

Local Government and Development: A Guide to the Literature

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I. INTRODUCTION

DURING THE PAST ten years decentralization has returned to the development agenda in a number of countries. Often this return to fashion has arisen as part of structural adjustment packages put together by the World Bank and other donors. In some countries, the motives for change have primarily been generated from within, excessively centralized government being seen as one of the main reasons that development strategies have often failed to achieve their objectives.

This article reviews some of the literature which has appeared in this same decade. Much of the work reviewed is rooted in the concerns of donor agencies since research and consultancy has generally only been possible through the funding provided by the World Bank and other bodies. However, independent scholarship has made its mark too, and is reflected in the review. The literature has not wholly been generated by western academics. It is encouraging to note that practitioners and scholars from Third World countries have also made a contribution to the field.

The article is divided into the following sections:

- Collected Readings
- General Surveys
- Financing Local Government
- International Union of Local Authorities publications
- Journals
- Bibliographies
- Conclusions- what are the gaps?

Notes at the end contain information about ordering some of the publications mentioned in the Guide.

II. COLLECTED READINGS

FOUR OF THE most important books on local government and development, all published in the 1980s, bring together the work of several authors and cover between them over twenty countries as well as exploring general issues. Philip Mawhood (editor) (1983), *Local Government in the Third World: The Experience of Tropical Africa*, (John Wiley, Chichester) contains a number of articles which have stood the test of time quite well. The book begins with a survey chapter by Mawhood which critically discusses a few key concepts, firmly coming to the position that merely strengthening central government's representative officers in the field should not be termed decentralization. This was a somewhat unorthodox view at the time, but it is now more readily accepted that some sort of representation of local communities through a form of council or assembly is at the heart of what decentralization means. In this view, district officers, deputy commissioners and the like are only appendages of the centre, providing the latter with "eyes and ears" at the periphery. Kasfir provides a general survey of how political forces, especially the fear of ethnically based fragmentation, led many African states to either abolish local government or else weaken it drastically. There then follows a series of national case studies. Oyugi's contribution on Kenya focuses mainly on the problems of Nairobi. Written just before the suspension of the Nairobi City Council and its replacement by a centrally appointed commission,⁽¹⁾ his chapter may now be read as a valuable historical background to the removal of local government from Nairobi during the 1980s. Other chapters of interest are Mawhood's on Tanzania, in which he traces the

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several policy shifts Nyerere made in the 1970s and 1980s and Norris's on Sudan in which administrative and political factors are shown to have been in conflict. Reilly's chapter on Botswana outlines the experience of a southern African state where local government has been taken very seriously. He focuses on the rural areas, a valuable corrective to the urban bias which can be detected in some of the literature. West Africa is also well represented in this volume: Harris discusses the case of Ghana in the 1970s; and Gboyega looks at the Nigerian experience, this chapter being a precursor to his book on the subject which appeared in 1987 - *Political Values and Local Government in Nigeria* (Malt-house, Lagos).

The volume edited by Shabbir Cheema and Denis Rondinelli (1983), *Decentralization and Development* (Sage, London) is also still worth consulting. This book has a wider geographical focus than Mawhood's and provides a somewhat more general approach, drawing on the mainstream of North American development administration thinking. Apart from the editors themselves, such well known figures as Leonard and Montgomery contribute to this volume. The case study material presented tends to be international-regional, rather than national, in focus. This enables quite a broad coverage to be achieved. Richard Harris contributes a thoroughly useful chapter on Latin America; John Nellis and Denis Rondinelli do the same for North and East Africa respectively. If there is a geographical bias at all it is towards Asia. Friedman's essay on alternative forms of decentralization within that continent contains references to a wide range of countries, including India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines and China. He looks not only at local government, which normally embraces a number of functions and services, but also at more specialized institutions, e.g. district agricultural committees. In the same volume, Mathur's account of administrative decentralization focuses on planning strategies, and discusses the role of local government along with other institutions such as government departments and parastatal bodies (eg. Malaysia's Federal Land Development Authority - FELDA).

The final chapter of this book sets out some ideas for "improving the implementation of decentralization policies". They include under this heading: the need for more specific and clear objectives; better assessment of existing capacities; improved awareness of levels of po-

litical support for the proposed strategies; careful phasing of programmes; and the creation of "co-ordinating and assistance linkages".

A more recent collection is that edited by Richard E. Stren and Rodney R. White (1989), *African Cities in Crisis: Managing Rapid Urban Growth* (Westview, London and Boulder). The aim of this book is to present the results of a project "designed to study comparative governmental responses" to what is perceived as a major "gap" between the urban poor on the one hand and urban planning and policy making procedures and institutions on the other. This project was funded by Canada's International Development Research Centre. A wide variety of countries are represented in this book, and many of the contributions are authored by African scholars and planners. A wealth of statistics is made available which otherwise would have been inaccessible. Of particular interest is Stren's essay on the general experiences of urban local government in Africa, which usefully covers both the francophone and anglophone areas of the continent (albeit, not the portuguese speaking countries). He highlights some of the financial problems being faced by urban councils (eg. Nairobi and Abidjan), and shows that these problems are linked to political factors and international economic forces.

Several chapters are of particular interest for the student of local government. Onibokun's study of Nigeria has a substantial discussion on local government, but usefully brings in the role of other agencies such as parastatals as well. Attahi contributes a study of Ivory Coast which has a strong focus on the commune system in that country, whilst Kulaba's piece on Tanzania looks at six urban centres and presents a good historical account of the failure of earlier policies (including what was misleadingly called decentralization in the 1970s). The latter chapter also highlights the decline of urban services in Tanzania. The concluding chapter by White is somewhat disappointing in that few clear conclusions for local government reform policy are drawn; the preceding studies are good enough to have facilitated a more detailed set of conclusions.

The volume edited by Jurgen Ruland (1988), *Urban Government and Development in Asia* (Weltforum werlag, Munich) is in many ways a parallel volume to that of Stren and White. It forms part of a three-year (1984-87) project on "Urban Government and Development in South-

East Asia", funded by Foundation Volkswagenwerk, Germany. This project was carried out in collaboration with a number of Asian institutions. The authors are a mixture of planners, economists and political scientists, several of them being nationals of the countries which are the objects of study. There are three general essays - on theory, urban problems, and patterns of physical institutional development. There are two extremely interesting pieces on Malaysia. One of these, by Phang Siew Nooi, is primarily about municipal local government. She concludes that local government legislation in that country "has enhanced state dominance to the extent that local governments have no flexibility, having to adhere uncritically to the policies and instructions of the federal and state governments - thus undermining their own autonomy and capacities" (page 184). Goh Ban Lee looks at urban environmental problems (water, air and noise pollution, soil erosion etc.) and concludes that local government has failed to respond adequately, at least in the case of Penang Island which he discusses in detail. There are also chapters by Acharya on India, focusing more on parastatal agencies than local government (a reflection of Indian reality perhaps), and by Sosmena on the Philippines which looks closely at the limits of local autonomy in that country.

III. GENERAL SURVEYS

BRIAN C. SMITH (1985), *Decentralization: The Territorial Dimension of the State* (George Allen and Unwin, London) is one of the few surveys to include coverage of Third World and First World nations. It also presents the best discussion available of the links between political theory and the various forms of decentralization which have been attempted. Detailed reference is made to the work of John Stuart Mill, for example. Smith includes in this section of the book a review of the argument that local government provides for a form of political education to precede elevation to national politics, an argument commonly heard in the colonial era (especially in the 1950s), but less so now. Quite a broad view is taken of what decentralization means, a chapter being devoted to what he terms "field administration" (or deconcentration), but he avoids falling into the common trap of seeing this strengthening of the civil service presence away from the centre as being synonymous with local government; the distinction between the two types of arrangement is firmly

drawn. The concluding part of the book includes discussion of the links between decentralization and development. He outlines how advocates of greater local autonomy have argued that development can only be achieved by such reforms. He is sceptical about such views without being excessively unsympathetic. For example, he draws on the work of other writers to make the point that in Pakistan and India the local power structures, particularly in rural areas, "may simply play into hands already powerful because of wealth or hereditary status" (page 193). Decentralization, in this view, is not desirable in itself; much depends on the politics, economics and sociology of particular systems and localities.

Another general survey of interest is a World Bank publication; Shabbir Cheema, Denis Rondinelli and John Nellis (1984), *Decentralization in Developing Countries* (World Bank staff working Paper 481, Washington DC). This contains a thorough look at some awkward terminological issues. Their view of decentralization is a very broad one in that they include "delegation" (essentially the use of parastatals as an alternative to civil service departments) and "privatization" within their typology. However, the bulk of the discussion concerns local government. There is a particularly interesting section on the experience of Morocco, where a comparatively positive policy towards decentralization has been adopted, but which has been little documented.

A more recent World Bank publication on local government is Kenneth Davey (1989), *Strengthening Municipal Government* (World Bank, Washington DC). This review draws on the experience of a number of countries, but does not just concentrate on those where the Bank has a high profile. The content reflects the author's substantial experience throughout the world, especially in Africa and Asia. There are five chapters, the first dealing with objectives of municipal government, which both echoes and updates the concerns expressed in the Bank paper by Rondinelli, Cheema and Nellis five years earlier. Davey stresses the objectives of greater efficiency and improved mobilization of resources (especially from tax payers and users of municipal services). The substance of this publication is contained in the second chapter, which lists a number of institutional factors and goes on to discuss them in detail. The author uses the following headings:

- the structure of local government (eg.

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boundaries, scale)

- functions (eg. questions of range, demarcation and suitability)
- internal management (committees, "cabinets" etc.)
- staffing (including establishment control, training)
- financing (the issues of "buoyancy", charging, loans etc.)

Other chapters look at accountability (both from the points of view of electorate and central government) and what Davey terms "external intervention", which is largely about central government guidance and control. There is a very short chapter of conclusions which highlights several key points derived from the preceding analysis. Included here are: access to buoyant sources of funding (ie. those that are able to adapt to changing circumstances); regular accountability; clear foci of authority; development of criteria for central government transfers to municipal government; development of service standards; improved contract management; and coherent training plans in support of reform strategies. He also lists several qualities which effective strategy implementation requires: persistence and patience; appropriate technology (but he is not anti-computer); and political sensitivity, by which he means the need for appreciation of the political risks policy makers may have to accept, since "municipal administration is the most politically exposed level of government" (page 69).

Hubert J. B. Allen (1990), *Cultivating the Grass Roots* (International Union of Local Authorities and All India Institute of Local Self Government, Bombay) is not just a survey, it is also an argument for local government on both moral and developmental grounds. This book advocates with more confidence than most of the literature reviewed in this article that local government can promote development if it has the autonomy and resources to do so, and if it is adequately in touch with the communities it is intended to serve. A very clear presentation of the potential benefits of decentralization is provided, but the author is aware of the difficulties which are liable to be encountered. Allen was previously Director of Training at the International Union of Local Authorities, a post which enabled him to acquire substantial knowledge of various systems; the content of the book reflects this fact. He comes out particularly strongly against the adoption of colonially received models of local government, particularly since both the British and French governments

are currently seen as over-centralized and rather unsuccessful systems. His position is that the objectives for Third World countries should be "the model based on the concerned dynamism of the local community", suitably adapted to the circumstances of the country in question. As well as informative chapters on size, accountability, finance, personnel and planning, there are some useful appendices: the IULA World Wide Declaration on Local Self-Government (1985) is reproduced, as is a check list for local government planning and implementation, taken from a 1975 West African regional seminar.

IV. FINANCING LOCAL GOVERNMENT

THERE ARE FEW general surveys of this topic available. Probably the most useful is Kenneth Davey (1983), *Financing Regional Government* (John Wiley, Chichester). However, much of the literature on local government includes material on financial issues alongside discussions on such matters as central supervision, politics, staffing and managerial efficiency. In addition, two national case studies published in the 1980s focus on finance for local government but do so with an approach which analyses general and conceptual issues as well as nationally specific ones. Coincidentally, both concern South-East Asian states.

The collection of studies edited by Roy Bahl and Barbara D. Miller (1983), *Local Government Finance in the Third World: A Case Study of the Philippines* (Praeger) is concerned with different aspects of the Philippines. Most of the research being reported appears to have been carried out by Syracuse University's Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, under contract to the US Government's Agency for International Development (US AID). Some of the analysis is quite technical and thus inaccessible to the non-specialist who lacks a grounding in Econometrics. However, there is much to be gleaned from several of the chapters. Of particular interest is the chapter on local government enterprises by Greytak and Diokno. This is an aspect of local government which rarely makes an appearance in the literature. As far as the Philippines case is concerned, there are success stories to be told in this area (eg. catering and agro-industry enterprises); this somewhat unusual experience further enhances the value of the chapter. Other chapters of interest are on property taxation, credit, licensing and prescriptions for strengthening performance. The chapter on

strengthening performance argues the need for two closely related sets of measures: greater efficiency in local government bodies themselves; and a less restrictive attitude on the part of central government.

Nick Devas (1989), *Financing Local Government in Indonesia* (Ohio University Press, Athens) is another volume of contributions by several authors. It is in other ways a parallel volume to that on the Philippines in that it is a highly detailed case study. It contains a useful account of some general principle, as in chapter two which looks at such reform objectives as simplification and increasing revenues as well as presenting in clear terms basic concepts such as yield and equity. Kenneth Davey contributes a chapter on central - local relations, as does Anne Booth (without much discernible overlap). The latter author advocates an approach which she terms "sweeping decentralization", eg. giving villages greater responsibility for primary education and basic health (page 209) but sensibly also argues for a measure of central control to set well defined standards of service. Brian Binder's chapter on financial management is also useful; he outlines criteria such as simplicity, completeness and adaptability. He also includes a useful, albeit brief, section on training needs for improved financial management. The book concludes with a vast amount of data (18 pages of it within the appendices), and there is a useful compilation of references.

V. INTERNATIONAL UNION OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES (IULA) PUBLICATIONS

UNTIL RECENTLY, IULA provided a valuable service for local government through a variety of publications. It is unfortunate that much of this activity has now ceased as a result of management decisions related to IULA's financial circumstances. As a result, the updating of a publication now over 20 years old (S. Humes and E. Martin (1969), *The Structure of Local Government: A Comparative Survey of 81 Countries*) has been suspended; a new edition of this excellent survey would be an invaluable asset for practitioners and scholars alike. However, some updating has been done in the form of booklets, an example being IULA (1986), *The Structure of Local Government in 20 Arab Countries* (The Hague), which contains brief (two-four page) profiles, focusing on historical background as

well as structures. In addition, functions are listed and reference made to the main items of legislation in each country. Although this publication does not contain any in-depth analysis, it is useful for reference purposes, bearing in mind that very little literature on these states is available in English (there appears to be rather more in Arabic).

Another IULA publication of note is Dele Olowu (1988), *African Local Governments as Instruments of Economic and Social Development* (the Hague) which not only argues for better resourced local governments with greater and more defined powers, but also has some useful empirical analysis. Both francophone and anglophone Africa are examined, with reviews of the colonial period, together with case studies of post-independence patterns of change and attempts to introduce reform. Chapter four, entitled "The Current State of Local Government in Africa", is a report based on a questionnaire administered in 1986. Roughly 40 per cent of African countries were covered in this exercise, the data being provided by ministries of local government, local government associations and training institutions. The report focuses on six issues: the structure of local government; mechanisms of control; local government functions; finance and development planning; personnel management; and support institutions for local government (eg. credit, training centres). Although some of the data presented may be of dubious value, this report contains much quality information for reference purposes. Unsurprisingly, the author concludes that "Local governments in Africa are generally tied to the apron strings of their national governments" (page 68). He is guardedly optimistic about what the future may hold; much depends on the policies towards decentralization adopted by central government.

The decline of IULA's publishing function led to the unfortunate disappearance of its quarterly journal, *Planning and Administration*. It served a particularly valuable service in providing an outlet for contributions by both academics and practitioners. Two good examples which give a flavour of the journal are two special issues which appeared just before its demise - one on Africa, the other on Asia and the Pacific. The African issue (Vol. 14, No. 1, Spring 1987) has a general theme chapter by Philip Mawhood which may be considered as an update of the discussion contained in his book of four years earlier. Several fresh points are made, of which two particularly stand out. The first is the need

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to consider the effects of economic recession (resulting in a much tighter financial base for local **and** central government). The second is the continuing importance of traditional institutions such as chieftaincy, a subject given more prominence than in the earlier volume. There are numerous case study articles (Botswana, Lesotho, Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia, Liberia, Sudan, Uganda) and comparisons are made between anglophone and francophone Africa, and between Africa and S.E. Asia. However, North Africa is excluded.

The Asia and Pacific issue (Vol. 16, No. 2, Autumn 1989) has a similar structure except First World nations are included. Countries covered by case study articles are India, South Korea, Indonesia, Australia, Japan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Saudi Arabia, New Zealand, Thailand, China and Malaysia. Several of the authors focus on rural development (eg. Slater on Sri Lanka, Boyer and Ahn on South Korea), whilst others have a more urban focus (eg. Kopardekar on India).

These two special issues are not the only ones worth consulting. Over the years, *Planning and Administration* contained much material related to local government and the problems of development.

VI. JOURNALS

THERE ARE SEVERAL journals which contain articles on public administration in Third World countries. However, none of these are devoted exclusively to local government topics. Probably the journal which contains the most relevant material on a regular basis is *Public Administration and Development* (John Wiley, Chichester). Almost every issue contains at least one article on local government or some other aspect of decentralization. To take three issues at random:

Volume 7, No. 4 (October-December 1987) contains four articles, all of which are of relevance. D.M. Hill writes on the case of Singapore, reminding us that even in city states the case can be made for institutions through which local communities can be consulted by the centre, even if it is not considered essential that substantial powers be devolved to them. M.M. Khan focuses on the politics of reform and reorganization in Bangladesh. As part of his analysis, he discusses ways in which the national government after the military coup of 1983 exercised control over the *upazilas* (localities). He analyzes the legislation in some detail. Downs looks at regional policy in Nicaragua between 1979

and 1984, the period immediately after the overthrow of the Somoza dictatorship. Part of this policy consisted of attempts to develop what he terms "sub-national government". He examines the various relationships between three types of organization which became important for regional policy during this period: the central government agencies, local government and "popular organizations" (many of the latter also known as Sandinista Defence Committees). Finally, Sanwal looks at district planning in India. Focusing on Agra District, Uttar Pradesh, much of his analysis concentrates on the roles played by state government officials such as district officers. However, local government is not entirely neglected, reference being made to the arrangements by which *gram sabhas* (village assemblies) were consulted as part of the plan process.

Volume 9, No. 2 (April-May 1989) has two articles related to decentralization and development. Collins reviews the case of Colombia. His main concern is with the phenomenon he terms "institutional proliferation". He shows that the creation of new agencies with semi-autonomous powers has had some negative effects on local government, especially as far as the functions of water and sanitation are concerned. He is sceptical, but not devoid of optimism, about what the future may hold for local government. Full cognizance is taken of the political factors involved here. On a somewhat sobering note, he makes the point that "the future of local government will also depend on the outcome of current violence in the country" (page 145). Slater and Watson examine reform strategies in the Indian state of Karnataka, focusing on local government innovation since 1987. Interestingly, this case also highlights political factors, but from another angle: the Karnataka Government of 1987 was controlled by the Janata Party, the opponents of the ruling Congress Party. The various reforms are discussed in detail, from *gram sabha* level at the base up to the *zilla parishad* which is responsible for district planning. The possible implications for relationships between various levels of government are examined (eg. what will come of the hitherto vital position of collector?)

Volume 10, No. 4 (October-December 1990) has articles on Zimbabwe by Mutizwa-Mangiza and on Kenya by Wallis. Both look at the attempts being made to decentralize planning to the districts in these two countries. Both articles give prominence to the role of local government, whilst also discussing central government involvement through field agencies and officials.

In Kenya, a noticeable tendency exists to more closely link the two forms of decentralized institution. The Zimbabwean pattern is slightly different since there was a preoccupation in the 1980s with the need to amalgamate the racially defined councils inherited from the settler government. However, the issue confronting both countries now seems essentially the same. How best to design a decentralized planning system under central government control and at the same time permit an adequate degree of autonomy for local government?

Development and Change (Sage, London) does not carry articles on local government and development as frequently as *Public Administration and Development*. However, three issues in 1989 and 1990 presented a debate between various viewpoints. In *Volume 20/1* (1989), Rondinelli, McCullough and Johnson present a political-economy framework for the study of decentralization policies in Third World countries. In line with the usage adopted by Rondinelli and others earlier in the 1980s, these authors adopt a broad meaning for decentralization so that it encompasses not only privatization but also market based forms of resource allocation as advocated by some "new right" theorists. This somewhat eccentric use of language, however, should not deter readers as their framework is otherwise valuable. The variables they point to include: characteristics of local goods and services; the characteristics of users; institutional structures; alternative financing arrangements; organizational alternatives for decentralization (including privatization, deregulation of services and deconcentration of bureaucracy); institutional arrangements for service delivery (local government is seen as one among many here, the others being private businesses, "informal" enterprise, contracting, voluntary bodies, co-operatives, self-help groups, public enterprises, market surrogates and central government units); and implementation issues. Other dimensions included in the model are: programme design, policy dialogue, evaluation and technical assistance. It is, in sum, a fairly comprehensive model. Even if it does not prescribe what to do, it does help the analyst identify a wide range of variables, some of which may turn out to be relevant for local government as such.

David Slater presents a critique of the Rondinelli approach in *Volume 20/3* (1989). Taking into account the marked contribution this approach has made to the literature, Slater points out that there is a close link between Rondinelli

and his colleagues on the one hand and the World Bank and the US Agency for International Development (US AID) on the other. The problem with this way of analyzing decentralization, Slater argues, is that the issues tend to be viewed in non-political terms without sufficient attention being paid to the contradictions and antagonisms which exist in so many states where decentralization policies have ostensibly been adopted. Much of Slater's critique is based on Latin American experience (eg. Cuba and Peru) and on marxist political theory (eg. Gramsci). Refreshingly, he does not assume the desirability of decentralization in the way so many other authors do. He shares Brian Smith's scepticism (in the book referred to earlier) about blanket/global prescriptions of the "only autonomy will do" variety; centralization may be justified if it leads to greater social or territorial equality.

Joel Samoff in *Vol. 21/3* (1990) makes a further contribution to this debate. His views echo those of Slater, but largely without the latter's theoretical commentary. The thrust of this article is to emphasise the need to see decentralization in terms of power relationships and in relation to outcomes. The value or otherwise of a given decentralization policy must be judged by asking the basic political scientist's question: who gets what? Samoff illustrated his point by looking at the connections between racial policies and decentralization in two national settings - USA and South Africa. In the USA he points out that local school boards and/or other local government bodies have often reflected white privilege and have therefore been major obstacles to improved black education. To challenge racial discrimination in such cases, it may be necessary to demand national government intervention. In other settings an opposite perspective favouring decentralization can be appropriate, eg. where black dominated localities may be prevented from bringing about change by conservatism at state or national level. In the case of South Africa, proposals for regional and urban decentralization may prove to be devices for protecting white interests and cultivating "collaborative political leadership" within black communities. Again, decentralization may not be the way forward if one's priority is to eliminate discrimination based on race. What is important here is that decentralization should not be assessed as an abstract principle (or set of principles); rather it needs to be judged in relation to its results within the various communities it is supposed to serve.

VII. BIBLIOGRAPHIES

MOST OF THE items outlined in this article include a substantial listing of references, mostly of material which is reasonably accessible. Studies based on field research may of course provide references to official documents which are more difficult to obtain. Stren and White's book contains numerous African references. Also useful is Richard Stren with Claire Letemendia (1986), *Coping with Rapid Urban Growth in Africa: An Annotated Bibliography* (Montreal, McGill University).⁽²⁾ Chapter one of Ruland's book of readings on Asia has quite a lengthy bibliography.

For the earlier literature, two Commonwealth Secretariat publications are an invaluable source. In 1983, the Secretariat published *Decentralization for Development : a Select Annotated Bibliography*. This was followed by a supplement in 1986 (same title as the 1983 volume). Both bibliographies were compiled by Diana Conyers, herself a major contributor to the literature in this field. For example, the studies and surveys carried out by authors like Hicks, Wraith, Maddick and Cowan 20-30 years ago may be found to be of historical interest, as well as possible contemporary relevance. Conyers not only lists the material; most items are described in one or two paragraphs as well. Both the main volume and the supplement include short essays by the editor in which she pinpoints issues of importance. For example, her essay in the 1986 volume comments on the frequent failure of central governments to decentralize financial resources. It also speaks of the confusion that often prevails when trying to decentralize development planning and criticizes governments for failing to pay sufficient attention to the details of decentralization.

VIII. CONCLUSIONS - WHAT ARE THE GAPS?

HOW COMPREHENSIVE IS the literature that has been reviewed in this article? As far as work in English is concerned, Asian and African experiences have tended to dominate. Throughout these two continents, a shared view seems to be reflected in the literature. On the one hand, more and more governments see decentralization as a way forward, as a desirable policy. On the other hand, the implementation of that policy has mostly failed to live up to expectations. The literature then explores the reasons for failure, drawing our attention to such issues

as excessive central control of finance and inadequately radical approaches to legislative reform.

However, there do appear to be some significant gaps in the literature. These may be worth mentioning briefly, if only to encourage researchers to attempt to fill them. First, it is interesting that the roles of donor agencies in encouraging, planning, implementing and financing decentralization have been neglected. As noted, donors have often commissioned the consultancy and research on which much of the literature is based. What is missing, however, is any thorough study and assessment of what the donors have been doing and with what sorts of results.⁽³⁾ Several countries can serve as examples of local government reform being donor led, or at least heavily donor influenced (eg. Botswana, Kenya, Lesotho). Studies of the character and consequences of these relationships of leadership and influence could prove of considerable interest.

Second, the literature does not yet reflect the efforts that some governments are making to focus on what has been termed "secondary urbanization". This approach has been floated frequently for the past 20 or so years, without significantly permeating through to the policy makers. In several countries, the need to encourage growth in smaller and medium sized towns is now more apparent than ever as the Nairobi and Bangkoks become explosively congested. How does local government enter this picture? What can we expect it to contribute?

Third, current concerns with the environment have yet to find their way into the local government literature. Such important issues as water supplies, public health and pollution are often local government functions which need to be given greater prominence in the literature.

Fourth, not enough has been done so far in the human resources area. Financial resources have generally been found to be of more interest to researchers and consultants than questions of staffing. However, it is surely important that we learn more about training needs, questions of motivation under conditions of scarcity which so often prevail and other matters of this sort. It may also be of interest to examine how cultural factors have affected human resource management in local government.

Fifth, the recent donor advocacy of privatization and liberalization may well have had an impact on local government, but this is a topic which has been researched scarcely at all so far. Most research on privatization has focused on the transfer of ownership of public corporations

and state companies. What has been happening at local government level?

The final gap concerns South Africa, the most urbanized country in Africa. Local government is bound to be a major subject of debate as the reform agenda develops. Foreign scholars have hitherto preferred to avoid South Africa, partly because of sanctions and partly because of its unique circumstances. They now may have an important role to play in assisting those who are the participants in those debates, and to supplement the studies now being produced by South Africans themselves.

IX. SOME ADDRESSES FOR ORDERING PUBLICATIONS

Planning and Administration, International Union of Local Authorities.

A few copies remain of the recent special issues on the three Third World regions and IULA has kindly agreed to make these available to readers of E & U at a concessionary price; send an international money order or pound sterling cheque drawn on a US or European bank account to Human Settlements Programme, IIED, 3 Endsleigh Street, London WC1H 0DD, UK; price for each issue: £5.00 (orders from Third World); £8.00 (order from elsewhere).

Special issue on *Latin America*, Vol. 12, No. 2, Autumn 1985.

Special issue on *Africa*, Vol. 2, No. 1, Spring 1987.

Special issue on *Asia and the Pacific*, Vol. 16, No. 2, Autumn 1989.

Hubert Allen (1990), *Cultivating the Grass Roots* - available from Dr. H. Kopardekar, All India Institute of Local Self Government, 11 Horniman Circle, Bombay 400 023, India.

Public Administration and Development, back issues write to Subscriptions Department, John Wiley, Baffins Lane, Chichester, Sussex PO19 1UD, U.K.

Development and Change, back issues write to Sage Publications, 28 Banner Street, London EC1Y 8QE, U.K.

World Bank publications. Most nations/regions have local distributors for World Bank publications which allow payment in the local currency. For complete list of publications and distributors, write for a copy of Index of Publications, Publications Sales Unit, the World Bank, 1818 H Street NW, Washington DC 20433, U.S.A.

Commonwealth Secretariat. For copies of *Decentralization for Development: a Select Annotated Bibliography*, write to Ms. Ivy Bloodworth, Commonwealth Secretariat, Marlborough House, Pall Mall, London SW1, U.K. (this publication is free).

NOTES

1. See paper on "Urban Management in Kenya" by Ndinda Bubba and Davinder Lamba, pp. 37-59 for more details.

2. More details about this annotated bibliography are included in Book Notes, see page 166.

3. One little-known source of information about the quantitative and qualitative role of donor agencies in human settlements (including local government) are the biennial reports prepared by the Executive Director of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements on aid and technical assistance to human settlements. See, for instance, UNCHS (1991), "Financial and other assistance provided to and among developing countries for human settlements - report of the Executive Director", Biennial Report presented to the Commission on Human Settlements at their meeting in Harare, April (which includes a special section on urban management) and UNCHS (1989), "Financial and other assistance provided to and among developing countries for human settlements - report of the Executive Director", Biennial Report presented to the Commission on Human Settlements at their meeting in Cartagena, April. Write to Publications Unit, UNCHS (Habitat), P. O. Box 30030, Nairobi, Kenya.