

Central-Local Relations in Zimbabwe: Does the Local Matter?

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In Zimbabwe, a pattern is progressively taking shape where the national government substitutes the local government in the delivery of local public services. Water, roads, health, and waste management are some of the local services that were taken over by the national government in recent years. These are services traditionally associated with local government. Local services assumed by the national sphere of government are either assigned to (1) state enterprises, (2) national government departments, or (3) private sector entities in which the state has an interest. In all three situations, the national government assigns functions to the institutions it controls. In taking over these functions, the interests of local governments and communities are often disregarded. Against this background, the paper analyses

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central-local relations in Zimbabwe. Importantly, it seeks to answer one crucial question: does the local matter?

Keywords: Zimbabwe, national government, local government, urban councils, rural district councils, local functions, service delivery

1. Introduction

The paper has two goals: (1) it cautions against centralising subnational government roles and responsibilities as part of a larger conversation about revitalising local public administration in Zimbabwe; and (2) it contributes to the ongoing debate in Zimbabwe about local government autonomy and its role in advancing local self-government goals and objectives. It seeks to achieve this by tapping into the local government's traditional role of facilitating the right of communities to manage their own affairs and to further their development. In the same vein, it also draws from the general proposition that a local authority has the right to govern, on its own initiative, the local affairs of the people within the area for which it has been established.

It has been argued that in order to achieve allocative efficiency, decisions should be made at the lowest level of a governmental system (Shah & Shah, 2006). It is also claimed that local governments can produce goods and services for less money than central governments (Shah & Shah, 2006; Avis, 2016). Similarly, proximity may make it easier for the local government to recover costs associated with providing public services. That is, services would be more demand-responsive, increasing the consumers' willingness to pay for them (Avis, 2016; Steiner et al., 2018). In the same vein, it is said that the local government facilitates for local residents to have a say in decisions about the kind, amount, calibre, and mix of local services as well as the price they are willing to pay for them, and that this ultimately increases citizen satisfaction (Marumahoko, Chigwata & Nhede, 2018; Marumahoko, et al., 2020).

In Zimbabwe though, a pattern is slowly emerging where control of services historically assigned to the local government is seemingly declining, with the national level increasingly allocating itself powers to provide these basic services (see Table 1 below). In doing so, the national government claims to be rescuing declining service delivery. Arguably, centralisation threatens local public service delivery, overtakes the legal municipal

independence for service delivery enjoyed by the local government, and allows the central government to take over purely local government functions (Integrated Regional Information Network, 2007; Ndlovu, 2019; Marumahoko et al., 2020; Zimlive, 2021; The Herald 2021; HCC, 2021; Matenga, 2021; Buwerimwe & Chikandiwa, 2022; Tshili, 2022; Dube, 2022; Zimeye, 2022; Zimlive, 2022). Moreover, Okudolo and Ojakorotu (2021) are of the view that national development is not realised if there is outright subordination of local government administrations in the entire development administration policy process circle.

In addition, Okudolo and Ojakorotu (2021) postulate that development policies are destined to fail if local administrations are not given pride of place in the policy process circle of their essence (2021). Using an example to underscore this, Okudolo and Ojakorotu (2021) argue that cooperation between the national and local governments would have helped effective contact tracing, testing, vaccination, and control of the COVID-19 pandemic. The paper vouches for local government, even as its purported shortcomings are often the subject of much debate in Zimbabwe and there is always present the threat of the national government exploiting its inefficiencies to further its own objectives.

Table 1: *Examples of local services taken over by the national government*

Local services taken over by the national government	Government agency/company to which it was given	Year
Water supply	Zimbabwe National Water Authority (ZINWA)	2001
Vehicle registration	Zimbabwe National Road Administration (ZINARA)	2009
Road construction and maintenance	ZINARA	2009
Road construction and maintenance	Department of Roads (DoRs)	2018
Health facilities	Ministry of Health (MoH)	2021
Solid waste management for Harare City Council (HCC)	Geogenix BV, a German investor (GBV)	2022
Waste management for Harare Metropolitan Council (HMC)	Environmental Management Agency (EMA)	2023

Source: Author.

The paper is organised as follows: the introduction is followed by a section on conceptual and theoretical perspectives on local government. Next is

a section on territorial organisation of Zimbabwe. Thereafter, the paper analytically engages on central-local relationships in Zimbabwe against the background of the Zimbabwe national government's increased assumption of local functions. After this, the paper answers the question of whether the national takeovers are aligned with the principles of local government discussed earlier on in the paper. At the centre of the engagement is the issue of whether or not the local sphere of government matters. These issues are discussed dispassionately. The paper then presents its concluding remarks.

Using document analysis, the paper conducts a methodologically rigorous study of central-local relations in Zimbabwe. By doing so, it concentrates on a topic that is among the most contentious in the field of Zimbabwe's local government but is far from being thoroughly addressed in the literature, namely, the question of central-local relations. The paper was able to account more thoroughly for exogenous elements than cross-country research by limiting its focus to central-local interactions in Zimbabwe. These exogenous components included external shocks, institutional and cultural influences. Whenever it is convenient to do so, the paper uses tables to enrich the discussion on central-local relations in Zimbabwe. Analysis draws from the principles of subsidiarity, jurisdictional design, decentralisation theorem, and Zimbabwe's constitutionalisation of local government and devolution.

2. Conceptual and Theoretical Perspectives on Local Government

Local government is a type of public administration that is geographically localised and has the power to decide and carry out policies in an area that is smaller than the entire state. It is a collective word for the lowest levels of government inside a certain sovereign state. Local governments generally act only within the powers specifically delegated to them by law and/or directives of a higher level of government. Even in nations with comparable structures, local government entities vary widely, and nomenclature is frequently different. Municipality, lower-tier government, subnational governments, local authorities, local councils, and subnational entities are common designations for local government institutions.

According to Olowu (1988), the five distinguishing characteristics of local government are: (1) its legal personality, (2) specific powers to carry

out a variety of tasks, (3) significant budgetary and personnel autonomy subject to limited central oversight, (4) effective citizen engagement, and (5) localness. Its control over a variety of services, such as waste management, roads, clinics, policing, parks, libraries, fire protection, and planning, along with the administrative, legislative, and executive actions that fall under its scope, are further differentiating qualities (Marumahoko, 2020a).

According to Stigler (1957), there are two guiding principles of jurisdictional design: (1) people should have the right to vote for the types and quantities of public services they desire, and (2) the closer a representative government is to the people, the better it functions. According to the subsidiarity principle, local issues should be handled by lower levels of government, which are also in control of regulation, taxation, and expenditure (Shah & Shah, 2006). Oates (1972) cites a number of factors as justification for this, including (1) local governments' awareness of residents' needs, (2) elimination of pointless layers of jurisdiction, (3) promotion of inter-jurisdictional competition and innovation, and (4) fiscal responsibility and efficiency.

The decentralisation theorem advanced by Oates (1972) emphasises that each public service should be provided by the jurisdiction having control over the minimum geographic area that would internalize benefits and costs of such provision. It has been observed that essential services such as education, health, road building, and maintenance, when being central government responsibilities, are constantly failing (Ahmad et al., 2005; Bradbury, 2007; Bogdanor, 1999; World Bank, 2003). Chandler (2010) quotes a generally held opinion that, in order to ensure efficient service delivery, local government jurisdictions' tasks should be based on the benefit areas of local public goods. It is also said that the primary benefit of local government is that it allows local public goods and services to be tailored to local citizens' likes and preferences (Watts, 2006).

With subnational government focusing on local public service delivery, central government can concentrate on issues of national importance such as macroeconomic policies, security, defence, foreign policy, and international relations (Allain-Dupré, 2018). Public services provided by the local government include road construction and maintenance, water treatment and supply, health services, and solid waste management (Marumahoko, 2020b). Facilitation, advice, directing, capacity building, and promotion are some of the national government's roles and responsibilities as it interacts with the local government in Zimbabwe (Chakaipa, 2010). These functions suggest the national government is in a supportive

role to the local government's administration and provision of local public goods and services.

According to Shah and Shah (2006), some limited central control or compensatory grants may be accepted only in the provision of services when spatial externalities, economies of scale, and administrative and compliance costs are taken into consideration. Even then, it may be argued that there is a need to channel more resources through local government so that it can improve its capacity to deliver. Claims of excessive regional imbalances, corruption and secession are often cited in literature as the other reasons for tolerating the national government's incursion into local affairs (Olowu, 1988; Swain & Dininio, 1999; De Vries, 2000; Ekpo, 2005; Gonzalez de Asis, 2006; Moyo & Ncube, 2014). Nevertheless, it appears that there are gaps in these arguments.

The arguments for central planning of local services are seemingly flawed. They ignore the benefits that accrue to local authorities when they use their own resources to address development imbalances. Olowu (1988) asserts that while corruption exists in local government, it is not as pervasive as it is in national agencies. Unlike national government committees, local government committees meet in public, have public agendas, and lack any formal secret legislation that would conceal routine decisions from the public's view. It is the view of Moyo and Ncube (2014) that fears of secession in Zimbabwe are sensationalised, given that most of the secessionist movements in the land-locked southern African country operate online, are outside the country, and lack any political or organisational structures.

3. Territorial Organisation of Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe is a landlocked nation in southern Africa. It is situated between the Limpopo and Zambezi Rivers. Zambia to the north, Botswana to the south-west, South Africa to the south, and Mozambique to the east are its neighbours. It is a country of approximately 15 million people. The Shona, who make up 82% of the population of Zimbabwe, are the largest and most prevalent ethnic group, followed by the Ndebele and other smaller groups. The most widely used of its 16 official languages are English, Shona, and Ndebele. On 18 April 1980, Zimbabwe, then known as Southern Rhodesia, regained independence from Britain (Marumahoko, 2016).

Zimbabwe's constitution adopted in 2013 acknowledges three levels of government (Moyo & Ncube, 2014). These are: (1) national government,

(2) provincial and metropolitan councils, and (3) local councils. The national government is made up of directly elected members of the National Assembly (MPs), senators and non-constituency members appointed and serving at the discretion of the president who is the appointing authority. They constitute the cabinet or the executive arm of government.

The (regional) tier of government are the provincial and metropolitan councils (Sections 268 and 269 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe). They preside over provinces which are the largest administrative units in Zimbabwe. There are 10 constitutionally established provinces, including the two metropolitan provinces of Harare and Bulawayo. Each province, excluding the two metropolitan provinces, has a provincial council comprising senators, chiefs, members of the National Assembly and others (Moyo & Ncube, 2014).

Local authorities are the basic tier of the governmental system in Zimbabwe (Marumahoko, 2020c). They are distributed across the eight non-metropolitan provinces and are comprised of 28 urban councils and 60 rural councils, with 6–8 rural councils in each province (See Table 2). District populations range from about 50,000 to five times that amount. Directly elected ward councillors make up both urban and rural councils. Within the districts that make up the provinces of Zimbabwe, ward councillors represent and oversee the issues of individuals living in both urban and rural areas.

Urban councils in Zimbabwe are classified according to size and functions, among other considerations. Local boards are the lowest form of urban councils. They are followed by town councils, municipalities, and the city councils as the highest organisation of urban councils (Marumahoko & Fessha, 2011). Officials elected every five years when Zimbabwe goes to the polls make up the policy-making component of urban councils (Chakai-pa, 2010). They work through a committee system with each committee chaired by one of the elected councillors. Committee decisions are referred to the full council as recommendations for adoption. Essentially, the full council is a policy-making body chaired by a chairperson in the case of local boards and town councils, and mayors in the case of municipal and city councils. The administration of urban councils is made up of technocrats supposedly chosen based on meritocracy. The chief executive officer, town secretary or town clerk is the accounting officer assisted by directors who head different council departments (Marumahoko & Fessha, 2011).

The structures discussed above apply also to rural district councils with the exception being that rural district councils are not classified. The head of the policy-making function is called a chairman, and the chief executive officer

is the head of the administration branch of rural district councils (Chakai-pa, 2010). At the national level, there is a minister of local government who is a member of the executive appointed by the president of Zimbabwe and who reports to the parliament and the executive over local government activities. The minister’s powers are often characterised as extensive, intrusive and invasive, prompting calls for role clarity, dichotomy and more autonomy for local government (Marumahoko & Fessha, 2011). Among others, the minister can give policy direction, rescind and reverse council resolutions (Chigwata, Marumahoko & Madhekeni, 2019). At times, local authorities are called upon to account to the parliament through the Parliamentary Committee on Local Government, Public Works and Urban Development. The Urban Councils Act and the Rural District Councils Act are the pieces of primary legislation that regulate the activities of urban local government and rural local authorities. Among others, they outline the powers and functions of local government in service delivery.

Table 2: *Organisation of local government in Zimbabwe*

Organisation	Number	Names
Local Boards	4	Epworth, Ruwa, Chirundu, Hwange
Town Councils	11	Rusape, Mvurwi, Karoi, Norton, Gokwe, Shurugwi, Zvishavane, Chiredzi, Chipinge, Plumtree, Lupane
Municipalities	9	Bindura, Chitungwiza, Chegutu, Chinhoyi, Kariba, Redcliff, Gwanda, Beitbridge, Kariba
City Councils	8	Harare, Bulawayo, Kadoma, Kwekwe, Gweru, Masvingo, Mutare, Victoria Falls
Rural District Councils	60	Guruve, Zvimba, Zivagwe, Zaka, Vungu, Uzumba-Maramba-Pfungwe, Umzingwane, Umuza, Tsholotsho, Tongogara, Sanyati, Rushinga, Runde, Pfura, Nyanga, Nyaminyami, Nkayi, Ngezi, Mwenezi, Muzarabani, Mutoko, Mutasa, Mutare, Murewa, Mudzi, Mberengwa, Mhondoro, Mbire, Mazowe, Masvingo, Marondera, Manyame, Mudzi, Makonde, Kusile, Kadoma, Insiza, Hwedza, Hwange, Hurungwe, Gutu, Gwanda, Goromonzi, Gokwe South, Gokwe North, Chivi, Chiredzi, Chirumanzu, Chipinge, Chimanimani, Chikomba, Chegutu, Chaminuka, Bulilima, Buhera, Bubi, Binga, Bindura, Bikita, Beitbridge

Source: Author.

4. Analysing Central-Local Relations

This section of the paper analyses central-local relations in Zimbabwe from four angles: (1) Zimbabwe's Constitution and subsidiary legislation on local government, (2) parallel structures for local government, (3) intrusive powers of the national government, and (4), the theoretical framework discussed earlier. The objective is to gain more insight into the nature of central-local relations in Zimbabwe.

4.1. Understanding Central-Local Relations from the Constitutional Perspective

Viewed from the constitutional perspective, the national government's takeover of local roles and responsibilities suggests vast overreach and points to the blurring of roles and functions. As previously mentioned, Zimbabwe's Constitution recognises three systems of government; these are (1) national government, (2) provincial and metropolitan councils, and (3) local government divided into (a) urban, and (b) rural district councils. Each of these levels of government is protected in the Constitution. They are a product of the Constitution adopted in 2013 that mentions devolution as the basis for Zimbabwe's central-local governmental system.

The encroachment seemingly rails against the adoption of devolution in Zimbabwe's current Constitution. It may not be aligned with the Preamble to Chapter 14 of Zimbabwe's Constitution, which focuses on provincial and local government and underscores the need for devolution of power and responsibilities to lower tiers of government in Zimbabwe. It seems that the encroachment is also at variance with Section 264 of the Constitution, which states that the goals of the transfer of governmental authority and duties to provincial, metropolitan, and local authorities include: (a) to give powers of local governance to the people and enhance their participation in the exercise of the powers of the State and in making decisions affecting them; (b) to promote democratic, effective, transparent, accountable and coherent government in Zimbabwe as a whole; (c) to preserve and foster peace, national unity and indivisibility of Zimbabwe; (d) to recognise the right of communities to manage their own affairs and to further their development; (e) to ensure equitable sharing of local and national resources; and (f) to transfer responsibilities and resources from the national government in order to establish a sound financial base for each provincial and metropolitan council and local authority.

In addition, in Sections 274 and 275 the Constitution of Zimbabwe underscores that urban and rural local authorities represent and manage the affairs of people in urban and rural areas throughout Zimbabwe. In the same spirit, Section 276 (1) of the Constitution emphasises that a “local authority has the right to govern, on its own initiative, the local affairs of the people within the area for which it has been established, and has all the powers necessary for it to do so”. It also instructs the national government in Section 276 (2) to come up with an Act of Parliament that may confer functions on local authorities, including (a) the power to make by-laws, regulations or rules for the effective administration of the areas for which they have been established; (b) the power to levy rates and taxes and generally to raise sufficient revenue for them to carry out their objects and responsibilities.

4.2. What Does Statutory Law Say?

A valuable tool for evaluating central-local relations in Zimbabwe, particularly as it relates to local service delivery, is the law on local government. As a place to start, it should be noted that in Zimbabwe, locally elected governments are expected to oversee the provision of local government services. Local authorities are given local responsibilities under the main statutes that govern the operations of urban local government and rural local authorities. These are the Rural District Councils Act and the Urban Councils Act. In this regard, a variety of service delivery tasks and functions are assigned to local administrations under the First Schedule to the Rural District Act (RDC Act) and the Second Schedule to the Urban Councils Act (UC Act). Water supply, road construction and maintenance, health care, and waste management are some of the functions assigned to local government (See Table 3).

Table 3: *Examples of the mandates to provide local services*

Service	Responsible institution	Authority
Water	Rural District Councils (RDCs)	Section 71 & 1 st Schedule to RDC Act
Water	Urban Councils (UCs)	Section 183 & 2 nd Schedule to UC Act
Roads	RDCs	Section 71 & 1 st Schedule to RDC Act

Roads	UCs	Section 198 & 2 nd Schedule to UC Act
Health	RDCs	Section 71 & 1 st Schedule to RDC Act
Health	UCs	Section 198 & 2 nd Schedule to UC Act
Waste management	RDCs	Section 71 & 1 st Schedule to RDC Act
Waste management	UCs	Section 198 & 2 nd Schedule to UC Act

Source: Author

4.3. Parallel Structures for Local Service Delivery

The Zimbabwe National Water Authority (ZINWA), Zimbabwe National Roads Authority (ZINARA) and other national agencies discussed earlier are all examples of structures parallel to the local government. They are created by the central government. They speak to the centralisation and circumvention of local government service delivery. Water supply, road construction and maintenance among others, transferred to state enterprises arbitrarily, are all major local government functions in Zimbabwe (See Table 4). They give local administrations their character as the government systems enjoying most proximity to communities.

Table 4: *Examples of parallel institutions for local administration*

Local service	Traditional provider	Parallel provider	Authority
Water	RDCs&UCs	ZINWA	MLG's directive
Vehicle registration	RDCs&UCs	ZINARA	MLG's directive
Roads	RDCs&UCs	ZINARA	MLG's directive
Roads	RDCs&UCs	DoRs	NG's directive
Health	RDCs&UCs	MoH	NG's directive
Solid waste management	RDCs,UCs&HCC	GBV	NG's directive
Solid waste management	RDCs,UCs&HMC	EMA	NG's directive

Note: MLG - Minister of Local Government; NG - National Government

Source: Author.

4.4. Influencing Local Activities

The national government's abrupt takeover of local functions including those based on local public participation suggests a struggle for dominance at the local level. It paints a grim picture where the national sphere of government represented by the minister of local government is invasive in its interactions with the local sphere of government. The takeovers are seemingly elements of the struggle for dominance at the local level and are not divorced from the excessive powers vested in the minister of local government by the UC Act and the RDC Act (See Table 5). Among others, the minister can do the following with the excessive powers:

Table 5: *The struggle for local dominance*

Act	Section	What the Ministry of Local Government can do
UC	80	Dismiss a council and replace it with a Commission
UC	116	Approve appointments of senior staff
UC	314	Rescind the resolutions and decisions of councils
UC	315	Make directives to councils
RDC	53	Approve certain resolutions
RDC	87	Act on behalf of council in estate development
RDC	94	Make by-laws on behalf of councils
RDC	158	Appoint a caretaker to act as a council

Note: UC - Urban Councils; RDC - Rural District Councils

Source: Author.

5. Are the Takeovers Aligned with the Theoretical Framework?

In this section, the paper's main objective is to scrutinise the national government's takeover of local functions from a theoretical angle. At the centre of the analysis is the question of whether nationalisation was aligned with the theoretical frameworks adopted for the paper. Three closely related theories discussed earlier are the basis for the discussion. These are (1) the subsidiarity principle, (2) Stigler's two guiding principles of jurisdictional design, and (3) the decentralisation theorem advanced by Oates (1972).

5.1. Are the Takeovers Aligned with the Principle of Subsidiarity?

The takeovers are far from being aligned with the principle of subsidiarity, which underscores that government functions ought to be performed at the lowest level of government. Water supply, health care, road construction and maintenance, and waste management are services more efficiently provided by the local government. Such services are usually assigned to the local government because of accessibility (Okudolo & Ojakorotu, 2021). It also has to do with its proximity to communities. It is a fact that national government is far removed from communities (Marumahoko, 2021). It also characterises local government as the sphere of government closest to the people.

A crucial element of the principle of subsidiarity is that local service delivery fosters a healthy bond between the rulers and the governed (Steiner et al., 2018; Marumahoko, 2021a). It is often said that local service delivery increases opportunities for active citizenship, accountability of local authorities as a result of more effective information dissemination and better dialogue, and that public service investment is based more on people's expressed needs (Involve, 2022; International IDEA, 2021; Devas & Grant, 2003; Miller, 2002; European Union, 2016).

It is said that the reason most countries are decentralising service delivery is that most services which are the responsibility of national governments are systematically failing, especially failing poor people (World Bank, 2003). In the same spirit, the World Bank (2003) notes that central governments are failing short of their responsibility to ensure adequate health, education, water and sanitation to the people. Recent studies have shown that in the hands of the national government, public spending seems to have a weak relationship with outcomes, and that communities tend to associate the problems of service delivery with the centralisation of these services (World Bank, 2003).

Another negative aspect of centralisation may be that allocation of resources among the local services may not reflect local preferences. It is not unusual for executives of state agencies to want to echo the policy preferences of the national government in their decision-making processes and not those of communities. Faguet (2001) states that some regions might get completely neglected as a result.

5.2. Are the Takeovers Aligned with the Principles of Jurisdictional Design?

The national government's takeover of local functions may not be aligned with Stigler's guiding principles of jurisdictional design. Here are the reasons why this may not be the case. The reassignment of functions was arbitrary, based as they are on the national government's directives. The inhabitants were not afforded the opportunity to vote for the reassignments. Neither were they consulted. Yet a key tenet of the principles of jurisdictional design is that people should have the right to vote for the types and quantities of public services they desire (Oates, 1972).

In the spaces occupied by the local government, policy making is known to tap into public consultation and there is rich information exchange between inhabitants and the local government. According to Litvack (2020), the exchanges enable the subnational government's response to local needs to be more efficient and effective. It is also said that physical proximity associated with the local sphere of government encourages voter education, engagement, and oversight of governmental performance (Ahmad et al., 2005). In the cases discussed earlier, the national government simply reallocated itself local government functions. There was disregard for consultation.

Stigler's second principle underscores that the closer a representative government is to the people, the better it functions. Therefore, the national government's takeover of local functions is clearly not aligned with this principle. Even if it thought that it would do a better job, the national sphere of government in Zimbabwe is seemingly not in a better place to achieve this. Firstly, the national government is not the system of government closest to communities, local government is. Secondly, the services the national government is centralising are consumed locally. Thirdly, the services centralised are better provided locally. Added to this is that the local government and not the national government is known to use local resources, innovation, technology, consultation and expertise to address local service issues with greater public sector efficiency

5.3. Are the Takeovers Aligned with Oates's Decentralisation Theorem?

The takeovers are not seemingly aligned with the decentralisation theorem according to Oates (1972). Like the subsidiarity principle, the decentralisation theorem underscores that each public service should be provided

by the jurisdiction having control over the minimum geographic area that would internalize benefits and costs of such provision. In the same sense, Oates (1972) underscores that local governments understand the concerns of local residents and local decision making is responsive to the people for whom the services are intended. Viewed this way, the national government is not better placed to provide the services it took away from the local government. It is not a system of government that exercises control over a minimum geographic area. Nor is it better placed to facilitate for communities to internalize benefits and costs of such provision (Oates, 1972).

5.4. Are the Takeovers Aligned with Zimbabwe's Constitution?

The takeovers are seemingly not aligned with Zimbabwe's Constitution for a number of reasons. Firstly, local government is protected in the Constitution. Secondly, it is one of the three systems of government for Zimbabwe mentioned in the Constitution. The others are the national government and provincial councils / metropolitan government. Thirdly, the Constitution adopts devolution as the principle for organising local government roles and responsibilities. Fourthly, the takeovers are inconsistent with Section 264 of the Constitution which states that the goals of the transfer of governmental authority and duties to provincial, metropolitan, and local authorities include: (a) to give powers of local governance to the people and enhance their participation in the exercise of the powers of the State and in making decisions affecting them; (b) to promote democratic, effective, transparent, accountable and coherent government in Zimbabwe as a whole; (c) to preserve and foster peace, national unity and indivisibility of Zimbabwe; (d) to recognise the right of communities to manage their own affairs and to further their development; (e) to ensure the equitable sharing of local and national resources; and (f) to transfer responsibilities and resources from the national government in order to establish a sound financial base for each provincial and metropolitan council and local authority.

6. Conclusion

In all of the above, the national government's overreach emerges as an issue of concern for communities and local government. It is not associated with any of the theories above. It undermines the roles and responsibil-

ities of local authorities and denigrates local government as the form of government most in touch with communities. Despite the bleak picture painted above, Oates (1972) urges us to have faith in local government for four reasons: (1) local government understands the concerns of local residents; (2) local decision-making is responsive to the people for whom the services are intended; (3) local government eliminates unnecessary layers of jurisdiction; and last but not least (4) it enhances inter-jurisdictional competition and innovation. It may be productive if the national sphere of government in Zimbabwe purposefully supported local government through advice, facilitation, promotion and capacity building, among others.

In recent years, Zimbabwe has seen an increase in the national government's takeover of services that are historically assigned to locally elected governments. The takeovers undermine local government, erode its stature, harm its autonomy, and belittle its pride of place in Zimbabwe's multi-level governmental system. Yet, Olowu (1988) reminds us of the value of local government by listing its five defining traits as follows: (1) its legal personality; (2) specific powers to carry out a variety of tasks; (3) significant budgetary and personnel autonomy subject to limited central oversight; (4) effective citizen engagement; and (5) localness.

Even after local government was constitutionally protected and devolution adopted as the guiding concept for Zimbabwe's governmental system, local government continues to lose its traditional functions to the national government. Water, roads, health care, and waste management are some of the local services that the national government has given itself. Perhaps it was as a result of this seemingly negative development that Chakaipa appeared to sound the alarm bell when he stressed almost 14 years ago that healthy central-local relations in Zimbabwe may need to be based on role clarity, transparency, respect, integrity, accountability and sound judgement (2010).

The paper evaluated Zimbabwe's central-local relations and the provision of local public services. It was found that the national government's takeover of local services undermines local government and by extension central-local relations. It might not be a bad idea if Zimbabwe's national government started viewing local government in a more positive light as its important partner for progress and not as a junior, inferior, or submissive companion existing at its whims and caprices. Local government matters. It is the foundation stone for societal advancement.

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CENTRAL-LOCAL RELATIONS IN ZIMBABWE: DOES THE LOCAL MATTER?

Summary

The study examines current central-local interactions in Zimbabwe and is based on document analysis. It looks at what might be a trend in Zimbabwe's intergovernmental structure, one that is marked by an increase in the national level meddling in local government affairs. After a brief introduction, the paper outlines its structure and approach. The conceptual and theoretical framework is then presented. There is a brief discussion of three theories: subsidiarity, jurisdictional design principles, and decentralisation theorem. This is followed by a brief discussion on the territorial organisation of Zimbabwe, with the intention of providing readers with context and perspective. The paper then examines central-local interactions, after which the discussion turns to whether the takeovers fit within the theoretical framework. The examination is conducted against the backdrop of the requirement to safeguard the local level's integrity, reputation, and autonomy. The paper's conclusion is that local government matters and is an important component of Zimbabwe's governmental structure.

Keywords: Zimbabwe, national government, local government, urban councils, rural district councils, local functions, service delivery

CENTRALNO-LOKALNI ODNOSI U ZIMBABVEU: JE LI LOKALNO VAŽNO?

Sažetak

Studija ispituje trenutne centralno-lokalne odnose u Zimbabveu i temelji se na analizi propisa i drugih javnih dokumenata. Pozornost je posvećena prevladavajućem trendu u međurazinskim odnosima u Zimbabveu koji obilježava rastuće uplitanje nacionalnih vlasti u poslove lokalne samouprave. Nakon kratkog uvoda, u radu se prezentira njegova struktura te metodološki, konceptualni i teorijski pristup. Rasprava se fokusira na tri teorijska koncepta: supsidijarnosti, načela za teritorijalni obuhvat lokalnih jedinica i decentralizacijskog teorema. Diskusija o teritorijalnoj organizaciji Zimbabvea koja slijedi osigurava radu kontekst i perspektivu za daljnju analizu. U središnjem dijelu rada govori se o centralno-lokalnim odnosima u Zimbabveu, a u njemu se brojni slučajevi u kojima su središnja tijela preuzela poslove lokalne samouprave analiziraju u svjetlu predstavljenih teorijskih koncepata. Ispitivanje relevantnih slučajeva temelji se na zahtjevu da je potrebno štititi integritet, reputaciju i autonomiju lokalne samouprave. Zaključak rada temelji se na tvrdnjama da je lokalna samouprava važna te da je neizostavna komponenta upravljačkih struktura Zimbabvea.

Ključne riječi: Zimbabve, nacionalne vlasti, lokalna samouprava, gradska vijeća, vijeća seoskih okruga, lokalne funkcije, pružanje usluga