

Decentralization and Decentralized Cooperation in Cameroon: The Futile and Conflicting Initiatives of implementation

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ABSTRACT: The Cameroon political economy was pressured by home and foreign realities to adopt a constitution in 1996 that provided ample space for the blossoming of new ideas in governance like decentralization and decentralized cooperation. Though the application of all the potent elements of this constitution remained in abeyance, decentralization provided an escape valve for those who found the hyper centralization suffocating. It was deal which sought to drift away from the Jacobin French system of power sharing and control wherein all powers and decisions rest in the center and for the most part in the hands of one man. Theoretically, decentralization was introduced as a ploy to take power closer to the people and ensure popular participation in decision making thereby ensure prompt control and evaluation of locally orientated projects. After functioning for some time, decentralization for the case of Cameroon gave birth to decentralized cooperation. In fact decentralized cooperation is considered by some authors as the “daughter” of decentralization. Decentralized cooperation that is in function in Cameroon since 2011 has seemingly not been very effective. As appealing as this project appeared its implementation suffered from conflicting groups of personal and collective interests all of them hinged to corruption and insincerity on the part of the governing. Even with the introduction of the decentralized cooperation’s in 2011 that could help enhance the project, there were still contradiction that made the implementation to remain for the most part a dream project. From palpable evidences drawn from primary and secondary sources, this paper attempt a portrait of how the initiatives that were deployed in getting decentralization to work became conflicting and therefore futile. It sums up the governmental/indigenous responsibilities to the failure of this project. From its narrative it opines that decentralization as governance approach seemed to have been hired in Cameroon to serve international policy design that addressing crucial home realities.

I. INTRODUCTION

An Overview of Decentralized Cooperation

As conceived by the European Commission, the objective of decentralized cooperation is, first and foremost, to ensure ‘better’ development, by taking greater account of the needs and priorities expressed by the population (Discussion Paper 8, 1999). In this regard, it aims to enhance the role and place of civil society in the development process. It consists on the one hand in bringing together and ensuring the collaboration at different intervention levels of the potential economic and social actors in North and South. On the other hand, it consists of evocating the active and determining participation of direct beneficiaries in decision-making and in the different stages of the actions that concern them. Ambrogio Manenti points out that the objective of decentralized cooperation is to create and/or consolidate long-term cultural, technical and economic partnerships between local communities as a tool to promote human development and peace (George Matovu, Andrea de Guttry, 2008). In this context, "local communities" refers to a decentralized politico-administrative level of a country, e.g. a municipality, or groups of towns, which answers to a local administrative body such as a province, county or department. They include the political administration (mayor, city councillors) and the population. For the purposes of decentralized cooperation, the local community is represented by a committee or working group which includes the local authorities, representatives of public institutions (e.g. health services) and organized civil society groups such as associations, NGOs, professional bodies, trade unions, the commercial sector(G Matovu, Andrea de Guttry, 2008).

The organized local community is thus the protagonist of decentralized cooperation initiatives, mobilizing resources, culture, history and all the potential of its territory. Decentralized cooperation applies a bottom-up approach through an institutional, social and grass roots partnership between institutions and civil societies of two or more entities. Working on common interests and needs rather than the opinions of the different parties in conflict, decentralized cooperation plays an essential role in promoting conflict resolution and peace building.

In addition decentralized cooperation creates a “culture of exchange», that enables people to have access to knowledge and information, encourages people to take control of their own problems, and helps to break the authoritarian grip that manipulates and polarizes the population, and generates development which does not rely heavily upon external funding. Decentralized cooperation can better use its potential when it is an integral part of a multilateral program with a specific role of UN agencies such as coordination of activities and technical assistance ensuring an orientation in line with the national policies, reform trend and international standards(G. Matovu, Andrea de Guttry, 2008). The UNDP is committed to strengthening decentralized governance because of its capacity to bring about sustainable cooperation at local levels, with the Northern partners contributing their own experience of how they dealt with a specific issue and transferring their knowledge and resources directly to the community/local entity concerned.

In the EU environment, decentralized cooperation has the following five main tenets:

- i) Active involvement of all the various groups of stakeholders (transferring responsibility to them). This entails making the recipients genuine stakeholders and/or partners who are able to assume responsibility for their own development;
- ii) Seeking consultation and complementarities between stakeholders. This entails promoting dialogue and linking action at various levels (local, national and regional), as well as forging new public-private partnerships as a strategy and basis for sustainable lasting basic services;
- iii) Decentralizing management. This involves delegating responsibility for management (including financial management) down to a level, which is as close as, possible to the recipients of the service (the principle of subsidiarity).

This requires a fundamental change in the attitudes and role of central government to become more of a policy maker and facilitator in the provision of services.

iv) Introducing a process approach which involves efforts to create genuine involvement and ownership. In addition, there is emphasis on listening, dialoguing, mobilization of local resources, achieving goals and action as part of a continuous process, joint evaluation, etc. Furthermore, there is emphasis on joint monitoring and results-based evaluation.

v) Giving priority to capacity building and institutional development. This seeks to increase the potential and control of local initiatives. It further aims at encouraging growth in the number of stakeholders, organizing and training themselves as well as forming networks and building partnerships with each other and with public entities. Beside the fact that decentralization is new model, some countries like Germany through their experience seek to export their experience and understanding of decentralization to other countries like in Cameroon.

II. THE AMBIGUITIES OF DECENTRALIZED COOPERATION IN CAMEROON:

Decentralized cooperation which is also known as international relations of local governments and their groupings is an emerging phenomenon nowadays that turns to compete at the international scene with states and other international public international organizations not as rivals but as partners. According to Landry Ngonu Tsimi,(L. N. Tsimi, 2015) decentralized cooperation is generally perceived by many authors as the cooperation between local governments (Developed countries) and their foreign counterparts (Developing countries in general) in the world in diversified domains. For others, its refers to a practice of international exchange involving local governments, local associations, NGOs, public administrations and enterprises. In fact some developed nations have made decentralized cooperation their Trojan horse in contemporary international relations, that is, as a new form of deployment on the international scene, thus the notion of paradiplomacy (L. N. Tsimi, 2015).

This explains why such nations are engaged in a multitude of decentralized cooperation convention. The curious thing here is that these conventions are more of North-South cooperation than North-North or even south-south decentralized cooperation convention (Tsimi, 2015). This simply suggests that states, notably developed nations have modified their manner of doing international cooperation by deployment and supporting their local governments on the international scene. That explains why a project jointly carried out between a French local government and a Cameroonian local government will always have the French flag and emblem signs of the presence of the French nations. Such an image doesn't go unnoticed in international relations. Narrowing down to Cameroon, one of the major obstacles of decentralized cooperation in Cameroon is that of

understanding the concept. In reality there exist two different approaches of decentralized cooperation; the extensive and restrictive approach. The restrictive approach of Latin origin and propounded by the French defines decentralize cooperation as any forms of partnership valid by a convention, local governments and their groupings with their foreign counter parts. This approach is qualified as restrictive because it recognizes strictly in quality and status local governments in decentralize cooperation as it is considered as the decentralized relations strictly limited decentralized in sensu stricto .

Actors of decentralized cooperation within this perspective are strictly local governments and their groupings. As such, all local governments or public institutions with an assembly elected from the universal suffrage can engage in decentralized cooperation. Thus any other institution out of these category and characteristics involve in international cooperation is considered as a non-governmental cooperation. As such, the French define decentralize cooperation as the establishment of long term relations between French local governments and their foreign counterparts formalized by conventions that the actions of their conventions specified and as well as financial and technical modalities. This could forms like Official Development Assistance, Institutional Support, joint management of wealth and services, transboundary cooperation or inter-regional cooperation, twinning, programs or development projects.

On the other hand, the extensive Approach originates from the anglo-saxon inspiration. The extensive approach limits to any international action engaged by sub-national entities and not necessarily local governments. The extensive approach prone the idea that associations and organisations of international solidarity play a crucial role in the emergence of local governments and authorities. In this light, all partnership relation with any public actor of international cooperation or not, NGOs, CSO, universities could be considered as part and parcel of decentralize cooperation. Here the need for numerous and diverse actors is stressed upon but most importantly on domain of activities concerned by cooperation. The extensive approach is propounded by the European Union. According to the European Union, decentralize cooperation refers any program conceive and put in practice in developing countries by actors the CSO, NGOs, local public authorities, agricultural cooperatives, women association, trade unions and in a large sense all organizations of the civil society.

Decentralized cooperation was instituted in Cameroon following the Prime ministerial Decree of 28 April 2011 on the modalities of decentralized cooperation in Cameroon. This decree defines decentralize cooperation in its article 2; as « as a partnership relation between two or more local governments or their grouping aimed at realizing common projects ». However article 3 of the decree exclude all partnership contracts as well as others relations that do not fall within the competence of local governments laid down by the laws of decentralization in 2004. From the two approaches of decentralized cooperation, Cameroon has adopted more of a restrictive than an extensive approach. In principle Cameroon practice decentralize cooperation without actually calling it decentralized cooperation. For instances most Cameroonian universities are in partnership and cooperation with several foreign universities.

Nowadays, the role of CSO and NGOs is very important in local development. Their role has been very visible and exemplary in many African countries. Local governments will benefit much if they were allowed to collaborate with such entities. Furthermore, most of these NGOS and CSO are very rich financially and technically and capable of supporting local governments as they do not usually have the means. This is so because, nowadays, international donors tend to trust, local governments, NGOS and CSO in the financing and execution of local projects than the central government. Unfortunately Cameroon could not benefit from this because its definition of decentralize cooperation is restrictive and not extensive. Many countries, notably developed countries have understood the stakes decentralize cooperation, thus has been using it deploy its international policy over the globe. Cameroon is one of the countries in which developed countries through their International Development agencies(GIZ, AFD, USAID, SNV) and even international organizations like the World Bank, European Union and UNDP have imposed their influence in Cameroon by supporting décentralisation and decentralize cooperation in particular (J.Budine, 1992)

III. THE RADIATION OF INTERNATIONAL POLITICS THROUGH DECENTRALIZED COOPERATION IN CAMEROON

The post-Cold War era partly experienced challenging debates and concerns on numerous perspectives, theories and ‘deep’ differences in opinion (ranging from policies to strategies and approaches) on various dimensions of development. The aim has been to arrive at concrete recommendations for action (A. Szirmai, 2005). The concept of development can be traced after 1945, when Harry Truman made a global call to improve the lot of more than half of the world’s population living in destitute and poverty in “primitive societies”. To salvage the poor and improve their living conditions, Truman proposed what he called “democratic fair dealing”.

By this statement, Truman meant a society where nations would respect the rights of men; where all men have a right to freedom of thought and expression and opportunity to share and participate in the common good. According to him, democracy alone can provide the vitalizing force to stir the people into triumphant action. By this, he meant granting a voice to local peoples in deciding their own affairs. This Trumanian policy greatly influenced international cooperation as European powers and other international institutions majority controlled by the west had to impose to imposed democracy and decentralization as an international policy with each power influencing its former colonies.

The European and world Charters on local autonomy and specifically French local authorities have had an impact on the African continent and Cameroon in particular. The magnitude of these events had a direct impact on many African States notably with the widespread political and socio-economic crisis in the entire continent around 1990s (C.N Mback, 2003). Internationally, the democratization of public life imposed on African countries by Western powers, who have decided to condition Official Development Assistance in exchange to the implementation of democratization, following the failure of the Communist socialist ideology. It was obvious, that to stop the last bastions of this ideology in favor of economic liberalism, it was important to address the human element, that is, advocating for individual freedoms and the economic crisis raging in Africa. Following the wind of change from the East, a new method defending democratic principles took over Western powers(CN Mback, 2003).

Consequently, through the voice of President George Bush, the United States expressed their new vision of their foreign policy, whereby the United States were committed more than before in promoting development and growth in an merging democratic African continent(Tsimi, 2015). Coupled to this was the coming to power of Michael Gorbachev as the head of the Soviet Union, who inaugurated the "Perestroika" that upset the whole Eastern Europe bringing with it a wave of democratic demands. The end of the bipolar struggle for influence and power, in addition to triggering transitions to more democratic systems in Eastern Europe, had a formidable impact on pro-democratic changes in Africa (Tsimi, 2015). It was against these events that the French President, Francois Mitterrand gave the impetus for French speaking Sub-Saharan African countries towards democratization during the customary Franco-African Summit notably that of Baule of 1990 which became a historic one as it conditioned French Development Assistance in exchange for implementation of democratic principles among which was decentralized cooperation. This was the similar situation with Germany who conditioned her assistance to her African partners including Cameroon.

This was manifested following the anticipated presidential elections of 11 October in Cameroon during Germany which estimated that Cameroon did not respect the principle of democracy (A. M Ondo, 2002). In fact democratization through decentralization cooperation has become a new approach in international cooperation. The emergence of a new approach to international cooperation (decentralization) during the 1980s is first and foremost the product of recent changes in the international system that tends to legitimize the phenomenon of globalization. This is because of the emergence of new actors in international affairs also known as transnational actors(C B Mougno, 2007), and as well as a new distribution of power. It is even more of the outcome of the profound changes in public governance, which has provoked gradual dynamics decentralization policies.

The rise of decentralization since the 1980s corresponds to a period during which the concept of globalization emerged, encompassing various diverse concepts such as trans-nationalization of international relations and the internationalization of local affairs .This global context was very common for local authorities of the North and South. Bertrand Badie and Marie-Claude Smouts define transnational relations as ;
'*Toutes relations sociales qui, par volonté délibérée ou par destination, se déploient sur la scène mondiale au - delà du cadre étatique national et qui se réalisent en échappant au moins partiellement au contrôle ou à l'action médiatrice des Etat*' (Blom & charillon, 2011).

Thus, besides this, are economic, demographic and cultural flows that escape more or less, State control and asserts a number of political and religious actors and which today include decentralized communities.¹ Nevertheless, the origin of the flow constitutes different forms of international relations is in its diverse or plural nature. Moreover, the State issuance of this flow is relative (L. Sindjoun, 2002b), if not; the State could lose its hegemonic goal. This is to justify the fact that transnational actors or better still local governments participate in one way or the other to the weakening of the concept of sovereignty that was put in place by the Westphalian model and, above all, provoking a rethink of the Hobbesian sovereign authority (Mougno, 2007) . The reality of transnational flows is permanent in international relations, transnational relationships are regular interactions across national boundaries that occur when at least one actor is a non-State or agent and do not operate on behalf of a national government or an Intergovernmental organization (T. Risse-Kappen, 1995).

The increasing rise of transnational relations constitutive of a "multi-centered world" would have ultimately favored the external actions local authorities in the sense that it creates the conditions for the dynamic expansion of trans-territorial mobility. The State alone has never occupy by itself the field of international

relations, it has always maintained relations of competition and complementarity with other actors that Rosenau qualify as "acteurs hors souveraineté" transliterated as "actors out of sovereignty," that is actors beyond full or partial to States sovereign control (Sindjoun, 2002b).

What then of the internationalization of local affairs which seems to be consubstantial with the flow of transnational relations of local government? This necessitates a cross examination of local government in international relations. Globalization in which fits all decentralization processes, action has significantly expanded the geographical spectrum destination project and beyond partnership opportunities continents. If Europe and Africa remain the two major poles, globalization and liberation of local officials opens new prospects for cooperation. This can be evidenced by the most recent partnerships between communities of emerging countries and those of the North with a view to mutualize their contributions to development (A. S. Santus, 2003). The internationalization of local affairs is the logical consequence of trans-national flows inherent in decentralized cooperation.

In fact, local authorities, in their dynamic expansion beyond national borders subvert the principle of territoriality thereby trans-nationalization of local politics (B. Badie, 1995) by exercising at the international level, competences or powers that have been given to them internally by national governments. Beyond the vague and elusive nature of the concept of "local affairs" (Bagnard, 2004), the absence of local authorities both at the national and international level as a result of the absorption of local interest in the issue of inter-state relations.

To illustrate this assertion, the construction of a water treatment plant jointly by a sponsored by a German and Italian council. Such international cooperation is based on recognized competence accorded locally to each council by their respective States. But if hypothetically, can the execution of the agreement or project between the two councils continue when their respective States break off diplomatic relations? Can decentralized cooperation be saved? In fact to Nach Mback (2003) there is no possibility for its success. However the interest here is to show in the context of mutations involve in international relations, but also the issue notion globalization - that is to say, the connection between the local and the global, but also processing and the substitution of local to international, *mutatis mutandis*. (With the necessary changes being carried out)

1.1- Westernization of the Cameroonian Local Government Order: Case of Germany

According to Bertrand Badie (1995), the "Westernization" of the political order is synonymous to the concept of "administrative mimicry" which consists in particular upholding the Western World administrative orders as the best. Most African countries at independence notably Cameroon copied their colonial masters administrative system. Luc Sindjoun has described this as an institutional and political imaginary practice in post-colonial African States (L. Sindjoun, 2002a). This is nothing less than an attempt to transpose the European and specifically, German model of public administration in Africa and Cameroon particular and whose main purpose is to contribute to consolidating their influence in the world (F. Petitville 1995)

However, Marcel Merle (1995) puts to question the existence of a Western State model, as he describe an abstract model whose forms were coated in its own territory of origin and with many different incarnations (Petitville, 1995). Corroborating this assertion, Luc Sindjoun on his part notes that the concept of "European State" used by Jacques Lagroye is largely a fetish and vain attempt to hide the forest with baobab trees in its multiple contradictory trajectories in the so called European sphere (Sindjoun, 2002a). The concept of "Western State" is to some extent a construction as well as the concept of the "West" that should not be naturalized. This does not mean committing the fallacy of absolutism of State reinvention as Badie and Hermet writes;

'Il ne s'agit pas pour autant de tomber dans le piège de l'absolutisation de la réinvention étatique qui admet le quasi-enfermement de l'analyse dans le ghetto de la spécificité érigée en irréductibilité car, avant la réinvention et la réinterprétation locales, l'Etat moderne dans la plupart des pays d'Afrique noire procède du rapport de dépendance avec l'Occident... (Badie, 1992)

To understand these authors, it shall be necessary to examine the origin of the phenomenon of westernization of the European politico-administrative systems, especially German model of the State in Cameroon. The "Westernization" of the political order in Cameroon is a colonial and neocolonial historical construction. Its functionality is tributary to the latter. Even though decentralized cooperation could be suspected of contributing proportionately in shaping the Cameroonian administrative system based on the European model dating right from colonization and which was maintained by the post-colonial cooperation. To Louis Paul Ngongo, the term colonial administrations covers all forms of organization imposed on Cameroon by the German, British and French political institutions and administrative structures (L.P Ngongo, 1987). This is in fact a special and confusing authority as reflected in its origins, which characterizes the administrative structures that supports them. Critically looking at African History, one cannot deny the fact that the present politico-administrative systems reigning in Africa today was implanted by the European colonial Masters. Therefore the State in Cameroon seems to have been exported (not imported), and implanted by Europeans in Africa and

Cameroon in particular (Sindjoun, 2002a) . Germany just like any former European colonial masters seek to imposed its own model of administration in former colonies.

Besides the attempt to Germanized the Cameroonian local government order, there is the need project her image at the international scene. Decentralization through Local Governments has increasingly become involved in issues that transcend national borders. In the early post-war years, Local Governments followed the lead of the central government. But over time, their outlook has broadened to encompass a wide array of international issues. With recent moves to devolve power to the regions, this trend is set to continue (N.S. T. Kaze,2017) Using international contacts, local governments, within the limits of their abilities, support the home government in important international initiatives. It is against this idea that most states like Germany through development agencies support decentralization in foreign countries so as to put them in contact with their local government.

Cameroon corresponds with German foreign policy priority, which is among others is the promotion of good governance with decentralization being the trojan horse. As such local governments in Cameroon could eventually establish decentralized cooperation with German local government. International cooperation by local governments has already served as an important tool of German foreign policy towards some African countries. Germany supports process of decentralization in many other African countries, where the German system of local governance is treated as an exemplary model (Kaze, 2017). Local government reform is treated in Germany as an important element in the modernization of the state and the political response to compete with other powers in Cameroon such as China, France and the United States who most of the time use hard power, likewise Germany uses soft power tactics. In this light the GIZ has organized exchange visits between some Cameroonian local governments with German territorial collectivities.

1.2-Geopolitical Motivations and the Question of Colonial Heritage

Since the fall of the Berlin world in the 1990s, the democratization process that followed witnessed the emergence of a new category of actors, local government in international relations along the state. Their influence in world's important questions such as climate change, development, pollution and participatory democracy cannot be undermined. The emergence on the international scene of local and regional governments, as well as that of their networks, is a process that is rapidly being extended and generalized. Nowadays, a local government cannot fully exercise its jurisdictions, render public services, promote its productive capacity or develop the model of city or territory it desires to drive, without entering into a dynamic of relationships with actors from abroad. International relations today are, for any city, municipality or territory, a vital space of learning and of opportunity. Today, there exists a world, regional, sub-regional and national association of local government. International linguistic association such as Francophonie (AIMF) and Commonwealth (CLGA) have also created their own association of local association. As such, the international activity of local governments has become part of a larger process that includes the growing significance of non-governmental bodies in international relations, and the expanding role of local administration in the EU. Although cooperation between local governments is still focused on contacts between communities and sharing experience between particular local entities, more and more of their projects assume a broader international dimension. Such "local government diplomacy" has already become part of public diplomacy and can be used as a tool of foreign policy besides this, is the question of colonial heritage.

Cameroon is one of Africa countries with the most consistent historical record of centralization emanating from the French administrative system. Though Cameroon was manage administratively by two different colonial systems one essential centralized (French) and the other decentralized (British) from 1916 to 1960 and 1961 respectively by France and Britain. But at independence and subsequently reunification, Cameroon remained a more centralized state at the end of the spectrum today, with a strong emphasis on central state oversight (tutelary), and limited fiscal transfers to elected subnational governments(Kaze, 2017). The continued prevalence of centralism in Cameroon is probably not coincidental. It may hold for historical-institutional reasons (such as path-dependence) or because the political cultures of the Republic of Cameroon and some of its political elites have come inherently to favor state power, but legacies of centralism tend to linger. In these case, some authority has been devolved, but autonomy is limited, accountability continues to operate upward (even alongside electoral accountability at the local level), and local capacity remains underdeveloped.

The British legacy of "indirect rule" was long posited to be more decentralized than French rule, though later scholars like Young Crawford has called into question whether the realities of colonial states admitted any significant distinction(Y. Crawford, 1994). Unfortunately in the conception of the law on decentralization, the historical reality of British Cameroon was not taken into consideration. This of course remains one of the major challenges the decentralization process faces in Cameroon. Cameroon is presently undergoing massive civil strife in the English speaking region of its national territory; effective decentralization can therefore emerged as the most appropriate post-conflict solution. Given the diversity and yet united nature

of Cameroon, we may say that British rule had the ambiguous merit of not affecting contemporary governance as much as the French tradition, or at least of facilitating greater variation in its ex-colonies. However the cooperation between Cameroon and Germany towards promoting effective decentralization albeit it's numerous challenges had some positives impacts and even opens new perspective for decentralization in Cameroon (Kaze, 2017).

IV. THE POLICY OF OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

In the 1990s, many global partnerships with institutional and territorial dominance, "aid to local governance" or "institutional support" emerged and proved to be an appropriate response to the current challenge for the joint development of globalization and decentralization. Meanwhile, the international dimension of the development of territories, their attractiveness, and socio-economic dynamism of its actors has become major issues to be considered in promoting sustainable development (Santus, 2003) and local development in countries of the Southern hemisphere. This model is considered to have been developed, refined and tested in the Northern hemisphere as consubstantial with official development assistance policies with decentralized cooperation as an outcome of effective decentralization. However this strategy can be assimilated to a neoliberal tags and as a mechanism of delivering official development assistance. In developing countries, notably Cameroon where the decentralization process is supposed to ensure effective and efficient decentralized cooperation, decentralization seems to be incomplete. This gives the impression that decentralized cooperation functions more from the perspective of official development assistance (M, Finken, 1996).

Moreover, Jean-Louis Venard (1993) notes, decentralized cooperation can be understood today in a double sense: first as institutional cooperation aimed more at promoting the mobilization of local governments in developed countries to serve urban development in Africa, by providing funding through direct agreements signed between cities in the North and South (Mougnoq 2007). On the other hand, according to the meaning given to decentralized cooperation by the European Economic Community (EEC), decentralized cooperation has been subject to official development assistance directly available to local governments of the South thereby bypassing the central government.

It should however be noted that the international cooperation to support decentralization could certainly be considered as a new method of channeling official development assistance, but at the same time, it naturalizes the apprehension of decentralized cooperation to reciprocal legitimation game, hence the importance of posing the following question of effectiveness and its sustainability. Governments of developed countries have publicly acknowledged and recognized the fact that official development assistance is not primarily meant to ensure the development of poor countries but to ensure their interests in certain parts of the world, whether commercial, strategic or simply cultural or political (S. Brunel, 1997).

As such Germany support towards supporting effective decentralization in Cameroon ensured and comfort her position in Cameroon (Kaze, 2017). Thus, among the objectives of official development assistance, the development of poor countries is not the first priority but to promote a neoliberal culture. The neoliberal approach advocates the strict application certain mechanical and precepts such as deregulation, price liberalization and open markets. Basing our argument on the hypothesis of the "invisible hand" of Adam Smith, this states all that anything that could cause eventual harm to free trade must be fought against in the name of economic rationality (Blom & Charillon, 2001). Narrowing to the context of German-Cameroon cooperation towards promoting decentralization and local development in Cameroon, the German International Development Agency (GIZ) support effective decentralization through PADDL can be labeled neoliberal construction and the perpetuation of ideological control of local entities. The spread of market logic would be borne by those institutions to local authorities to operationalize Cameroonian structural frameworks conducive to the development of its dynamics.

For example, on the 14th July 2009, the governments of Germany and Cameroon signed two agreements for financial (45.5 million Euro) and technical (37 million Euro) cooperation in Yaoundé². The agreements, totaling 82.5 million Euro, were signed during a ceremony that took place in Cameroon's Ministry for Economy Planning and Regional Development (MINEPAT) office. Cameroonian Economy Minister Louis Paul Motazé signed the agreements together with German Ambassador Reinhard Buchholz in the presence of various representatives from the Cameroonian government, German development cooperation agencies (Kaze 2017). The funds for the technical cooperation were meant to be used to finance already existing programs which are being implemented by the German development agency Gesellschaft für internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ) with main focus on programs dealing with health/AIDS, forest and environment (Pro-PSFE) and the Support Program for Decentralization and Local Development projects (PADDL). The increasing role of experts committed by the international agencies in the construction of a local development enterprises does not only induce the dominance of international actors in the development process and implementation of national policies, but would also create (S. Latouche, 1998), awareness of the politico-ideological stakes of local governments field in the World market economic cultural expansion.

The idealization of German-Cameroon cooperation to promote effective decentralization is aimed therefore, at ensuring the sustainability of the control and influence of the dominant actors of development by building a neo-liberal political culture for local actors.

V. IMPEDIMENTS OF DECENTRALIZED COOPERATION IN CAMEROON.

The first major challenge of decentralization at the level of the central government in Cameroon stems from Law N° 2004/018 of July 22, 2004 laying down rules applicable to councils (C. cheka, 2007). Article 115(1) of the latter law puts into question the principle of free administration of decentralized local entities, albeit by the creation of “city councils” with special status. According to Boudine, “the essence of the autonomy of local authorities emanates from the mode of designation of their leaders by direct universal suffrage and the freedom of the deliberating assembly to define norms that bind them; with the proviso that they do not conflict with national law (Boudine, 1992). Citing Luc Sindjoun, Professor Yves Paul Mandjem (2016) holds that the state or legislator in Cameroon transform the decentralization process into a “passive revolution” whereby the legal framework is very ambiguous and characterized by state control at almost all levels of decentralized system.

The appointment of government delegates to head local authorities (even if of large cities) in Cameroon introduces a unique twist into the classical meaning of “autonomy of local authorities”. Although a theorist of Cameroonian constitutional law like Bernard Raymond Guimdo(1998) seems to gloss over this point, it would appear that the appointment of these government delegates to lord over large cities in accordance with article 115(1) of the said Cameroonian law contradicts the principle of the free administration of local authorities by officials locally elected by direct universal suffrage, considering that government delegates are appointed by presidential decree

In such conditions, these municipal administrators are neither mayors nor municipal councillors attached to some local authority. This constitutes a serious setback especially at the level of the local entities where this provision is applied. Were it indeed the case of large cities in an emerging democracy tampering with the principle laid down by law whereby local authorities are freely administered by boards elected in accordance with conditions laid down by law, it is submitted that there is a need to find alternatives that conform to the law (Cheka, 2007). For example, the appointment of the government delegate in each case from amongst elected local councillors in one breath permits respect of the spirit of the law without expressly excluding avenues for the expression of the interest of government in the choice of officials charged with administering the cities. In the absence of such a formula, the introduction of the notion of government delegates questions the principle of elections as a means of designating municipal executives accountable to the electorate; thereby subverting the democratic and decentralization process.

Leadership Inadequacy (Impostors of Decentralization)

Coupled to limited financial resources, there is also the problem of available and competent human resources. The profile of local government administrators are generally retired Civil servants, wealthy people and to extent local politicians most of whom do not master the objective, functioning and expected results of decentralization. It should be however be noted that following our investigation on the field, we discovered that most local administrators do not master the concept of decentralized cooperation which should be one of the secondary impacts of decentralization capable of permitting local government to get into intra/inter partnership cooperation to foster their development(Kaze, 2017) . Most of their services lack the service in charge of decentralized cooperation even though the state has already put in place a judicial and clear judicial framework guiding decentralized cooperation in Cameroon. The outcome of this is that local governments are unable to efficiently and effectively manage the resources at their disposal. Beside the challenge of resources and its management, is the problem of institutional capacity.

Accountability, both of officials to elected representatives and of elected local governments to citizens, requires effective systems of accounting and auditing that create trust in the information about how resources have been used. Elected representatives, never mind ordinary citizens, are rarely in a position to check the details of the use of resources. Yet accounting systems are often extremely weak in local government and are open to all manner of disputes. Annual accounts are often finalized long after the end of the financial year (if at all in some cases). Meanwhile, the central governments rarely have the capacity to perform comprehensive external audits on all local governments. This could partially be explained by the lack of information. Accountability also depends on information being available to citizens, in a sufficiently comprehensible form, about how resources are being used (A Goetz, 2001). Added to this are bad governance practices such as corruption and embezzlement. In Cameroon today, there are many mayors in prison for charges of corruption, misappropriation and poor management. This at this is link to the political will of the central government.

VI. POLITICAL WILL AND GOVERNMENTAL PARALYSIS

In the same vein, the pace of the process of decentralization would seem to be retarded in part too by the Executive. It would appear that certain provisions of the law are not yet effective even though the 2004 decentralization laws did not make them contingent upon the signing of legal instruments of application by the Executive (Local government law of 1974). A glaring example of this has to do with ensuring that the council executive draws its legitimacy from the electorate of the council area. It is for this reason that the creation of “special regime councils” hitherto lorded over by government delegates appointed by decree was repealed by section 156 (1) of the 2004 law applicable to councils. Many years after this repeal, however, the said delegates of “special regime councils” are still in office, although the transitional and final provisions of the 2004 decentralization laws apparently do not expressly state that they shall keep their positions, even for the time-being.

Though observers in Cameroon across the board agree that it is thanks to the government reshuffle cabinet of August 2002, that decentralization has been put on an irreversible track, this level of pussyfooting in the application of the law lends credence to critics who charge the government with the absence of the political will to effectively decentralize. The former ask what guarantees there are that legal instruments of application will be signed if dispositions of the law (that are applicable without more) remain a dead letter to date.

Blue print model for Decentralized Cooperation in Cameroon

All around the world in matters of governance, international cooperation and development, decentralization is the rage. Even apart from the widely debated issues of subsidiarity and devolution in the European Union and states’ rights in the United States, decentralization has been at the center stage of policy experiments in the last two decades in a large number of developing and transition economies in Latin America, Africa and Asia (P.Bardhan, 2002). The World Bank, for example, has embraced it as one of the major governance reforms on its agenda. As a result, decentralization has become a strategic policy for governmental restructuring in many developing countries especially in Cameroon since 2010 that witness the effective transfer of competence and resources by some ministries to local governments.

There are three perspectives regarding the benefits of decentralization, namely: developmentalist, democratizing and centralist. The developmentalists, including the mainstream development donors, support the implementation of decentralization because it will: bring government closer to the people; improve service delivery; educate people to become full citizens; facilitate local participation especially of the poor and thus allow government to better understand the people’s needs; improve public policy design; reduce conflict by helping people to accept government decisions; socially integrate the community; and make local economies more prosperous and more equitable (Y. Olum, 2014). It is within the developmentalist perspective that Cameroon’s decentralization process is situated.

As for the democratizers, they argue that decentralization enhances greater citizen input in governance by strengthening both local elites and the central state; opens the way for popular participation in making decisions about policy design and implementation; and yields higher levels of government responsiveness, honesty, legitimacy, and tolerance among citizens because local officials have better knowledge of local conditions than central government officials and are thus better positioned to respond to local tastes and preferences (S. J. Burki, 1999). The centralists argue that decentralization transfers social conflicts, resources, and responsibilities to the local level where there is greater political inequality.

However, they note that decentralization reinforces relationships of subordination and pulverization of the relative strength of subaltern actors. In addition, they argue that corruption and clientelism are more prevalent at the local level, making participation unattractive to many citizens as well as making participation itself undemocratic. Finally, they note that decentralization impairs development because local governments are less technically capable than central government because the state loses regulatory capacity and fiscal control. The difficulty of finding strong and consistent evidence of direct causal linkages between decentralization and many of the acclaimed benefits suggests that decentralization can be instrumental in promoting development and good governance but it is not a panacea or an end in itself. In short, decentralization has its own political dynamics and is by no means a universal ‘good’ (J.Barkan & M.Chege, 1989). Thus, if the acclaimed benefits of decentralization are to be achieved, developing countries and Cameroon in particular should take into account a number of pre-conditions before implementing these preconditions include among others, institutional mechanisms and Creation of participation space, Political and Civil will and capacity development at the local level.

Institutional Nexus

Institutional arrangement is an important factor in the successful implementation of decentralization (J. Litvack, 1998). The decentralization of political power within states requires the creation of decision-making institutions which are elected and appointed (B.C. Smith, 1985). R. A.W. Rhodes (1995) sees political institutions as

“instrumentalities”. He notes that the state is a human grouping in which rules a certain power-relationship between its individual and associated political institutions, which cover state organization (including democracy), separation of powers, center-local relations, and federalism.

Therefore, the broad mechanism for citizen input in political institutions is critical in the design of decentralization policy. The institutionalized channels for citizens’ engagement in decentralization and the ability of the citizens to use them are two critical factors which should be taken into account as design parameters for decentralization programs in any country. Indeed, local government institutions provide the opportunity for effective citizens participation. However, the types of institutional mechanisms that are created in the specific national environment can only be developed over a long period of time. Legislation is important in establishing the institutional framework for citizen participation. The new spaces for citizen input, written into organic laws should be put into practice, and not manipulated as frequently happens in developing countries, by political leaders or technocrats for patronage, or private interest purposes.

The institutional channels through which decentralized development activity occur are of different kinds. Three basic types of institutions are identifiable that also apply to developing countries: quasi-governmental institutions where the authority and other resources of the state are involved, either directly or by delegation; membership or self-help institutions where people have joined together to advance their interests through collective action; and private or quasi-private institutions where decisions can be made by owners on a for-profit basis, or by patrons and contributors on a charitable basis (A. H Hasnat, 2005). These three types of institutions can be divided into local level sets of institutions, namely; local administration (bureaucratic), local government (forum for political representation), membership organizations, co-operatives, service organizations, and private businesses. These distinctions are crucial for evaluating possibilities for successful implementation of decentralization. However, in developing countries these institutions are largely weak.

In developing countries local institutions are largely used in illegitimate ways and are of minimal consequence to the people’s lives because they do not engage them in governance. In fact, decentralized institutions are constructed in such a way that they are easily controlled, manipulated, and exploited by more advantaged sections of the elite and the local community. Some governments, therefore, do not adopt strategies that promote institutionalized collaboration among state and non-state actors in identifying, analyzing and addressing approaches to ensure the success of decentralization. Yet reciprocating “linkages,” rather than autonomy for local institutions, are critical in providing more productive relationships for both center and localities. Lastly, the decentralized institutional frameworks in developing countries that are constructed do not create a significant impact on its efficacy as a tool for engagement.

In fact, the institutions and structures through which responsibilities, power and authority are transferred to local governments should have substantive representativity. Also, for local democracy to prevail, clear responsibilities should be defined for the representatives. In other words, decentralization should neither maintain nor further “ongoing legislative apartheid” by reinforcing the power of unrepresentative local leaders. Indeed, the more resources, responsibilities, and decision-making authority are transferred downwards, the greater the likelihood of institutionalizing participation because local governments can offer citizens benefits for their participation.

However, because the decentralized institutions in developing countries are used by some representatives to advance their personal interests, they have undermined the use of resources and constrained effective participation.

1.2-Creating spaces for participation

The concept “participation” is as old as politics, but it was after the Second World War that it was extended to all spheres of life. Its modern usage came into effect during the 1960s to express what the European Economic Commission once coined “the democratic imperative.” Democratic imperative is defined as the principle that “those who will be substantially affected by decisions made by social and political institutions must be involved in the making of those decisions (A. Bullock, 1977). In international discussions of development policies, “participation” is frequently used to espouse a long socio-historical tradition. Local citizen’s participation in the development process has to do with enhanced capacity to perceive their local needs, formulate their demands, organize to promote their legitimate interests, secure conditions for their improved livelihood and play a major role in the management of their own affairs. Essentially, participation means three things: people’s involvement in decision-making process in implementing programs; people’s sharing in the benefits of development programmes; and people’s involvement in efforts to evaluate such programmes (Olum, 2014).

Besides these three meanings, participation also refers to organized efforts to increase control over resources and regulative institutions in given social institutions, on the part of groups and movements of those people hitherto excluded from such control (A. Pearse & M. Stiefel, 1979). In its broadest sense, participation sensitizes people to increase the receptivity and ability of rural people to respond to development programs and to encourage local initiative. Clothed in the democracy context, the history of democracy is in large part the history

of development of regular and legal channels through which citizens can express their preferences and apply pressure on government to comply with these preferences. Otherwise stated, there is a need for continuous interaction between the state and citizens in a manner that combines social justice and customer focus for citizen empowerment in the dynamics of policy development. Hence, citizens assume the role of “agent” in implementing public policies which depend more on a collective change of behavior than on the legislative authority of the state.

Several measures can be taken to encourage more widespread citizens’ engagement in local governments (Burki, 1999). Four measures will be enumerated that apply to developing countries: adopting ward or neighborhood-based electoral districts. First is the election of, say, Councilors by a ward or a neighborhood to give geographically defined interest groups an assured seat in Council and thus some prospect that their involvement in the political process will produce tangible and beneficial results.

In practice, some elected Councilors have turned out to be oppressors rather than defenders of the interests of their constituents. Second is an open and unblocked electoral system for local elections. This system decreases national party control over elected officials. The electoral process in developing countries produces outcomes that are frequently contested by the losers due to several anomalies such as rigging, violence and intimidation. Third is changing the timing of sub-national elections. The timing of local elections should not coincide with national elections to avoid local government elections being overshadowed, and to discourage clientelist considerations in the selection of candidates for local office (Kaze, 2017). In Cameroon, local elections have not only been held on the same day with national elections but have not been held at all at the right moment. Fourth is the practice of multiparty politics. Under a multiparty system, political parties provide the critical connectivity between the electorate and the political system.

Political parties are an essential instrument for representing political interests, aggregating demands, recruiting and socializing new candidates for office, organizing the electoral competition for power, and forming effective governments. Hence, by organizing class and other interests, political parties can be used in Cameroon as an instrument by which the poor and marginalized groups can gain voice in the formal political system. Party members and leaders have an incentive to get out the vote, create a presence in the community, seek out voters, and respond to voters’ interests. In many African countries, however, ruling parties have suppressed the opposition parties to the extent that they cannot perform their roles effectively. In spite of these constraints, decentralization relies heavily on participation to improve the allocation of services. Decentralization should never be used for engaging the citizens to support central government’s programs, directives, and hegemony, as is the case in developing countries but as a framework for genuine popular control over decision-making processes.

In Cameroon, participation can at best be described as pseudo-participation because the local citizens have little or no significant contribution to the decision-making process. To corroborate this assertion which is typical in Africa, Olum (2004) cautions that “power at the local level is more concentrated, more elitist and applied more ruthlessly against the poor than at the center.” In fact, in developing countries decentralization has been used to support central government rather than to allow for the real sharing of power and the involvement of local communities in policy decisions regarding development within their own surroundings. This is why decentralization has largely failed to empower citizens to engage in decision-making processes so as to ensure that policies are citizen-centric, responsive and sustainable. In most developing countries the failure to engage stakeholders in decentralization has fostered social, political and economic stability. Hence, it is important to take concrete steps such as constitutional reforms or the creation of special mechanisms, to protect minority rights and engage minority groups in participatory decision-making.

However, broad participation can be disruptive. In developing countries local electoral cycles have led to periodic fiscal indiscipline as local leaders try to attract more votes. Hence, assessing how much citizen input constrains local government’s actions provides a starting point for designing decentralization policies. Indeed, these initial conditions determine the extent to which decentralization will increase central government’s responsiveness to citizens and provide guideline for including participation-enhancing measures in decentralization policy. Institutional structures such as regular elections, permanent public-private-partnerships and local referendums are identifiable conditions that may improve the ability of local governments to identify and act upon citizen’s preferences.

Political and Civil Will

Political commitment for decentralization and decentralize cooperation by extension is the *sine-qua-none* of strategy implementation (D. A. Rondinelli, 1982). Yet it is often an element that is frequently missing especially in developing countries. It is the national governments that make the rules under which local governments operate. The power of sub-national interests in the national governments has a key bearing on how the intergovernmental rules are constructed and enforced. Ideally, decentralization would devolve government functions and authority to the local level, allowing citizens to elect their representatives to manage local affairs.

This perspective typically highlights the fact that moving government closer to the people will ease the interactions and information flow between political leaders and the citizens. It has also been the struggle of democracies regarding the question of how to represent regional interests in the national government.

Theoretically, this democratization process aids in formulating a development agenda that corresponds to local needs and opportunities thus improving transparency and accountability in public service delivery. It should be emphasized that local development does not have political color. The behavior of politicians and the local citizens towards social and economic issues will greatly affect, positively or negatively, the outcome of every locality. The constitutions and local dynamics of every country will have a lot to do with success or failure of decentralization programs. Therefore, political leaders should expand the frontiers of democracy by encouraging greater citizen participation in political affairs of their localities and those of the nation.

However, political leadership which behaves more in a partisan manner and is non-committal to decentralization as happens in developing countries, encourages corruption and excludes local citizens in running local governments. In the end, and acting outside the framework of the national constitution, social services are targeted at party members instead of the deserving poor. In some African countries like Cameroon, for example, some voters hold the ruling Cameroon People's Democratic Party (CPDM) party card because it is the surest way to access social services (Kaze 2017). It ought to be noted that in some localities in Cameroon elite capture has cropped-in which has encouraged corruption and lessening of participatory governance.

In the end, the democratic benefits of decentralization have not been fully realized. In this sense, if political leaders are to be effective they have to advocate for civic renewal. This requirement is even more so in developing countries where regimes are somewhat artificial and weak. To rid these countries of democratic deficits in their respective local governments will necessitate the creation of effective participatory institutions and active citizenry to sustain them. The more devolved the political system, and the less clientelistic and confrontational the strategy used by the political. Similarly, like political leaders, there is a need for local citizens to demonstrate the will to participate fully in the participatory institutions so created to implement decentralization. After all, it is the inability to integrate citizens into mainstream development and the poor performance of the state that has given birth to the call for decentralization and good governance in developing countries. Thus, citizens are bound to de-participate in any institutional framework if they know that they are being used to advance the interests of other parties.

In this sense, citizen engagement should neither conflict with representative democracy nor diminish political will. The truth is that decentralization in Cameroon has neither guaranteed more representativeness and accountability nor more democratic government at the local level. Thus failure arises because the local people are not the direct beneficiaries but a means of legitimizing elite power, mostly through patron-client networks. This legitimization is because Cameroon like most developing countries portrays features of neo-liberalism and elite-dominated democratization. No wonder that in most developing countries, patron-client relations between citizens, political organizations, and the state, and a paternalistic and passive political culture that have traditionally predominated have failed to disappear with the advent of decentralization (A. Nickson, 1995). This unhealthy situation has had to happen because the condition of citizenship in these countries has been weak, precarious, and restricted. These impediments should be broken through active citizenship. Until a new type of active citizenship emerges, anomie and rootlessness will continue to predominate to the extent that decentralization will not achieve what it set out to do. Thus, local citizens should have the will to become actively involved only when their vital interests are at stake. However, local democracy should not be seen as a forum for mass decision-making on all issues of public policy. Rather, it should provide a mechanism for interest groups to reach political decisions without resorting to open conflict.

Finally, citizen engagement should not be seen as a panacea to local development and local governance. Proponents of citizen engagement should, therefore, not "romanticize the citizen" (C. Pollitt, 2007) in fact; no one is interested in everything. What citizens care about is that they could participate if they want to and that their 'voice' would be heard if the need arises. While citizen engagement is not in conflict with representative democracy and it is no substitute for political will, an active and dynamic citizenry will be increasingly needed not because political leaders are somewhat lacking, but because the active role of citizens as players in policy formulation and policy implementation will be increasingly central to creating new public goods and services. But sound policy formulation and successful policy implementation demands the right type of capacity.

VII. CONCLUSION

The ambiguity and incongruence that have mired the decentralization process in Cameroon is indeed a disturbing one. Lofty as the project might have been, we have noted that there is a conspicuous lack of will to erect the institutions that sustain decentralized cooperation in Cameroon in particular and Africa at large. To some extent, this lack of will stems from colonial misgivings and orientation especially the French governance policy which provides little space for decentralized collectivities as well as grotesques laws whose essence instead stand on the way to the blossoming of decentralized cooperation.

This nonchalance and complications have fought against decentralization thereby representing a serious challenge both to governance in Cameroon and putting to questions the essence of the 1996 constitutions. Additionally this rendered the democratic progress very feeble if not void of any standards. With an ageing government, sectarian and pugnacious tax policies, delays in designing and implementing projects as well as the prompt control and evaluation development has stagnated thereby creating short-circuits in administrative flow and project execution. All of this have helped to nurture corruption creating a center-periphery power depression complex where the spirit of patriotism and sense of belonging is very weak. This study has offered a state and civil society reform where the bastion of social contract likened in the Hobbesian model does operate for decentralized cooperation to succeed. It holds the state largely responsible for the failure arguing that foreign donors who are the authors of this cooperation have been most often instinctively caught in a trance in the course of this new dispensation. The blue print model proposed can be valid for any other country or society where decentralization has been a travesty.

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