach for the present study was motivated, first and foremost, by the assumption that constraints in natural resource management to some extent vary from one empirical context to another, and that different types of constraints call for different solutions. Devolution is one such possible solution. The case study approach ensures that the theoretical discussion about the promises of devolution is empirically relevant, at least in the case of Majawanga. This is in agreement with the point of view that the mode of generalising results of a case study is “analytical generalisation” in which previously developed theory is used as a template with which to compare the empirical results of the case study (Yin 2003).

As case study results cannot be generalised in the strict statistical sense, i.e. from sample to population (Yin 2003), the empirical relevance of the case study results described in this article is, in principle, limited to Majawanga. Nevertheless, other literature on Tanzania identifies constraints on the management of natural resources similar to many of those identified in Majawanga, cf. sections 3 and 4. In this sense, the empirical results and the discussion of their implications to the promises of devolution are, at least partly, relevant in a wider empirical context and potentially relevant in a wider theoretical context as well.

### **1.6. Contents of the article**

The article is structured as follows. First, we address the question of to what extent the village council in Majawanga controls the three critical domains, i.e. whether it already has significant domains of power and authority. Second, we identify some of the major constraints encountered by the village council in managing common lands in Majawanga. Finally, we discuss whether increased discretionary powers and downwards accountability are likely to assist the village council in overcoming these constraints.

## **2. To what extent does the village council in Majawanga control the three critical domains?**

To address this question, this section starts out by taking a brief look at the structures of local government in Tanzania.

### ***2.1. Local government structures in Tanzania***

In 1982, the Government of Tanzania introduced the Local Government (District) Authorities Act (GOT 1982). This Act re-established local government as a representative system, and still constitutes the main legal basis for local government in Tanzania. As indicated by the title, the Act establishes the district council as the focal level of local government in Tanzania but also provides for councils at ward and village levels and for village assemblies (GOT 1982).<sup>8</sup>

The village assembly comprises all inhabitants of a village who are eighteen years of age or above and is “the supreme authority on all matters of general policy making in relation to the affairs of the village as such” (GOT 1982). The village assembly elects the chairman and members of the village council which thus, at least formally, is defined as a downwards accountable body.

The district council consists of members elected from each ward in the area of the district council; members elected by the district council from among persons nominated by party organizations in the area of the district council. In practice this means the ruling party. Moreover, it consists of three members appointed by the Minister of Local Government. The ward development committee consists of all the village council chairmen within its area, the elected member of the district council who represents the ward, and public officers seconded to the ward (GOT 1982). An overview of the present structure of local government in Tanzania is presented below in fig. 1.

To complete the summary of local government structures in Tanzania it is to be added, first, that Tanzania has a divisional level located between the ward and the district. The divisions have no locally elected councils, only government officers. Second, villages are divided into smaller geographically defined sub-village units. Each sub-village is represented in the village council. Third, the village council nominates a number of sub-committees, including a land and environment committee, to assist in implementa-

tion. Fourth, the ruling party (CCM) used to be a fully integrated part of the local government system. Now the party has structures parallel to local government as illustrated in fig. 1. Party representatives are in reality still born members of the district council. Finally, the ten cell system, which was introduced by the ruling party under the socialist Ujamaa system, and which organises every 10 households under a ten-cell party leader, is efficient in many areas in Tanzania including Majawanga even today.

The question whether the village council controls the making and enforcement of rules and resolution of conflicts will be approached in formal legal terms, and by looking at the actual situation of the village council in Majawanga.

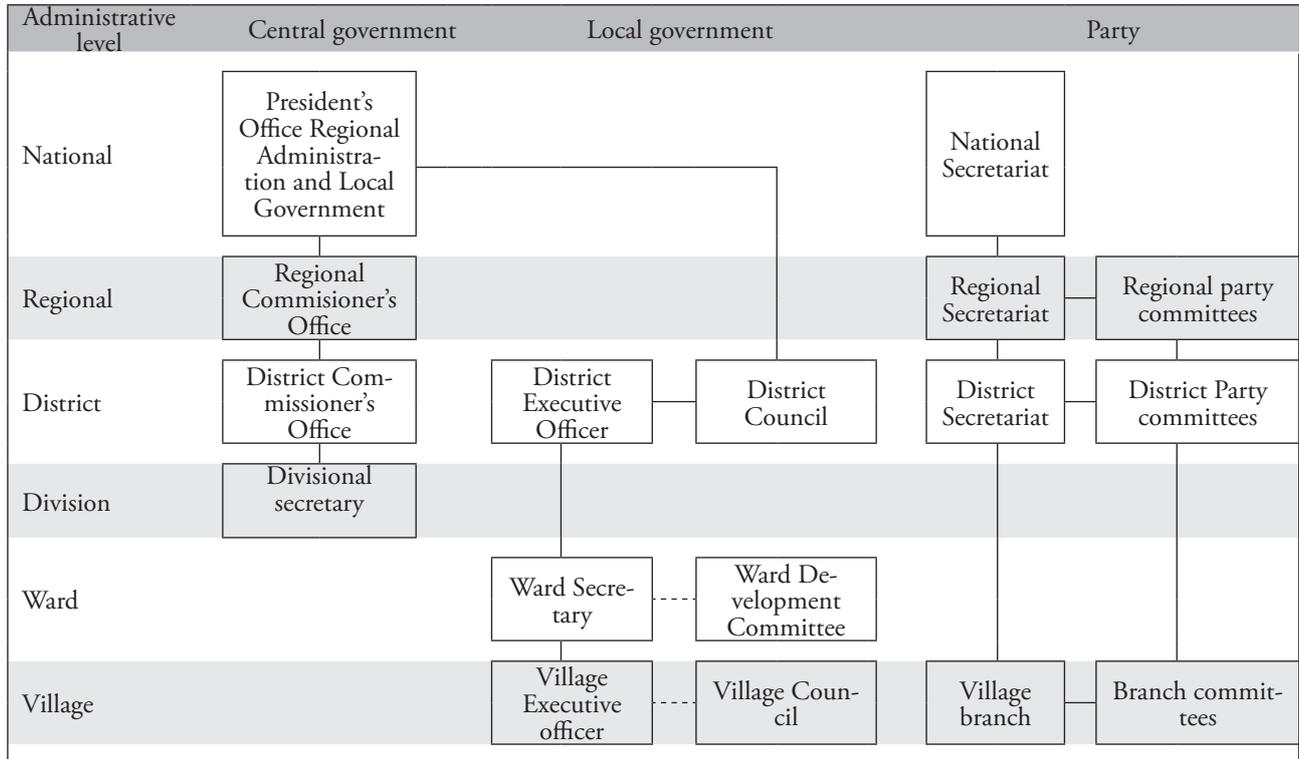
### ***2.2. To what extent does the village council in Majawanga formally control the three critical domains?***

The Village Land Act of 1999 establishes that the village council has the authority to make and implement its own bylaws for the better management and administration of village land within its jurisdiction. Village council’s enactment of bylaws at the village level, however, requires approval by the village assembly as well as the district council through the ward (GOT 1999, GOT 1982).

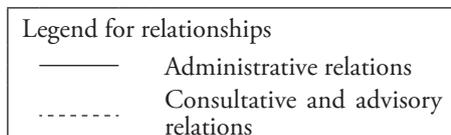
The district council has authority to make bylaws too. It also has specific functions relevant to the management of common lands, including regulating movements of livestock and maintaining, improving, and regulating the use of forest and forest produce (GOT 1982). The village council has not been assigned such specific functions, but is responsible for managing village lands in a sustainable manner (GOT 1999) and for implementing bylaws enacted by the District Council (GOT 1982). The Village Land Act assigns the village council the duty to solve conflicts related to village lands but conflicting parties may appeal the village council’s decisions to higher instances.<sup>9</sup> In some cases, the Village Land Act is quite specific with regard to what measures can be taken against any person, who offends the rules, such as determining exact fines (GOT 1982).

It can be concluded that the village council is entrusted with relatively wide formal autonomous powers over the three critical domains. These formal powers are restricted by the provisions that (1) dis-

**Figure 1.** Structures of local government



Source: Modified from Baker et al. 2002



district councils must approve of the bylaws made by the village councils, (2) village council decisions can be appealed to higher instances, and (3) by specific provisions about fines. Moreover, there is a discrepancy between the Local Government (District) Authorities Act (GOT 1982) and the Village Land Act of 1999, which results in overlapping authorities. The former law establishes the District Council as the focal level of local government with specific functions in relation to natural resource management, while the latter defines the village council as the focal level of local government in relation to natural resource management on village lands.

**2.3. To what extent does the village council in Majawanga actually control the three critical domains?**

In Majawanga, the village council and villagers interviewed mention a range of rules concerning the protection and utilisation of natural resources. These rules include the following:

1. The cultivation and establishment of permanent settlements inside common lands is prohibited
2. Cutting trees and branches is prohibited in common lands

According to the village executive officer, these and other rules effective at the village level reflect written laws and bylaws passed at higher levels of government.<sup>10</sup> The village council itself never had any bylaw approved by the District Council, but communicates and implements rules from higher levels of government. This happens through regular village assembly meetings, through the chairmen of the six sub-villages and the ten cell leaders and by having two unpaid men (Mugambo) patrolling the common lands. The Mugambo is allowed to fine offenders on the spot or to bring them to the village council. In principle, the fine has to be shared between the Mugambo and the village council.

Conflicts in relation to common lands or other natural resources are, in principle, solved by the sub-village chairmen, by one of the sub-committees, or by the village council. In the case of larger conflicts, or if the resolution of a conflict requires the use of force, the village council usually turns to higher levels of government, such as the Ward Executive Officer or the primary court at ward level. This can be illustrated by the following examples quoted by the village council chairman and secretary:

“Some people have started cultivating inside Madali although it is prohibited. We have advised them to stop cultivating after harvesting this year. Otherwise the Divisional Secretary will be informed to take action”

“Recently, a young man decided to plant sisal across the old road in the village. He had no permission from the village council. We requested him to remove the plants and re-open the road, but he did not comply. Then we requested the Divisional Secretary to assist us. She sent some soldiers to pick him up and gave him the choice of paying 50,000 TSH or spending 6 months in jail. He paid immediately and re-opened the road”

“We have a conflict with our neighbouring villages, Mklama and Meshughi. The boundary between the three villages is not well defined. We have decided to ask the government to help sort it out. We have submitted a letter for the ward. The ward is supposed to send the letter to the Divisional Secretary, but we do not know if this has happened. Until now, we have waited for more than 10 years for the government to come along to define the village boundaries.”

In sum, although the village council in Majawanga is entitled to prepare and implement its own rules, it only implements rules communicated from higher levels of government. For solving conflicts the village council to some extent depends on backing from and access to means of force sanctioned by higher levels of government. In reality, the village council's discretionary power over the three critical domains is thus significantly restricted. The implications of this will appear from below.

### **3. What are the major constraints for village council in managing common lands?**

This section investigates the main constraints encountered by the village council in relation to higher levels of government; in relation to other villages and village councils; in relation to the inhabitants of Majawanga and in relation to the limited financial and technical capacities of the village council.

#### ***3.1 Constraints in relation to higher levels of government***

As mentioned in section 2, the village council in Majawanga never had any bylaw approved by the District Council. According to the village councillors, this is mainly due to lack of responsiveness from higher levels of government and in particular the ward level. They suspect that applications and other enquiries for the district council, e.g. for land surveyors, do not pass beyond this level due to the insufficiency of the person who is Ward Executive Officer.

The village council, as well as officers at higher levels of government, is aware that it cannot bypass the formal procedures, as this implies a risk of being overruled by higher levels of government. The divisional forest officer in Gairo explains this by quoting an illustrative example from another village in the area:

A village council decided to preserve a forested area within its jurisdiction. The council issued and announced the rule that residence and cultivation was prohibited in that area. Later, two newcomers settled in the area. The village council imposed a fine on them and ordered them to terminate the settlement. The two offenders did not comply and appealed to the district council, which found that the village bylaw was invalid as it had not been approved by the district council. The District Council overruled the village council decision and the offenders could stay.<sup>11</sup>

On the other hand, it can be observed that the village councillors in Majawanga do not actively push for having own approved rules and that the general attitude of the village council is rather one of “wait-and-see” for directions and orders to come from higher levels of government<sup>12</sup>

Turning to the enactment of rules and conflict resolution, it was concluded above in section 2.2 and illustrated by the example quoted immediately above that the discretionary powers of the village council are constrained by the risk of being overruled by higher levels of government. Moreover, it was illustrated by the examples in section 2.3 that the village council is constrained by its dependency on access to legally sanctioned means of force belonging to higher levels of government, such as the police.

In Majawanga, the main factors constraining village council's discretionary powers in relation to higher levels of government include inert bureaucratic procedures with a heavy top-down bias, lack of responsiveness from higher levels of government, and a "wait and see" attitude of the village council. Moreover, these factors include the dependency of the village council on access to means of force, as well as support and collaboration from higher levels of government, which again requires the compliance of the village council with formal and informal requirements from higher levels of government. Bruce (1999) observes that the provision for review and approval of local bylaws is problematic in many other places in Tanzania as well. He states that in most cases the efforts of villages to enact bylaws seem to have failed due to the requirement that village by-laws be approved by higher instances and, more generally, because of the reluctance of officials at any level in the administration to delegate authority to village government.

### ***3.2. Constraints in relation to other villages***

Majawanga was surveyed and demarcated in 1974.<sup>13</sup> A few years later, two of the neighbouring villages were surveyed. The different surveys left Majawanga with unclear borders, and there is a long-standing disagreement between Majawanga and the neighbouring village, Mklama, as both claim an area inside one of the two woodlands. This conflict has become fiercer with the increased pressure on land. The two village councils have negotiated, but have not been able to solve the conflict. Both village councils have regularly applied to the Ward Executive Officer for having a new land survey, but in vain.

The border conflict results in uncertainty about who has the management responsibility for and user right of the particular area subject to conflict, but does not appear to affect the management of common

lands well inside Majawanga. For these areas, formal legal ownership is well established: The State owns the land; the village council of Majawanga manages it. Nevertheless, even these parts of the common lands have significant traits of open access regimes (Bromley and Cernea 1989, Ostrom 1990). This is because herders from other villages regularly pass through Majawanga to graze and water their livestock. The majority of Majawanga villagers depend on access to natural resources outside the village, in particular for fuel wood, grazing areas, and areas for cultivation (Andersen 2005; Gervin 2003).

The situation in Majawanga with conflicts about land, unclear borders, and open access to common lands is quite common and often more significant in many other villages in Tanzania as well.<sup>14</sup> In conclusion, although the village council has the formal authority to enact and enforce own bylaws for the common lands, it does not have the independent authority to solve serious management problems that arise between villages such as border problems. Moreover, the patterns of resource interdependency across administratively defined borders represent a serious constraint for each individual village council to make and enforce rules within its own jurisdiction independently of other village councils in the area.

### ***3.3. Constraints in relation to the villagers of Majawanga***

As mentioned in section 1, some scholars point to the potential problems of devolution such as conflicting interests within the community, which often result in elite capture and ignorance of minority interests, and the tendency of collective decision makers to exploit rather than conserve natural resources especially if costs of exploitation accrue later.

There are multiple interests in relation to the common lands of Majawanga. Some of these interests are conflicting. Poor families who collect fire wood but do not own livestock have an urgent short-term interest in restrictions on browsing in order to reduce soil erosion and ensure regeneration of trees. The more wealthy livestock owning families have this as a long-term interest, but they also have an immediate need for maintaining and expanding existing grazing opportunities. Moreover, there is an interest conflict between the need for forest products and the need for agricultural lands, as agricultural expansion into

the common lands will result in reduced access to forest products.

In Majawanga, the village council has not passed any bylaws, which could have been affected by elite capture. On the other hand, the village council has not pushed for rules that could ensure the sustainability of the common lands. Such rules could aim to control browsing, or they could define villagers' rights and duties in relation to the common lands. For instance, each household could contribute a certain amount of labour, or plant and protect a tree. The village council's lack of initiative in relation to enactment of rules is related to inert bureaucratic procedures at higher levels of government, but can also be interpreted in light of its difficulties in taking unpopular decisions. It is difficult to take such decisions especially if local elites such as "large scale" powerful cattle owners (are likely to) resist them. Some of the village councillors themselves may have an interest in maintaining access to grazing areas and areas for cultivation. The lack of initiative, thus, may well be interpreted as a result of elite capture, although more in terms of hidden and indirect "non-decision making" and "radical power."<sup>15</sup>

When attempting to enforce rules concerning the common lands, the village council encounters additional constraints. Many villagers in Majawanga inform that they depend on the common lands for fuel wood, and that they use fresh wood or a mix of fresh and dead wood despite being aware that this is illegal (Andersen 2005). The reporting and patrolling system is, in other words, not effective. Collecting firewood and fresh wood from the common lands appears to be a more or less socially accepted practice which cannot be done openly due to the formal rules imposed by higher levels of government. But the poor enforcement of the few existing rules can also be partly ascribed to the difficulty to prevent poor fellow villagers who are often kin and in-laws to cover some of their most basic needs.

The importance of kinship relations is further accentuated by the fact that, although traditional leadership has been abolished after independence, and although a formal and hierarchical system of administration has been put into place, many conflicts in the Kaguru society continue to be solved the old way, between relatives. The traditional leaders (mainly clan leaders) among the Kaguru did not

have a strong political power in pre-colonial times. They exercised their authority partly through their control of rainmaking and land-purificatory rites (Beidelman 1967). The matrilineal kinship structure of the Kaguru combined with a certain amount of patri-local rule of residence created conflicting sets of social allegiances (Beidelman 1986). As elsewhere among "tribes without rulers", most conflicts were solved without a centralised authority, through the existence of a common moral frame focusing on religious mechanisms and kinship duties (Evans-Pritchard 1940; Fortes and Evans-Pritchard 1940; Middleton et al. 1958). This tradition is still important in Majawanga.

A few scattered settlements and cultivated fields can be found inside the Madali grazing area. These settlements have existed for some years. The village council chairman informs that the council has requested the settlers to move away, but admits not to have taken any serious measures to actually make them move. The reason given is that the settlers are herders who lost their cattle and have become poor with no other options for survival. It belongs to the picture that 30 per cent (18) out of 60 respondents in a survey carried out in Majawanga informed to have acquired land without permission (Ngaga and Mugasha 2003), and that recently Madali was abandoned as common lands, harvested, burned and transformed into cultivated lands.<sup>16</sup> This situation may also be interpreted as a result of collective decision makers' tendency to exploit the natural resources because present needs are urgent and costs accrue later (See e.g. Ribot 2004).

Summing up, what is usually considered as the major strength of local government sometimes produces constraints for equitable and efficient natural resource management: the proximity to the villagers. These constraints have a "positive" feature, which could be labelled politics of compassion referring to the dilemma expressed by the village council chairman; that if the village council enforces existing rules, this may have serious negative implications for people they know, and for themselves.<sup>17</sup> They also imply the risk of politics of kinship, elite capture, nepotism, and patronage (e.g. Agrawal and Gibson 1999).

Most of the problems observed in the relation between village council and villagers in Majawanga

have been observed in many other settings as well (e.g. Borrini-Feyerabend et al. 2004).

### ***3.4. Constraints in relation to the limited financial capacities of the village council***

In the theory about decentralisation, it is often emphasised that the most important factor determining local authorities' discretionary powers is whether devolved powers come funded or unfunded by central government, or, even more importantly, whether they include powers for the local authority to acquire their own funds – such as through taxation, fees, fines, loans, and sale of confiscated goods (e.g. Ribot 2004). In relation to common lands in Majawanga, it could be expected that access to human resources, such as a sufficient number of staff reporting directly to the village council, and access to specialised knowledge on rehabilitation and sustainable use of common lands, would be another decisive factor determining the village council's actual power.

At the time of fieldwork, the account books of the village council in Majawanga showed incomes and expenditures almost equal to zero. The village council secretary and accountant informed that government had not allowed village councils in Tanzania to levy own taxes since the previous year.<sup>18</sup> Nor had the village council received any grants from government during the same interval. The only funding the council was formally allowed to spend was 10 per cent of imposed fines. Furthermore, the village council secretary was (and is) the only staff at village level and the village councillors did not have access to any specialised knowledge on rehabilitation of wood lands in practice.

It does not require a lot of financial resources to carry out the isolated activity of making rules. Likewise, enforcing rules and solving conflicts is already being done in Majawanga, although not very effectively, by drawing on other important resources: the organisation of the villagers and means of force belonging to higher levels of government. On the other hand, financial and human capacity will always to some extent delimit the range of technical options available to the village council for managing the commons, and through that delimit its discretionary powers. For instance, an active approach to the rehabilitation of the common lands, such as enrichment planting, measures for erosion control etc., is much

more demanding in terms of financial and human resources than a passive management strategy, such as no action, or fencing the areas for trees to regenerate. But then again, the active approach may still be an option even with the limited financial and human capacities of the village council, that is, if forest officers at divisional level and villagers can be mobilised to contribute directly through technical knowledge, seedlings and labour.<sup>19</sup>

In this sense, it may be concluded that the limited financial and human capacity constitutes a constraint but not necessarily an insurmountable constraint for the village council in Majawanga to exercise discretionary powers over the three critical domains.

## **4. Will increased discretionary power solve the problems encountered by the village council?**

The following sections discuss whether increased discretionary powers to local government is likely to solve the management problems encountered by the village council in Majawanga in relation to higher levels of government, in relation to other villages, in relation to the villagers of Majawanga, and in relation to the village council's limited capacities.

### ***4.1. In relation to higher levels of government?***

In Majawanga and other villages in Tanzania the main factors constraining village council's discretionary powers in relation to higher levels of government include inert bureaucratic procedures and problems of having village council bylaws approved by the district council through the ward; the village council's difficulties in enforcing bylaws without drawing on government institutions at higher levels, i.e. the police, and that the village council's resolution of conflicts can be appealed to higher instances.

If the village council in Majawanga were given full autonomy to enact its own bylaws, the problem of inert bureaucratic procedures would naturally disappear, and by that a significant constraint for the village council to manage common woodlands. The village council would, however, still have to comply with national laws, which in Tanzania for the time being (1) are difficult to get hold of for village councils, (2) written in a language which is difficult to understand even for academics, and (3) extensive and not always consistent. Accordingly, there would

still be a need for co-ordination with district bylaws and, for that matter, with rules enacted by other villages and village councils in the neighbourhood. Hence, full autonomy to the village council would solve the problem of inert bureaucratic procedures, but not the problem of how to ensure vertical co-ordination between different levels of government and horizontal co-ordination between villages.

If local actors are more likely to feel ownership for and comply with rules they formulate themselves this may explain some of the difficulties the village council in Majawanga faces in implementing rules enacted by higher levels of government. These rules do not always tally with social practices. On the other hand, even if a perfectly downwards accountable local body was enabled to enact its own bylaws, and a majority of villagers would perceive these laws as “theirs”, there would in reality often still be a (perhaps strong) minority who would oppose these rules. Neither would the logic of “sense of ownership” apply to people coming from outside the jurisdiction of the village council, such as the herders grazing and watering their cattle in Majawanga. Increased discretionary powers over the domain of implementation would not solve the problem of how to cope with non-compliance: the village council would still depend on means of force sanctioned by higher levels of government.

Furthermore, the village council may in some cases find it easier to implement rules coming from higher levels of government than their own rules as it is then possible to lay off responsibility for the content of the unpopular rules and point to the necessity of adherence, to avoid repercussions from higher levels of government, or national laws may in some cases simply be seen as more legitimate than local bylaws. Hence, increased discretionary autonomy in enacting rules is likely to assist the village council’s implementation in some regards, but is not likely to solve all problems of non-compliance and legitimacy.

If the village council in Majawanga were given full autonomy to solve conflicts related to natural resources under its jurisdiction the “problem” of appeals would be solved. On the other hand, eliminating the possibility of appeal would hardly be desirable seen from the point of view of rural people’s legal rights. The real problem to be discussed here is therefore not whether village councils in Tanzania

should be given more autonomy over conflict resolution (they already have a great deal of autonomy in this regard and this should be maintained) but rather how to ensure that resolution of conflicts at different levels of appeal happens in a fair and transparent manner under due consideration to the legal rights of cultivators, herders and any other rural people.

In sum, it is likely that increased discretionary power to the village council in Majawanga and elsewhere would result in increased compliance with the rules governing the common lands. However, there are limits to the kinds of problems increased discretionary powers can solve. To ensure a relatively autonomous village councils’ successful management of common lands, it is equally important to consider measures to strengthen vertical co-ordination, and procedures to assure that higher levels of government is supportive of the village council in making and implementing rules, while simultaneously ensuring the legal rights of rural people.

#### ***4.2. In relation to other villages?***

The relations between Majawanga and other villages in the neighbourhood cause constraints in terms of village land border conflict and patterns of resource interdependency across local government borders. The village councils of Majawanga and Mklama have not been able to solve the border conflict themselves, not even to find a temporary solution. The two villages would benefit from external mediators and technical assistance. These should be supplied by higher levels of government, who could also guarantee lasting solutions.

The common lands in Majawanga have well-known characteristics of open access, as people from both within and outside the village have access to the resource with little control being exercised. This creates problems for the village council, as the rules governing the commons must be (i) adapted to very different users and (ii) communicated to people who are not under the jurisdiction of the village. In a situation with autonomous village councils and poor communication and co-ordination, this could easily develop into a mess of local rules changing whenever a cattle herder crosses a village border, leading to confusion, conflict, and opportunities for rent seeking behaviour by village leaders. Even a perfectly autonomous and accountable village council would find it difficult to impose restrictions

on outsiders' access to grazing resources, when a large majority of Majawanga villagers depend on firewood from sources outside Majawanga. The situation calls for external actors to plan for forest resource conservation and restoration for a larger area to ensure that the needs of all households can be met within reasonable distances, and to mediate negotiations between the villages. Such horizontal co-ordination cannot be expected to be successful from village councils' own efforts alone.

Increased discretionary powers over the three critical domains will not solve the problems encountered by the village council in relation to other villages unless combined with a strengthened role of higher levels of government or other external actors to ensure horizontal co-ordination, to disseminate information about laws and bylaws enacted at different levels of government, and to guarantee possible agreements between villages. Moreover, the village council will still depend on higher level of governments to sanction people from Majawanga and other villages if they do not comply with village bylaws.

#### ***4.3. In relation to the villagers of Majawanga?***

The village council in Majawanga is in a far better position than higher levels of government when it comes to knowledge about who are the users of common lands, what are the main problems facing the villagers in Majawanga, etc. In this light, it makes sense to devolve power and authority to this level of local government. On the other hand, the very closeness to the constituency inhibits decisions necessary to ensure efficient management of common lands if these decisions are unpopular or if needs are urgent and costs accrue later, such as the protection of common lands when Majawanga villagers are in need of more agricultural land. Higher levels of government have an important role to play in demanding efficient management of and providing legitimacy and support to village councils in such situations.

It is clear that even in the case of Majawanga being a relatively homogenous village there are various internal as well as external actors with different stakes in common lands. It is rarely possible for the village council to represent the different stakes at one and the same time. This means that the village council sometimes must take decisions that favour one group over the other. This problem will not disappear with increased discretionary powers and

mechanisms to ensure downwards accountability of the village council. Neither will the risk of local elite capture. Based on research in different localities in Tanzania, Brockington (2006) and Fjeldstad (2001) note that, despite a good legal framework suggesting the presence of downward accountability, Tanzanian local government is plagued with problems of poor governance and corruption strongly inhibiting its legitimacy. Pondering over these findings, Brockington (2006) poses the question of whether these findings should caution against decentralised natural resource management or if good governance may be won in the process of a local power struggle for control with decentralised natural resources? At least it is safe to say that further authority to the village council over the three critical domains will not necessarily solve the problems of proximity and elite capture unless accompanied by measures to empower and organise the weakest groups in the community. These groups must be enabled to articulate their interest vis-à-vis government institutions and elites and to put pressure on decision making. Awareness rising about rights and interests could be another important element in a strategy aiming at equitable management of common lands by village councils. With regard to implementing rules and solving conflicts the village council in Majawanga is in a good position because it is knowledgeable about local conditions, including traditional mechanisms of conflict resolution, but, as already mentioned, higher levels of government have an important role to play in relation to ensure that resolution of conflicts at different levels happens in a fair, transparent and unbiased manner, under due consideration to the legal rights of rural people. Hence, devolution is not likely to solve the problems encountered by the village council in relation to the villagers of Majawanga unless combined with measures to strengthen the positive role of higher levels of government.

A case study from Iringa District illustrates that devolution of natural resources may sometimes even strengthen internal conflicts in a village. Following devolution of forest management, a sub-village situated in the village's forest reserve threatens with seeking independence from the main village. The inhabitants of the sub-village feel they receive too few benefits in return for paying taxes on forest products. A precondition for becoming independent is that the sub-village has the basic infrastructure, i.e. a dispensary, milling machine, office, and a primary

school. The village leaders seek to prevent development of infrastructure in the sub-village,<sup>20</sup> which results in more tension and conflict. The village has not yet been able to solve the dilemma (Lund 2007). The village leaders cannot start negotiating forest taxes before higher authorities guarantee that the village will not be split. In this case too, the presence of responsive higher levels of government is a prerequisite to solve some dilemmas concerning management of common lands.

#### ***4.4. In relation to the village council's limited capacities?***

Previously we concluded that Majawanga village council is constrained because of its limited technical knowledge and limited financial resources, but that this may not constitute an insurmountable constraint unless the council wishes to embark on a very active strategy towards regeneration of the areas (enrichment plantings etc.). Still, one might pose the question whether devolution might assist in removing one of the constraints faced by the village council by increasing its technical and financial capacities.

In relation to technical knowledge devolution is no solution. Instead central government has an important role to play in disseminating knowledge on management and regeneration of degraded woodlands through information campaigns, extension service, outsourcing, etc.

In relation to financial resources, devolution could be in the form of (i) increased opportunities to collect and retain taxes or (ii) increased disbursements of central government grants. The evidence with regard to (i) is rather mixed, as both outside observers and insiders to the local government system alike frequently have pointed to the issue of local politicians exhibiting laxity in taxation issues (Max 1991, Fjeldstad 2001). Contrasting this, a study comprising 15 villages in Iringa District, Tanzania on taxation of forest products finds that devolution of rights to collect and retain forest revenue leads to significant improvements in taxation efficiency (Lund 2004). It is unclear whether the result reported by Lund (2004) is due to a strong effort in awareness raising by a donor supported project or the fact that the subjects to taxation of forest products usually comprise smaller, marginalised and poor groupings in the village, thus decreasing the social

costs of tax enforcement to local politicians. In addition, taxation of resource uses in depleted and degraded areas holds limited promise only. In relation to (ii), it seems unrealistic that central government should increase disbursements of grants to finance rehabilitation of degraded lands unless heavy donor financing is put in place.

More money, more options for using taxation as an instrument for managing natural resources, and increased access to technical assistance would naturally increase village council's discretionary powers and management options considerably, but such measures do not seem realistic at this point. In relation to managing common woodlands efficiently and equitable, the village council does not have to await such measures, as it can go for low cost passive solutions, and draw on other resources such as contributions in kind from the villagers.

## **5. Summary, conclusion, and further perspectives**

The aim of this article was to contribute to the debate about devolution and natural resource management by discussing the hypothesis that devolution will lead to efficient and equitable management of natural resources.

Initially, it was concluded that, although formally the national legal framework in Tanzania opens up for relatively wide discretionary powers to village councils in relation to managing natural resources, e.g. common lands, the real powers are limited. Furthermore, downwards accountability of village councils is at this point outplayed by upwards accountability. There is, in other words, still a wide scope for devolution in Tanzania as in other countries in Africa (Ribot 2002 and 2004). For this reason, the hypothesis could not be tested directly. Instead, the hypothesis was approached by taking two steps. The first step was an empirical investigation of the constraints encountered by the village council in Majawanga. It was observed that constraints similar to many of those identified in Majawanga have been identified in other locations in Tanzania as well. The second step was a theoretical discussion of devolution as a strategy for overcoming each of the identified constraints.

As illustrated by the case of Majawanga, there is hardly one clear cut answer to the question whether

devolution will lead to (more) efficient and equitable management of common lands. Village councils in Tanzania face many different constraints for equitable and efficient management of natural resources. Increased discretionary power is likely to assist the village councils in overcoming some of these constraints, but there are other constraints which cannot be overcome by village councils in isolation. Furthermore, new constraints are likely to appear in the process of devolution. But what, then, are the further perspectives of recommending devolution as a solution?

In Tanzania, devolution would make management processes more flexible and adapted to the local context. This advantage could be even greater if the ward and divisional levels were cancelled to make the line of communication between village councils and district council direct. Devolution would, however, not change the fact that in managing natural resources the village councils depend on backing from the State, e.g. in the form of access to means of force. Higher levels of government also have a role to play in guaranteeing rural people's legal rights vis-à-vis the village council, as they have an independent judiciary backed by the State. The role of higher levels of government could be even more important in areas with more valuable natural resource bases and higher market pressure that attract more wealthy and powerful stakeholders than in Majawanga. Increased discretionary powers and downwards accountability of village councils would also increase the need for vertical co-ordination, i.e. co-ordination with rules and regulations enacted by higher levels of government.

Even with increased discretionary powers, the village councils' authority will remain limited to their own jurisdictions. Devolution is therefore likely to increase the need for (1) clear boundary demarcation, (2) horizontal co-ordination with other villages, and (3) rules adapted to the social reality of the villagers: that patterns of natural resource use do not follow administratively defined village boundaries. A way forward could be regional mapping of resource uses that might inform negotiations of resource use regulations between villages. For instance, Majawanga is a net user of firewood and grazing from the neighbouring villages, but is a net supplier of salt lick and water. Mapping such interdependence patterns might provide for negotiating common

regulations. In areas where such negotiations are not possible, external bodies are needed to solve conflicts and ensure vertical and horizontal co-ordination. In the last instance, such bodies will depend on backing from and access to means of force sanctioned by the State.

Devolution may assist village councils to overcome some of the constraints encountered in relation to their own constituencies. Thus, villagers may be more willing to comply with rules that are enacted by downwards accountable village councils, better adapted to the local context, and supported by a majority of villagers within the constituency, but the village councils may still face the problem that a minority fails to comply with a particular decision. Accordingly, the village councils still need backing from and access to means of force sanctioned by the State. Moreover, intervention by higher levels of government may be needed to enforce decisions that are unpopular with the majority, but necessary for the sustainability of the resource. Finally, devolution will increase the need for organization, support, and empowerment of poor people to enable them to articulate their interests versus the rural elites. All this will require direct or indirect interventions by higher levels of government.

It has been stated many times that the failures of centralised forest regulation, the demands of local populations, and the potential to promote greater efficiency, equity and democracy in development all suggest that decentralised natural resource management deserves a chance (e.g. Ribot 2002, Hobley 1996, Rondinelli and Cheema 1983, Larson 2003). The case of Majawanga illustrates that management by the village council has advantages but also that local people will not always choose the most sustainable use of forests or natural resources, and that their participation in and influence on local government will not always guarantee better forest use or more equitability. As stated by Larson (2003) this highlights the importance of other factors in the model of devolution and natural resource management, for example broader scale economic incentives, the local incentive structure, the appropriate balance of powers with the central government, the role of NGOs in local power relations, etc.

As the case of Majawanga illustrates, it is first and foremost the role of higher levels of government,

and the dynamics of the relation between higher and lower levels of government that must be put on the agenda, at least by those who strongly advocates devolution in natural resource management. It has often been pointed out that central government institutions and personnel at all levels purposively resist decentralisation processes (e.g. Ribot *et al.* 2006). This is an important part of the argument, but very often higher levels of government are simply not geared to ensuring vertical and horizontal coordination, to avoiding local elite capture, to providing the necessary technical support, etc. It is therefore our point of view that, beyond the point of arguing for more autonomy to local governments, it is necessary to start considering the role and functions of higher levels of government with a view to support and assist local governments in overcoming the many constraints they encounter.

## Notes

- 1 Cf. also GOT n.d.
- 2 E.g. Ribot 2004, Mniwasa and Shauri 2001, Agrawal and Ribot 1999, GOT 1997
- 3 There are many other potential drawbacks of decentralisation in natural resource management, such as the risk of “recentralisation”, which is the paradox that administrative decentralisation may result in Central Government’s increased control of politics at the local level (Apthorpe and Conyers 1982), or that natural resources already exist physically within a specific local arena with its own particular history and tradition of resource management, and where decentralisation therefore is not just a decision to be made by central authorities (Larson 2003).
- 4 *Ujamaa* refers to the African socialism developed by the former President of Tanzania, Julius Nyerere. The basic aim of *Ujamaa* was to make the people of Tanzania self-sustained, among other things, by organizing them into co-operative villages. In the process of creating *Ujamaa* villages, the central government sometimes used force to move people from one area to another. In Majawanga the process was voluntary. For more details on the history of the study area, see Gausset *et al.* 2006.
- 5 The importance of efficient and equitable management of woodland resources for the rural poor in Sub-Saharan Africa has been accentuated by numerous studies (Cavendish 2000, Luoga *et al.* 2000, Monela *et al.* 1993, Monela *et al.* 2000). A number of studies show that poor households within rural communities obtain a larger share of their total income from natural resources than more well-off rural households. Further, poor households are highly dependent on forest resources from common lands for subsistence products especially in periods of adverse climatic conditions when agricultural activities cannot support their livelihoods (Cavendish 2000).
- 6 Similar arguments can be found in Agrawal and Ribot (1999).
- 7 This conceptualisation intends to cover the three dimensions of power described by Lukes (1979).
- 8 The Regional Administration Act (1997) further increased the autonomy of local government on behalf of the regional administration (GOT 1997; Mniwasa and Shauri 2001).
- 9 E.g. the Land Commissioner, the Minister of Land, the High Court, the District Land and Housing Tribunal, the Ward Tribunal and other institutions depending on the nature of the conflict (GOT 1999).
- 10 For instance, a bylaw passed by Kilosa District Council in 1997, contains the following rule: “Cultivation on grazing areas forbidden: 14. No farmer is allowed to cultivate on land/area specially reserved for grazing animals” (Kilosa District 1998).
- 11 Bruce (1999) and Mniwasa and Shauri (2001) quote almost identical cases and state that such cases are common all over Tanzania.
- 12 This “wait and see” attitude can be understood in the light of the changing and ambiguous policies central government has led in relation to the autonomy and initiative of local government in Tanzania. Since independency, local government has been established, abandoned, and re-established (Max 1991) to the detriment of continuity and legitimacy. Recent examples of central government overruling local government is the abandonment of local taxes in 2003 without prior notice to local councils (GOT 2003) and the ban of all harvesting of forest products from October 2005 (Lugungulo 2006), which effectively has taken away village and district council’s management rights to forest resources. The village councils are, moreover, likely to lose initiative because of the risk of being overruled by the district councils.

- 13 This was a mandatory part of public policy under the Village and Ujamaa Village Act of 1975 (Bruce 1999).
- 14 For instance, disputes are common in Mara region, where Ujamaa village boundaries were not traditional and where many villages have been further subdivided since the policies of creating Ujamaa villages (Operation Vijiji). There have also been problems in areas including Babati where there was extensive resettlement at the time of Operation Vijiji, and where there are endemic conflicts over use rights between different ethnic groups, particularly between pastoralists and agro-pastoralists or agro-pastoralists and settled cultivators (Bruce 1999). Land conflicts are for various reasons becoming common all over Tanzania (Odgaard 2002). In theory concerning the commons, well-defined borders and well-defined owners are seen as a main precondition for successful local management of natural resources (e.g. Ostrom 1990, Bromley and Cernea 1989).
- 15 Non-decision-making is a means by which demands for change in the existing allocation of benefits and privileges in the community can be suffocated before they are even voiced; or kept covert; or killed before they gain access to the relevant decision-making arena; or, failing all these things, maimed or destroyed in the decision-implementing stage of the policy process. Radical or hegemonic power is about the many ways in which the operation of social forces and institutional practices affect political processes (Lukes 1979).
- 16 During 2004, all three common lands were greatly reduced by crop agriculture. The most severe reduction was measured in Madali (Theilade 2005).
- 17 See also Wilson (1951) who refers to “the politics of good company” referring to the importance of remaining on good terms with relatives and neighbours.
- 18 This information is supported by GOT 2003, where it is proposed to abolish a further number of levies and fees charged by Local Governments.
- 19 Limited financial and technical capacity constitutes a much more significant constraint for village councils in many other areas of Tanzania. In areas where villages manage large and valuable timber resources or areas of national, e.g. watershed, or international, e.g. biodiversity, importance, the supervision and support to management by higher authorities is necessary, both in relation to formulation of management plans (Blomley and Ramadhani 2006) and implementation (Topp-Jørgensen *et al.* 2005).

20 It was generally acknowledged in the area that having basic infrastructure, i.e. dispensary, milling machine, office, primary school would assist a sub-village when submitting an application for becoming a village.

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