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Full Length Research Paper

Districts creation and its impact on local government in Uganda

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The volatility of creating new district local governments (DLGs) in Uganda has attracted heavy domestic and feasibly significant international criticism. The phenomenon now forms part of the political and governance discourse in the country. Despite this condemnation government insists on establishing more DLGs in the guise of increasing political participation and improving social service delivery. This paper explores this phenomenon in respect to its functional and institutional relevance to local government in terms of the acclaimed benefits. The paper examines the different modes of participation at local government to the conclusion that although more DLGs aimed at enhancing political participation at lower level, it has not translated into real community involvement in policy decisions neither has it contributed to improved social service delivery. The study explored how and why this phenomenon, thus it is mainly explanatory while the research method is qualitative. Data was primarily collected during a field study but also substantiated by secondary data such as newspaper articles. Data was appropriately analyzed and the findings are such that new districts have led to a power capture by the elites, exclusion of local people from policy making and decline in social services.

Key words: new districts, district local government, participation.

INTRODUCTION

The creation of new districts in the name of district local governments (DLGs) has become the latest political gimmick in Uganda. At the time of independence the country had only 18 districts. When the National Resistance Movement (NRM) took over power in 1986, there were 33 districts. Today, twenty eight years later are 112 districts. The government's position has been that this move would increase political participation among ordinary citizens, advance social service delivery and above all steer local governance that addresses community needs. From the perspective that local governance is a rule-governed process through which residents of a defined area participate in their own governance in limited but locally important matters (Olowu and Wunsch 2004:

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4), this seemed to be a convincing argument. Like most African countries, Uganda had a centralised system. Then it adopted decentralisation through which power was devolved to local authorities and the idea of participation was strongly propagated. The system is rooted in the Local Government Act (LGA) and it fits within the modern governance discourse which underscores the importance of broad political participation and suggests that it is a viable means towards better provision of services and democracy (Stoker 1998). Political participation is the engagement or public involvement in decision making (Lamprianou 2013 in Dēmētriou 2013: 21); that is, the degree to which citizens exercises their right to engage in political activities. It can also infer citizen rights and democratic governance (Gaventa 2008; in Hickey and Mohan 2005: 25).

In much of Uganda, new districts stand for bringing services nearer to people, fostering development and above all ensuring rigorous representation. The institutional design and structure of local governments under decentralisation makes districts major players in enhancing political participation. Districts provide the plat forms for citizen participation in the process of governance for instance political actors in different elective positions are drawn from the local polity making them a central point for deepening of democratic process in any political system. However the proliferation of new districts over the years suggests that political actors have hijacked the original agenda to enhance their political interests. According to Green (2008), creating new districts is a political strategy aimed to keep the regime in power, besides other than advancing social services, which has created conflict among different communities. One observable and indispensable challenge is what I call *'Soilisation'*[1]. *New* districts are mostly created on political grounds and sometimes on ethnic, tribal, religious and regional groups depending on the prevailing circumstances. It is increasingly evident that this trend will continue and is a critical component in shaping the politics of local governance in Uganda. The disparity and abnormality associated with creating new districts has negative impacts on local government operation by encroaching on its already skeleton financial and human resources structure to the detriment of local communities. Although academic research has examined this trend, the focus has been on service delivery. Little research has investigated the characteristics, dynamics and the impact of new districts on the practices of local governments.

The real challenge of this paper lies in providing vivid knowledge about the above mentioned aspects.

The research questions driving this study are as follows:

1. The creation of new districts, is it a good course or politics at play?
2. How has the creation of new districts impacted on local government practices in as far as policy decisions are concerned?

The rest of the article is structured as follows; first is an explanation of methodological aspects, followed by conceptual reflections. Thereafter, empirical analysis focusing on the fore mentioned aspects and then the conclusion.

METHODOLOGY

The study is qualitative in nature. It aims to explore the phenomenon of district creation in Uganda and to explain why it is happening and what impact it has on LG. Data for this study was collected during a two months field study in Uganda between July and September, 2012. During this period, intensive face to face interviews were conducted with over fifty participants in four districts of Pallisa, Kabarole, Mukono and Wakiso. This is supplemented by secondary sources. However it is important to note that not all data collected appears in this article. Legal instruments in particular were used for reference purposes. Data was thematically analysed and discussed in reference to some of the acclaimed reasons for creating more districts. Because, this is a social phenomenon, Fritz Scharpf's, Actor-centered Institutionalism (ACI) was adopted in analyzing the data. This is because the approach focuses on the interplay between actors and institutions. Scharpf (1997) argues that 'social phenomena are to be explained as the outcome of interactions among intentional actors—individual, collective or corporate actors'. Actor interactions are structured and the outcomes are shaped by the characteristics of the institutional settings in which they occur. My analysis majorly focus on two aspects that is physical and human resource infrastructure and the political atmosphere. The paper does not make a case for or against new DLGs, rather it presents current state of local government. It also highlights their plight in the face of this phenomenon amid the many pressing challenges that face LGs. Thus the paper discusses political participation in Uganda, the state of new DLGs and the emergence of soilisation.

PREMISING LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN UGANDA

Since independence in 1962, Uganda has had several transformations in its local government ranging from a centralised system to a current decentralised one. Each

[1] With the term Soilisation I denote the extent to which people's minds, thinking and behaviour have been localised and/ or trivialised to think within their vicinity. The term is derived from the current notion *of 'son of the soil'*implying one born within a given locality. In the context of Uganda it has become a form of identity also used to exert a sense of belonging. It is a recent phenomenon resulting from constant creation of new districts

system had a significant pattern of governance while actors' behaviour was often shaped by the surrounding political environment. Decentralised local government as is the case in Uganda is seen as a pathway to 'automated' participation by communities (Smoke 1999). This suggests a close link between decentralization and increased political participation; bearing in mind what decentralisation is— *'the restructuring or re organisation of authority so that there is a system of co-responsibility between institutions of governance at the central, regional and local levels according to the principle of subsidiarity, thus increasing the overall quality and effectiveness of the system of governance, while increasing the authority and capacities of sub-national levels'(UNDP, 1997).*

Local government in the colonial era was managed through the Natives Authority Ordinance and hierarchically structured in form of provinces, districts, *sazas* (counties), *gombololas* (sub counties), *milukas* (parishes) and villages. The administrative staff at different levels comprises of the *'Lukiiko' (council) which* regularly met to discuss matters of local governance and public administration (Burke, 1964). The post- independence local government was based on a quasi-federal constitution with centralised power. Its design was mainly to serve the interests of its masters for instance it accommodated the sub-centres of power that countervailed the locals and enriched the centre. From 1995 to date, the NRM embraced decentralisation whose configuration is rooted on the traditional structures. The idea behind decentralising the local government was hatched on the basis that it would stimulate democratic governance and increase local participation in politics especially politics that concerns their day to day affairs. The constitutional foundation of decentralisation is located in article 178 which sets out the principles and structures of local government—'the state shall be guided by the principle of decentralization and devolution of governmental functions and powers to the people at appropriate levels where they can best manage and direct their own affairs'. Compared to previous local governments that mostly implemented policies from the central government, devolution of powers has empowered LGs to make their own policies; but the process has also become a more multifaceted affair since there are many actors involved.

This makes policy making also more complex because many actors have different opinions. Indeed governance is a complex set of institutions and actors drawn from but also beyond government (Stoker 1998).Through decentralisation, local government in Uganda has attracted varied actors and institutions whose interests have to be reflected in policy decisions.For the case of Uganda, some scholars have argued that the NRM's decision to adopt decentralization was an attempt to show the world its commitment to democratic governance despite coming to power through 'illegal means' (Wetaaka Wadala, in Asiimwe and Nakanyike 2007).

THE GOVERNANCE AND DISCOURSE

The concept of governance does not only dominate academic and development discourse, but also attracts diverse definitions. Okoth-Ogendo (2000) defines it as organisation and management of social systems that is, how resources are allocated, managed and consumed, how power is acquired, distributed and exercised and how lifestyles of present and future generations are determined. Nevertheless, the different perspectives suggest that governance is about actors—public and private, steering, interaction and a process. Local governance can be considered a sub set of governance and as such is a pathway through which citizens are expected to participate in the management of the day to day affairs of their lives. It is therefore an important instrument for shaping societies in Africa and elsewhere in the world. It constitutes 'a set of institutions, mechanisms and processes, through which citizens and their groups can articulate their interests and needs, mediate their differences and exercise their rights and obligations at the local level' (UNDP 1997).

It can be said that real local governance is conceived when there is citizenparticipation, partnerships among key actors at the local level, capacity of local actors across all sectors, multiple flows of information, institutions of accountability and a pro-poor orientation. Governance can be compared to organisations as constructs designned to distribute rewards and sanctions and to establish guidelines for acceptable types of behaviour. In the same manner governments contain constitutions, customary rules, contracts and laws which guide politicians in executing their duties (March and Olsen 1984:740). What is inference here is that governance is all about political systems and political structures. In general the governance theory suggests an amicable partnership between the private and public sector. It advocates for blurring of responsibility in which the private sector takes on the provision of social services which traditionally used to be a prerogative of the state.

However, the concept of governance presents some shortfalls; first and foremost, the concept is so normative in nature, it presumes the existence of an ideal polity and an ideal society coupled with ideal institutional and structural conditions which is not always the case in most systems. It does not as Mayntz (2003) states, observe the different societal interests that are unequally represented, interest groups which often lack the necessary minimum of public spirit, politicians who are more interested in maintaining power than in public welfare and weak state institutions that fail to discipline the particularism of powerful interest groups. By arguing that the

varied actors therein involved can bargain as equals, the governance theory assumes that all actors possess equal values, which is not always the case.

Furthermore, it is almost impossible to think of a powerful but not omnipotent government especially in countries like Uganda considering that actors often find solace in their values to influence decisions. The blurring of responsibilities as promoted by the governance ideology creates ambiguity and uncertainty in the minds of policy-makers and the public about who is responsible and can lead to government actors passing off responsibility to privatized providers when things go wrong resulting in the blame game (Stoker 1998). Stoker further raises the aspect of accountability deficit for instance in decentralised governance which creates self-governing networks there emerges the issue of accountability deficit at two levels.

Members of a particular group may be dissatisfied with the network arrangements agreed by their leaders and yet find it difficult to express or more particularly act on the dissatisfaction because of the powerful nature of the glue provided by the network of which their group is part. Even if all constituents of member groups are satisfied, a problem of accountability can still arise since all networks are to a degree exclusive. They are driven by the self-interest of their members rather than a wider concern with the public interest or more particularly those excluded from the network. In line with this, the Ugandan case presents rather a different scenario. Creating new districts in the name of district local governments is seemingly the new mode of local governance. One obvious and indispensable fact is that this move heavily hitches on LG given their already demanding situation, financially as well as in terms of human resources and physical infrastructure. To get a clear picture of what this means, this paper starts by providing a highlight on the physical and human resource infrastructure.

Physical and Human Resource Infrastructure

The starting point of any public administration demands presence of physical infrastructure not just for service provision, but also to accommodate social service providers such as civil servants and policy makers. Unfortunately for Uganda, most of the new DLGs do not have even basic buildings. As one civil servant in Wakiso observed, 'the system is surrounded by numerous challenges for instance most districts are just beginning to have headquarters having operated in small hired houses, others virtually under trees while several local government units continue to operate in small rented structures along trading centers'. A visit to some of these districts proved that some of these lamentations as most offices lacked even the basic furniture, had no electricity or access to clean water. This extremely low level of infrastructural development had rendered the whole process problematic and severely affects the practices. Naturally, the state of infrastructural development impedes local government practices. In the absence of well-developed social infrastructure, it is difficult to attract qualified personnel critical for the running and management of LGs.

In resonance with this argument one civil servant articulated that geographical diversity within the country had a way of impeding on the human resource in terms of attraction and retention. She observed that '*sometimes, you advertise, you recruit, and a few months later they live because, you are working with people who have a rational mind. These are people who have gone through universities, you bring them in areas where accommodation facilities are poor, even the social amenities are not there they are cut off, they want to watch premier league, it is there, --so those are some of the challenges that have crippled us' (DCS4).* The design of DLGs, calls for high caliber people, but these are not readily available or ready to work in remote rural areas. The creation of new districts does not look into such challenges and for that reason LGs are unlikely to achieve much of what they are supposed to do. The decentralisation of local government makes it more complex and subject to failure. Steiner observes that proper implementation of decentralization can easily be constrained by several challenges, which can in turn diminish the chances to bring about voice and power for the poor as well as responsiveness and efficiency in local decision-making. Therefore, as a highly complex reform process, decentralization requires comprehensive transformation and modification in political, administrative and fiscal procedures (Steiner 2008, in Crawford and Hartmann 2008:33-4). The fact that such challenges are known but deliberately ignored can be explained in terms of actors being rational beings driven by self-interest, calculating, balancing and rebalancing costs and benefits (Scharpf 1998).

Poor facilitation and wages are put aside and some of the newly created districts lack basic amenities which further demotivates potential employees. One civil servant observed that '*when someone is posted to some districts is not only that he has no money to rent the house but the house is not there. We have schools scattered all over the rural areas but teachers don't have accommodation. They are forced to travel long distances and as such they are always late at school' (DCS5).* Because of such factors local governments cannot perform miracles. Low motivation characterises technical personnel while politicians become more canning than ever before said another member of parliament. Consequently service delivery had not changed so much if anything it has dwindled because of increased overhead

costs. This translates into more representation but without tangible benefits. This is confirmed by one accounting officer in Wakiso district who lamented that one cannot expect LGs to perform miracles when they only get 20 per cent of the national budget, with it 15 per cent goes into salaries and only five per cent is left for projects/ services delivery (DCS3).

In 2012, the United Nations Development Programme ranked Uganda number 161 of 187 on the Human Development Index. This statistics are confirmed by a shocking observation made by one MP that districts have been forced to relocate social facilities such as health centers to create accommodation for the district headquarters. This affects health service provision because 'this new area was not meant to be a health centre, which are often constructed in a specific manner reflective of a health facility'(NPlt3). This represents a growing trend of uneven development, increasing inequality and distinct geographical patterns of unequal distribution of social services. As Niamh (2010 23-5) observed, there is a growing gap between the rich and poor without any clear prospects of resolution. Indeed Afro Barometer (2012) lowly rates Uganda's government performance in handling social services, including health and education as well as infrastructure issues like water, roads and electricity.

As Olowu and Wunsch, (2004) argue, local government reforms only make sense if they lead to a working political outcome. In addition, local governance is a situation that obtains when localities are able to effectively manage their public affairs in a way that is accountable to local residents. This implies that on top of it being a lengthy and complex process, effective decentralisation demands expertise without which not much can be achieved. Perhaps this is why one national minister lamented that 'decentralisation should not have taken place or should have been very carefully selected, reflecting the availability of capable people at the different levels of LG' (NPlt2). In his lamentation, he particularly regretted that 'health should not have been decentralised because the country does not have the capacity'. Perhaps his argument was based on his expertise as a medical doctor.

Furthermore the unfortunate reality of the situation has been overlooked by impressive but misleading reports about the system. Such reports have been refuted by academicians who suggest that the reality on ground is different, adding that it was mainly students on internship who did most of the work due to absence of technical staff—'*a person goes to the sub county, but the sub county chief will appear once or twice in a week, most of the time he is just doing his work. So they say they have taken services nearer to the people, but the last time I saw an agricultural officer in the village moving around advising peasants I think it is in the 80s. After decentralisation and the creation of so many districts, I have never seen anything. They get a graduate from here and say now you can become an agricultural officer of this small districts may be Agago or where ever, he is going to spend most of his time in Kampala (AC3).* From this perspective the assumption that creating new districts increases and improves service delivery is not realistic as actors devote most of official time doing private other than official work. The problem is compounded by the absence of communication infrastructure which makes it difficult to monitor workers. If LG does not apply its capacity in the interest of the common good then it is not well-performing and effective (World Bank, 2002). Therefore it is important to realise the role of adequate human capital and sufficient financial resources. Untrained and unprofessional officials are less likely to understand and correctly assess the requirements and consequences of decentralisation in their entirety, hence putting the proper implementation of the reform at risk.

In defence of new DLGs, it is argued that these districts are to be configured into economic centres other than structures of governance thus realising socio-economic rights (NCS3). This juxta position is certainly an over simplification of the complexity and dynamics that characterize the current local government arena given the many challenges that surrounds the system. With a GDP of $16.81 billion per annum (WB 2011) such arrangements may be far from reality if not stretching too much. Moreover majority of the population still live on less than a dollar per day. The WB report suggests that with a per capita income of US$506, the country remains very poor and far from the middle income status it aspires to achieve in one generation[2]. Moreover any economic investments are concentrated in the city and little if any in a few urban centres. This restricts economic developments to Kampala and a few nearby urban districts. And considering that some of LGs projects and activities should be financed by locally generated funds, this imagination is far stretched. In 1998, Claude Ake noted that concentration of resources in urban areas and marginalisation of rural areas which was followed by depolitisation, intimidation and domestication of popular communities and constituencies started with post-independence rulers. If DLGs are to be configured into economic habours, it takes more than creating many non-viable districts but ensuring that the existing ones are economically viable and sustainable. In most cases the creation of new districts takes away the much wanted revenue sources. In all the districts sampled, participants complained that the new districts or sub-counties are being curved out of the most productive areas. In Mukono for example, the curving of Buikwe and Buvuma districts resulted in revenue loss in form of corporate tax from the

[2] For more on Uganda's growth see the World Bank Grouphttp://www.worldbank.org/en/country/uganda/overview

Sugar Cooperation of Uganda Limited (SCOUL) and from the major fish landing sites like Katosi which went to Buikwe and Buvuma respectively (DPlt4).

Observably, the limitless creation of news districts appears to be the NRM's latest political gimmick such that they can be equated 'club goods' in the field of political economy. Their creation is an example of what Lowi (1964) calls a 'distributive policy,' in that their benefits go to a small group of people but their costs are spread out across the entire population. As spelled out by Olson (2012) in his analysis of special-interest organisations, such policy is likely to encounter little opposition since its cost per capita is so low that those who pay for it have little incentive to organise collectively to combat it. In Uganda, this trend cannot be halted because those who wish to stop it are 'powerless' while the powerful are the ones with hidden motives. Indeed the former prime minister regrets the failure to repel such a practice when he laments that; *'there has been a lot of pressure from the politicians to form more districts and sometimes on ethnic grounds and my view is that we should have resisted this pressure because it also raises the cost of public administration. But whenever I would say, please we are over doing it, they would laugh at me. They would say we want it because, if you are in the constituency and people feel for example they are marginalizing your area, you tend to demand for things. But when you have so many of these and they are not viable, then it undermines the efficacy of local administration (AC1)*

Educing from this comment, it is clear that conflicting interests among policy actors are a huge barrier to policy formulation, which policy could minimise the influx of such practices.

LINKING THE CREATION OF NEW DISTRICTS TO PARTICIPATION

Across Africa, countries are re-organising the roles and powers of local actors to increase participation of local populations in governance (Ribot 2003). Ribot further argues that the impact of these reforms on popular participation depends on the local institutional arrangements they create: 'which actors receive powers, what powers they receive, and the relations of accountability these actors are located in'. Scholars of decentralisation have argued that most recent reforms taking place in the name of democratic decentralization have not created accountable representative local institutions nor devolved the powers that would constitute democratic decentralization (Crook and Manor 1999; UNCDF 2000:1; Crook and Sverrisson 2001; Ribot 2004). On the contrary decentralization has come to signify programs and reforms that are ultimately designed to retain central control. Empirical evidence from Uganda, indicates two sides of the story—a fair welcome to increased local political participation culminating in 'meaningless participation'.

The creationn of new districts was advanced to pave way for increased political participation but also seen as creating more space for nurturing democracy (Singizi and de Visser 2010). The duo add that new districts could have been intended to down size LG units in order to enhance state ability to address local concerns especially in line with decision making. But there is a growing evidence that new DLGs are politically motivated to ensure that the NRM party has more numbers in parliament. With more numbers, the party can influence policy decisions. This line of argument does not correspond with the promotion of democracy and social service delivery claim. To reflect on the Mamdani commission[3] it was clear from the very beginning that creating many administrative units was a danger to local governance. The Mamdani commission which included among others, professor Apolo Nsibambi who later became prime minister observed that 'quite often, government responded to popular demands for a more responsive administration by creating new and smaller units'. Undoubtbly the phenomenon had reached its apex raising more political debate around it especially because it is believed to be an NRM strategy to gain more political control country wide and amid growing opposition.

CURRENT POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE

Political Pluralism

The existence of political parties is a basic requirement for democratic process (Musambachime 1998 in ESAURP 1998)[4]. Musambachime defines a political party as an organisation formed by a group of people who share a common concern or conception of how and why state power should be used or organised. Therefore political parties seek to influence government policy and undertake responsibility for actually implementing it. Often times, political representation occurs through and by political parties thus parties promote representation of different sections of society. This could be treated as participation, implying that citizen interests and preferences count in the realm of politics and governance. Decentralised local governance provided prospects in increased participation and representation meaning that local people will be empowered and transformed into citizens other than subjects as Mamdani (1996) would put it. However in Uganda, parties see themselves in terms of

[3]Mamdani commission is the one which carried out nationwide studies to find out how Ugandans wanted to be governed recommending decentralisation.

[4]Eastern and Southern African Universities Research Programme (The Road to Democracy)

'superior versus inferior[5]' and such status determine the level of participation especially in policy decisions. Members of the superior party confidently and authoritatively assume ownership of government and governance. This feeling is conveyed in LG practices and minimizes participation from other actors. In an interview with a group of sub-county civil servants, they regretted that in case of any disagreement among actors, the superiors directly reported to central authorities (GRP3). This denotes preferential treatment accorded to NRM members who see their counterparts from the opposition as threats or competitors within the structure. The informal translation of the ruling party's power into actors' authority significantly impedes proper governance practices. This undermines the presumption of modern governance in which political actors are supposed to bargain as relative equals rather than resorting to use of power (Peters and Pierre 1998). No wonder Oyugi (Oyugi 2000) argues that 'the legal-political design of local government in Africa tends to weaken the cultivation of a democratic culture at the local level as well as weaken the ability of local authorities to take initiative in the field of service provision. But to reason with Scharpf, such behaviour is explained in view that actors respond differently to external threats, constraints and opportunities because they may differ in their intrinsic perceptions and preferences but also because their perceptions and preferences are shaped by the specific institutional setting within which they interact (Scharpf 1997: 36-7).

Multi party politics has further divided actors who in terms of local governance should work for a common good. This division is not limited to party differences but also among actors from the same party. The result has been the formation of what Scharpf (1997) calls 'actor constellations'. A clear example is the case of one central district as sighted by the acting permanent secretary of local government; 'you have a council like Sembabule, they were all movement but they were divided among the powerful movement people. You have a case like now in Masaka municipality were the chairman and the mayor are opposition, and the council is basically NRM, the majority of them are NRM leaning. Now he has failed to form government because they say you must include us. You came here to Kampala capital city authority, you have the mayor who I think is DP and then the councilors are NRM; there have been stalemates there for some time' (NCS1). The formation of constellations helped actors work towards fulfilling their interests and not the agenda of LG. Therefore despite being a standard element of good governance, multipartism has been detrimental to local governance in countries like Uganda which is still under political transition and trying to nature political pluralism.

Instead of promoting cordial relations it has breed hatred and conflict.

This kind of scenario is best understood by Ihonvbere (1998:223) who cautions against mixing political liberalisation and democratisation arguing that the former is possible without the latter. Undeniably rampant internal conflicts characterise most political parties in Uganda hence the perception that actors therein use politics as a means to acquire political power and wealth, often for private interest but not as a mechanism to transform society (Kakuba 2010). This could be used to explain the demand for more districts because political actors view it as the only means to advance their interests. In some of the new DLGs, there has been failure to establish a government because no party has majority in a given council. In the absence of a governing body, LG cannot operate. In Bourdieu's reasoning, individuals have the capacity for invention and improvisation (Bourdieu1990). His theory of action suggests that 'the world is surrounded by structural constraints which form permanent dispositions representing various schemes of perception which are generic and often originate from conventional categories which play a role in shaping actors' behavior and decision making (1977:15). The above scenario demonstrated portrays politics as a very deterrent instrument to decentralised local governance. The involvement of politics in local governance has much more negative impact. In that some local leaders may divert resources or discriminate resource allocation, favoring their constituencies in order to be re-elected. This brings conflict in the management of local governance as already shown evidenced in some districts where councilors are conflicting with district political heads. In such instances, it is difficult to drive a council in which actor's habour personal interests. To use Nzongola-Ntalaja's (1995) words, 'there is a pathological fixation on power. Everything they do and say has to do with power (cited in Mbaku and Ihonvbere 1998:18)'. It implies that even the fight for resources to be allocated to their constituencies is not for the good of the community but used to win political mileage, to access and retain power. Rugalabamu (1995) rightly noted that the rise of party systems has turned politics into a scramble for power without any reflection of people's interest (Rugalabamu; in ESAURP 1998:13). He recounts that there has been no party capturing power on behalf of the people and administering it under the control of the people.

Another observation is the impact of multipartism on recruitment policies. Coupled with weak institutions and their failure to tame office bearers, actors turn to power and political affiliations in recruiting LG personnel. This limits participation to such patronized clicks. In his highlights of democratic governance, Dahl argues that all actors in the political arena should be eligible for public office and equally compete for support and votes as well as acceptance of the people's preferences (Dahl

[5] The NRM which is the ruling party considers itself superior; opposition parties are in this case the inferior

1971:3).Olowu and Wunsch (2004:199) once argued that if decentralisation is to be democratic and local governance is to emerge, locally accountable institutions must be established that makes key decisions: setting local priorities, allocating resources and supervising implementation of these decisions. As confirmation, a concerned MP regretted that the district chairpersons who head the district service commission[6] often have an idea of people's political leanings depending on their origin and this is taken into account when making job offers (NPlt2). In a group discussion with sub-county chiefs in Pallisa, members confirmed told me that chairpersons have overall power and often know who supported their candidature and this is reflected in recruitment of LG workers. This is an exhibition of recruitment that follows patronage lines. This is what Guy Peters (1984:73) calls 'ascriptive recruitment' which undermines the drive towards social equality. ACI explains this as actors' ability to use any values available to them to enhance their interests (Scharpf 1998: 51).

SOILISATION

This study found out that '*Soilisation'* has become the most devastating outcome of local governance in new districts. Soilisation which denotes trivialised thinking/ behavior; belief in individuals born within a given locality (son of the soil) has divided communities and bred tribalism, endless tensions, conflict, encouraged corruption and nepotism and retarded development. It has become a form of identity used to enhance a sense of belonging and patronage. The *'son of the soil'* notion was prominent in the course of the field study hence the coining up of the concept. The practice is deep rooted in people's minds and wide spread in all spheres of life both in private and public sector. In LG, *Soilisation* is openly practiced and intensely manifests itself in recruitment amid legally established institutions. Merit recruitment has been overridden by the practice of *Soilisation* thus all district jobs go to 'sons and daughters of the soil' with minimal attention to qualifications and competence.

Empirical findings demonstrates that 'there is localisation in everything from the brain to action' as some respondents indicated. Unlike in the past where LGs could recruit people from different regions, it did not work with the current setting because when a post was advertised the son or daughter or the soil must get the job (DCS1; GRP3). This has not only made it difficult for technocrats to get jobs outside their districts of birth but also obstructed chances of recruiting the much needed brilliant brains in the name of giving opportunities to people of a particular origin. This has been a result of localizing of peoples' minds to the point of not thinking beyond their vicinity. In such instances merit recruitment is almost out of question, instead tribal bias takes precedence. Such nepotism encourages recruitment of under qualified. In Uganda, decentralising local government has been taken to imply that it is the son of the soil and the daughter of the soil who should do the work in that soil. As soilisation becomes deep rooted in people's minds, it becomes difficult for those who are not 'sons/ daughters of the soil to cope if at all recruited in 'foreign land'. Obviously this breeds inefficiencies in terms of quality of service delivery and participation. Although some scholars argue that it is important to have administrators whose social and economic characteristics are similar to the people they will be working with, (Peters 1984), there is a danger that undermines the possibility of these actors to bias programmes and policies. It may also bring about division in social strata over time as these *'soilised'* and '*localized*' actors continue to recruit only their children and relatives excluding other members of the same community. By so doing, participation is limited to a specific group of people. It threatens unity among community members and reduces peoples' trust in government institutions.

From the legal perspective, *Soilisation* undermines constitutional provisions which allow every Ugandan to freely work in any part of the country and promotes accommodation of cultural diversity. Coupled with the non-transferability of local government staff, those without godfathers stand no chance of ever getting jobs within the DLG even when they are 'sons/daughters of the soil'. Closely related to this is corruption. In the instance that those in charge of recruitment do not have close relatives, prospective employees are forced to bribe for them to be recruited. Again, government has defended this arguing that it is taking care of marginalized groups. Prove of soilisation breeding conflict, tribalism and dividing communities is already evidenced in Pallisa district where two tribes therein (Iteso and Bagwere) are conflicting with each demanding for a separate district yet before the new district phenomenon, the two happily lived together. Dividing the districts resulted in new identities also used to discriminate each other. Small identities promote fear of other groups resulting in representation and identification of communities in terms of 'those' and 'we' (AC3). The impact is increased ethnicity and ethnic based conflict. Creating new districts to solve such ethnic related conflicts equally does not rhyme with the constitutional provision of promoting understanding and co-existence among the country's diverse.If the creation of new districts is meant to minimise conflict, it is important to pay attention to the root cause of the conflict. There is a possibility that after creating districts to ease ethnic tension, the country may need to create more districts to ease religious conflicts as well as those based

[6] DSC is responsible for recruitment of civil servants at district level

on differences in political ideologies.

It is plausible that the demand for districts is a struggle for scarce resources. Apparently resource allocation in the country is based on ones place of birth as one academician reasoned (AC3 2012). According to him, this political patronage is spearheaded by the people from the centre who want to place their children in particular places. Thus, what should be an autonomous LG system is not visible as people have to go through these patronage lines. Using the conventional theory on state-building, Howard (1991:412-12) asserts that national interests are subordinate to ethnic or regional autonomous governance and identity demands. Bayart (1993) equally argues that strong autonomous powers for ethnically defined local government units would exacerbate ethnic tensions and contribute to national disintegration.

In most African countries, territorial conflicts and issues of identity have become common, forcing governments to resort to creation or demarcation of different administrative units. In Ethiopia for example, government was forced to approve several administrative regions to curb down issues of nationality and increase representation yet fighting between the state and the nationality based opposition groups continued (AsmelashBeyene in Shivji 1991). The same can be traced in Uganda where several districts continue to experience boarder conflicts for instance between Pallisa and Namutumba (DPlt1 2012), Kyenjojo and Kabarole extra. This contradicts constitutional provisions, national objectives and directive principles of state policy, that '*all organs of the state and the people of Uganda shall work towards the promotion of national unity, peace and stability; and every effort made to integrate all the people of Uganda, while at the same time recognising the existence of their ethnic, religious, ideological, political and cultural diversity'* (1995 constitution). As Green (2008) noted, far from alleviating ethnic tension and spurring development, it is clear that the creation of new districts has led in many cases to increased levels of ethnic conflict. He highlights a series of cases in which new districts have produced ethnic conflict other than solved them.

Therefore with Soilisation on the increase, participation and policy/decision making in local governance processes is limited to only those considered natives of the district. Ethnic identity is the axle upon which all rights and privileges are determined. Fragmentation defines and permanently creates conflict prone tendencies.

POLITICISATION OF NEW DISTRICTS

The first chapter of Uganda's national constitution articulates that 'all power belongs to the people who shall exercise their sovereignty in accordance with the constitution'. It further states that '---all authority in the state emanates from the people and the people shall be governed through their will and consent. Article 179 of the same constitution empowers LGs to create new districts and or administrative units. This has been taken to imply that people can demand and their demands shall be granted as per constitutional provisions. Therefore denying people their demand translates into violation of the sovereign constitution. But scholars like Oloka-Onyango (2007:12 remark that the proliferation of new districts is a political strategy adopted by President Museveni as a means of dispensing patronage, and ultimatelyof splintering challenges to the central government hegemony and control. Therefore new districts are directed to benefit a few local politicians who serve to reinforce central government's political influence and not to ensure realisation of socio-economic rights. In deed in its report on 'The Dynamics of District Creation in Uganda', DEVIVA and Actionaid (DENIVA 2011) highlight that 'issues of participation in decision making and accountability were moving towards a downward trend in spite of local government administration being brought closer to the people.' The report highlights that 'there was minimal consultation in the process that led to the creation of some of the new districts, especially where people reported that they heard the issue of demanding for district status at a political rally attended by the president'. Woldemariam (2009) is hence right to argue that both in developed and developing countries, political actors 'exploit aspects of voters' irrationality when campaign strategy calls for stirring up emotions to win elections, pass referenda or whatever the issue may be.

CONCLUSION

This article has examined the phenomenon of creating new districts in Uganda and their impact on LGs to the conclusion that the practice is politically motivated and has no positive bearing on local governance. On the contrary they are a burden to LGs since it encroaches on the already minimal resources. Evidently, there is no direct coloration between creating DLGs and improved social service delivery or participation. New districts are set to become a key criterion for long-term sustenance of individual political ambitions as well as increasing patronage for the NRM. Suffice to say, that the apparent defunct state of institutionalism in the country can be held to account for this fluidity. Perhaps it is correct to argue that, the philosophical foundations of this phenomenon have not been adhered to. What is happening is actors' turn to power to drive policy towards their interests with minimal appreciation of roles and responsibilities. Under such circumstances, the argument that greater participation and democratic decentralization facilitate social, economic, developmental is meaningless.

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List of Participants

	Participant	Brief Profile	Code/ date of interview
1	ApoloNsibambi	Professor of political Science and Ex-prime minster	AC1 30.07.12
2	Patrick Lumumba	Political Scientist, lecturer at Makerer University	AC3 27.07.12
3	Patrick Butabwire	Acting permanent secretary of ministry of local government	NCS1 24.07.12
4	Stephen Kasijja	Member of Parliamnet for Burahya county in Kabarole district	NPlt2 23.07.12
5	Stephen Malinga (RIP)	MP for Butebo county in Pallisa & former minister of Relief Disaster and Preparedness	NPlt1 10.09.12
6	Jack Sabiiti	MP for Rukiga county in Kabale& chairman of local government Accounts committee	NPlt3 13.08.12
7	Assumptalkiriza	Deputy coordinator for programme coordination unit in ministry of local government	NCS3 27.07.12
8	David Naluwayiiro	Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) Wakiso	DCS3 20.08.12
9	Luke Lukoda	CAO Mukono	DCS1 25.07.12
10		Deputy CAO Wakiso	DCS5 21.08.12
11		Senior Assistant Secretary (SAS) and parish workers	GRP3 28.08.12
12	Godfrey Kyeyune	Vice chairman Mukono	DPlt4 25.07.12
13	SAS	SAS Karambi sub county in Kabarole	SCS1 03.09.12