Beiträge zur 3. Kölner Afrikawissenschaftlichen Nachwuchstagung
(KANT III)

Herausgegeben von

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Pipes, Institutions and Politics: Political Dynamics of the Water Sector Reform in Tanzania

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In 2010 the United Nations declared access to water and sanitation a human right. However, in Tanzania at least half of the population is still deprived of basic water and sanitation services, with devastating consequences for economic and human development. Low performance of the water sector is rooted in a lack of effective institutions and organizations delivering water services. Although in 2002 the Government of Tanzania adopted a progressive water policy to improve service provision, the outcome of the reforms has not yet lived up to expectations. This article argues that it is not only the lack of qualified personnel or finance, but rather political factors which matter for the implementation of a water policy and the delivery of water services. Using an empirical case study, the article will show that organisational politics and micropolitical conflicts triggered by institutional changes and weak commitment have undermined implementation of current water sector reforms in Tanzania. Therefore, it is recommended that "technical" cooperation agencies consider the political environment of their interventions and apply a process-oriented approach to policy advice. Fixing pipes and implementing institutional changes depends on getting the politics of reforms right.

1. Introduction

"Free water for all" was the vision of the Government of Tanzania when the East African country became independent in 1961. However, the ambitious plans, policies and programmes of the Government to provide all Tanzanians with clean drinking water have never been realised. Today, more than 50% of the population still do not have access to clean drinking water and safe sanitation. The Millennium Development Goal (MDG) to halve the population without access to water and sanitation will not be achieved. The consequences are devastating for human development. Unregulated use of water resources and disposal of wastewater threaten ecological systems. Although the country is one of the best endowed with water resources in

Sub-Saharan Africa, only 6% of the annual renewable water resources are actually used. This points to the fact that water scarcity is not primarily caused by physical and hydrological conditions. Rather it is rooted in flaws in the institutions that provide water services and regulate the use of water resources. Consequently, in 2002 the Tanzanian Government adopted a new National Water Policy (NAWAPO). NAWAPO provides for a far-reaching institutional reform and restructuring of the water administration, and is supplemented by one of the largest water sector investment programmes on the African continent.

However, despite comprehensive technical and financial support from the international community and the pro-reform rhetoric of decision-makers, there are indications that the actual implementation of the new institutional framework of the sector is deficient. According to development agencies the new institutional framework exists largely "on paper". The new role and responsibilities of the Ministry of Water and Irrigation (MoWI) have not yet been internalised, and almost a decade into the reform process, the sector is still "underperforming". The success of the reform project and sustainability of the investments seem to be at risk (Kanyabwoya 2009).

A closer look at the reform process reveals a large gap between reformers' "talk" and actions, between policies and practice, between vision and reality. This article argues that understanding this gap requires looking at the political dynamics and interactions in the course of water sector reform in Tanzania. To fully understand the ongoing reforms, political factors such as policy ownership and commitment, stakeholder relations and micropolitical conflicts in the water administration must be taken into account.

2. The Water-Politics Nexus: Who gets what water, when and how?

2.1 The Water Crisis – A Crisis of Governance

The water sector reform in Tanzania responds on the national level to water-related challenges which indeed transcend the country's borders. The fact that almost one billion people lack access to drinking water and more than two billion are deprived of basic sanitary services has provoked the notion of a global "water crisis". According to hydrological models, climate change will have a strong impact on the temporal and spatial availability of freshwater resources. In the year 2050, between two and seven billion people in at least 48 countries

around the globe are predicted to suffer from periodic or chronic water stress[1] (Dobner 2010:53, IPCC 2008).

For decades approaches to cope with the water crisis were dominated by the "hydraulic mission". In order to improve water supply systems in low-income countries, water experts and policy-makers focused their efforts on technocratic approaches such as large-scale infrastructure projects, training of personnel, capital injections and technology transfer (Allan 2003). However, despite heavy investments the supply situation worsened in many countries. In Sub-Saharan Africa today, more than 340 million people do not have access to clean water, and approximately 500 million live without sanitation (UNESCO 2009:xii). The decay of water infrastructure, causing water losses ranging from 40% to 60% in many African countries, and decreasing performance of public utilities triggered a debate on how to improve the delivery of water services in the 1990s.

While water service provision had traditionally been perceived as a public responsibility, the involvement of international private operators, building on the Dublin Principles (1992), was seen as the only means to enhance its quality and efficiency during the 1990s. However, attempts to privatise water utilities in metropolies did not lead to the expected service improvements. Rather, they caused high losses for the companies, and negative social externalities led to widespread public resistance to private sector participation (PSP). Despite Dublin, private investments today play a marginal role in the sector, with international companies withdrawing from the global water market. The PSP "fashion" seems to have passed. Nowadays public utilities provide more than 90% of the world's drinking water, and it seems likely that the state will continue to play the key role in the water sector in the future (Tropp 2007).

Since the Bonn Freshwater Conference in 2001, there has been an evolution in the water community that acknowledges the important role that good water governance plays for the provision of water services (Böge 2006). The attention has refocused on the public sector and its institutions, and a new consensus has evolved from the notion that the "water crisis is essentially a crisis of governance" (UNESCO 2003:370).[2]Good water governance implies trans-

[1] According to the human water stress index, water stress is defined as a situation in which an annual average of less than 1,700 m^3 of freshwater is available per capita (Dobner 2010:50).
[2] The perception that "bad water governance" and ineffective institutions, rather than a physical water scarcity is

parency, participation, equity and accountability in service provision. Its consolidation requires institutions that structure interactions of stakeholders such as water users and service providers, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and administrators in accordance with these principles. Water institutions comprise all formal and informal rules and norms that regulate the control and distribution of and access to water resources. Whenever the formal institutions in the water sector – policy, law and administration – are subject to conscious change within a given constitutional framework, we speak of an institutional reform (Saleth/Dinar 1999, Sehring 2009).

In order to respond to bad corporate governance of water utilities, African governments including Tanzania embarked on water sector reforms since the 1990s (Richards et al. 2008).[3]The governance problems in the water sector of many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere include heavily centralised water bureaucracies, a legacy of colonialism and fragmented responsibilities that undermine the maintenance of facilities. A lack of transparency and accountability in the operations and corruption lead to poor performance of utilities.

At the urging of donors three complementary concepts constitute the centrepiece of most water policies in the region: New Public Management (NPM), Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) and decentralisation. IWRM can be understood as a process that promotes the co-ordinated development and management of water, land and related resources in order to maximise economic and social welfare in an equitable manner without compromising the sustainability of vital ecosystems (GWP 2000). Principles of IWRM, such as economic efficiency, stakeholder participation, and subsidiarity profoundly change the way water resources are managed. Additionally, decentralisation implies the transfer of power, resources and the responsibility for service delivery from a central administrator to lower levels. While higher levels of government retain a regulatory role or facilitate funding, ownership of water schemes is tobe enhanced through local responsibility for their management. NPM aims at increasing the efficiency of water administrations by substituting hierarchical structures with management approaches from the private sector. The most important changes would include the autonomy of utilities and cost-recovery in the operations of service provid-

at the core of the water crisis in Sub-Saharan Africa, is supported by the figures on water use. Out of the 5,400 billion m^3 freshwater available on the African continent, only 4% is actually used (Hepworth 2009).

[3] Additional factors causing low water sector performance in many countries are public underinvestment, population growth and rapid urbanisation (Richards et al. 2008).

ers. Additionally the three functions of policy design by a ministry, service provision by utilities and communities, and regulation and sector monitoring by an independent authority are separated (Schwartz 2008).

The implementation of numerous water institutional reforms in low-income countries indicates that the well-known slogan of the donor community – "institutions matter" – has finally reached policy-makers in the water sector. The World Bank formulated the equivalent advice to donors and governments: "Do not fix the pipes, fix the institutions that fix the pipes" (World Bank 2004:32). The statement seems to recognise rhetorically the importance of institutions in the water sector, i.e. policies, laws and administrations. Nevertheless, it reveals a misleading assumption that institutions can be "fixed", "repaired" or "designed" just as easily as technical facilities and leaking pipes.

2.2 Water Sector Reforms as Micropolitical Games

In contrast to the notion that institutions can be "fixed", which still influences many decision-makers and policyadvisors in the water sector, experience of water sector reforms has shown that dysfunctional institutions are far more difficult to repair than pipes (Tropp 2007, UNESCO 2006). Despite progressive policies, plans and laws existing on paper, many water reforms are actually never implemented. Water supply problems persistin a great number of countries (Mollinga 2007). Analysts observe "that the water sector appears to be largely littered with well-intended and rationalistic reforms that have failed to fully appraise the context of their implementation" (Molle 2008:147). Indeed, the implementation of water policy is a highly political affair. Institutional reforms, which are intended to make water management more "integrated", "transparent" and "equitable" are by no means neutral; labels such as "participation" and "efficiency" tend to conceal the disputed nature of institutional changes. Institutional arrangements depend on the interactions and interests of numerous actors in the triangle of donors, civil society and the state, and are ultimately subject to dynamic bargaining processes.

As mentioned above, the state and public sector are considered to play a key role for the future development of the water sector and therefore for successful reforms. However, the state is by no means a unitary actor, which simply implements a policy. Rather, it can be un-

derstood as an entity composed of a great number of actors, organisations and individuals alike. These actors possess diverging preferences that are constituted by interests, norms and identities. Interests of actors – which are the core of this case study – can be differentiated into material interests (income, goods, knowledge, improvements in workplace conditions), symbolic interests (language, mutual acknowledgement) and social interests (status, influence). Actors pursue these interests by using their respective resources for action, such as power[4], control of funds or information, rights/entitlements, formal competencies or trust. Accordingly, the implementation of a reform programme can be understood as a result of strategic interactions of various actors in a policy arena. In their dynamic interactions individuals and organisations bargain, act unilaterally or cooperate with each other.

The study of public administrations has long been dominated by Weber's legal-rational model which views the bureaucracy as an apolitical instrument implementing decisions made in the political system (Weber 1972). However, in the context of neo-patrimonial regimes[5] and weak bureaucracies, the administration cannot be viewed as a transparent, rational and efficient apparatus in the Weberian sense (Anagwe 1994, Chabal/Daloz 2001). In such environments, policy implementation "is far more than a mechanical translation of goals into routine procedures; it involves fundamental questions about conflict, decision-making, and 'who gets what' in a society" (Grindle 1980:3, Lasswell 1958). Behind the façade of a rational bureaucracy, administrative divisions, implementing agencies and the individuals working in them interact in a sphere of informal, bureaucratic politics. Although such interactions, patterns of action and procedures are not codified through written rules, they are crucial for the functioning of the administrative apparatus. While the modification of formal institutions may be a relatively simple exercise, informal norms and patterns governing the behaviour of bureaucrats can be very persistent. Informal institutions do not have a coordinating centre and emerge from complex social dynamics.

In contrast to reforms that have a sector-wide scope, reorganisations take place on the meso-level of organisations and affect directly the micro-level of individuals. Reorganisationsand restructuring of the water administration are an essential component of IWRM, decen-

[4] According to Weber (1972), power is the ability of an actor to realise his or her will in a social action, even against the will of other actors.
[5] The two most important characteristics of neo-patrimonial regimes are clientelism and patronage-networks as well as endemic corruption (Chabal/Daloz 2001, Erdmann/Engel 2006, Köllner 2005, Sen 1999).

tralisation and NPM. They lead to innovations in structures, rules and procedures, or a new organisational culture. Thus, the daily execution of tasks and the usual interactions of staff are subject to profound change. In contrast to the pre-reform era, which is dominated by the logic of routines characterised by continuity, security and incremental change, reorganisations represent an innovation game: Resources and power are redistributed between organisations, divisions and staff members. The structural conflict between "innovations" and "routines" triggers and intensifies micropolitical dynamics between proponents and opponents of change. While promoters of change accept or actively support a change process, opponents try to reshape, delay or undermine the extent of an organisational innovation. *Micropolitics* exists because bureaucratic rules provide leeway for the contingent action of individuals, alliances and interest groups in the "shadow" of the formal structure of organisations. Institutional reforms are particularly likely to meet micropolitical resistance: not only incentives and interests of individuals, groups or organisations are at stake, but also their basic values and identities (Crozier/Friedberg 1979, Klenk/Nullmeier 2004, Lowndes 2005).

Mollinga (2007) emphasises the "mental maps" (mindset) and the "vested interests" of water managers as well as "institutional rigidity" as potential barriers to change in water administrations. At the level of *individuals*, knowledge about new structures and the will/motivation to accept changes are crucial for their reaction to change. The will is determined by personal, ideological, technical or political reasons. Thereby, change resistance is not necessarily illegitimate, but can also result from valid concerns about the "fashions of consultants" (Hauschildt/Salomo 2008:169, Therkildsen 2001). With respect to *administrative barriers*, the persistence of established habits, knowledge and procedures, which is typical of large bureaucracies, can frustrate change. Mollinga points out that water managers have not yet internalised the political and social dimensions of water governance and still maintain their preoccupation with the physical/technical dimension of water management: "Water bureaucracies seem to be extremely resistant to change" (Mollinga 2007:15).

Therefore, in order to increase the chances of water reforms succeeding, UNESCO (2006:9) recommends political sensitivity during the implementation of reforms, and close and constant attention to political-economic interactions and social-institutional factors affecting water sector reforms. Building on that recommendation, the following case study analyses the policy legacy of the Tanzanian water sector and the status quo of the current

sector reform. The analysis illustrate show political dynamics and interactions empirically influence the implementation of the Tanzanian water sector reform. The qualitative research design[6] comprised interviews with key informants as well as the analysis of documents (Scharpf 2000). In total 31 interviews with staff members of the water administration, development agencies, NGOs as well as experts were conducted in Dar es Salaam in 2009.

3. Political Dynamics of the Tanzanian Water Sector Reform

3.1 Policy Legacy and Status Quo of the Reform Process

The legacy of Tanzanian water policy dates back to the 1930s. During that period the administration of the British Protectorate started constructing water supply networks, with an emphasis on urban areas of Tanganyika. After independence, the new Government shifted the focus of infrastructure development to rural areas and set the goal to supply clean water to all citizens by the year 1991. However, the authorities constantly neglected non-engineering aspects of water schemes. Personnel were not trained to maintain facilities such as sewage treatment plants, distribution networks and water works. Competencies were fragmented between numerous institutions. Due to the top-down approach, users did not develop local ownership for the facilities, which led to the decay of infrastructure (Therkildsen 1988, URT 1995). The promise of free water for all citizens and the Rural Water Supply Programme of the 1970s served the Government as a political instrument to symbolise national progress and thus to generate popular support for the ruling Revolutionary Party CCM.

In order to respond to the worsening water supply situation, Tanzania's Government adopted its first National Water Policy in 1991. Although the policy prescribed a number of changes, it did not alter the centralised structure of the sector. New laws were not enforced and access to water was still managed "by force, by power, by influence".[7] According to Hepworth (2009), a lack of political will and commitment undermined the implementation of the policy, which was, in the words of a consultant, "not implemented even 25 per cent".[8]

[6] The qualitative research approach and case study design imply a number of methodological constraints regarding the validity and comparability of the data as well as in terms of interaction effects resulting from the face-to-face communication situation (Bogner 2005, Gläser/Laudel 2006).
[7] Interview with an NGO representative, 21/10/2009.
[8] Interview with a consultant, 15/10/2009.

Therefore, a number of donors threatened to withdraw. They saw their investments, which constituted at one point more than 70% of the sector budget, going down the drain. Calls for an evaluation of the policy and for profound changes paved the way for the new National Water Policy (NAWAPO), which was adopted in 2002 after extensive consultations between development agencies and the executive. The subsequent institutional changes were outlined in a Water Sector Development Strategy and new water acts, which finally entered into force in 2009.

With regard to the formal institutions of the Tanzanian water sector, the full reform programme comprising IWRM, New Public Management and decentralisation has been applied. In the sub-sector of water resources management, basins and catchments are being managed according to hydrological boundaries. Basin Water Boards and a National Water Board are to balance social, economic and environmental concerns and resolve inter-sectoral conflicts on water use. They are to collect hydrological data, to issue and enforce abstraction permits and to provide for inter-sectoral coordination in water issues. In the water and sanitation sub-sector, the role of the Ministry of Water and Irrigation (MoWI) is now limited to policy-making, while implementing functions and the responsibility for operation and maintenance of water supply and sanitation/sewerage systems are transferred to Local Government Authorities and utilities. A newly created, independent regulatory authority is responsible for the monitoring, regulation and benchmarking of the commercial utilities operating mainly in urban areas (URT 2002, MoW 2006a).

The new institutional framework implies a major transformation of the way water is governed and water services are delivered in Tanzania. According to the interviews, most stakeholders think that the policy is “very progressive” and view it as the right response to the increasing pressure on the country’s water resources. However, former ministry officials, donor representatives and NGOs are sceptical about the actual implementation of the new policy. Although they caution that reliable figures on water supply are hard to come by, they agree that the sector is underperforming and that implementation progress is slow. They state that the decentralised institutional arrangements exist largely “on paper”. Furthermore, MoWI acknowledges that the water-related goals of the MDGs and the national poverty reduction strategy will not be achieved (MoWI 2009).

The Ministry itself emphasises the gap between ambitious policies and programmes of the past and their actual implementation. It states that a "solid policy, institutional and legal framework is necessary but is, in itself not sufficient. […] The lesson learned is that while the framework of the reforms is an impressive achievement, their implementation has been patchy" (MoW 2006b: 2/7f.). The "patchiness" of implementation raises the central question: "To what extent does the government really want to implement the water policy?"[9] In order to contribute to answering that question, several socio-political variables are analysed. They affect the feasibility of reforms according to Dinar et al. (1998) and Wimmer et al. (2003):(1) The constellation of actors, their interests and power relations, on the macro-level of the water sector. (2) The degree of policy ownership of political/bureaucratic elites and staff of the water administration. Degree of ownership is usually a good predictor for the level of commitment of actors, i.e. their political will to actually implement changes. (3) Conflicts at the meso- and micro-levels of the implementation apparatus.

3.2 Actor Constellation in the Water Sector

The four major complex actors (organizations, groups) in the Tanzanian water sector are the MoWI, Parliament, development agencies, and NGOs. They are characterised by different interests and have varying resources (power) at their disposal.

The MoWI is a dominant actor in the water sector. It controls authoritative resources (rule-setting power), and as the coordinator of investments within the Water Sector Development Programme, it strongly influences the allocation of funds. Additionally, commercial utilities and Community Owned Water Supply Organizations must report information on water supply to the Ministry, which allows MoWI to control the flow of water supply figures in a manner that enhances the Ministry's legitimacy, especially at a time when the delivery of public services to the poor is a "very hot issue".[10] The Ministry's data is even said to be a "political proclamation" rather than reflecting the reality on the ground.[11] Despite the official goal of the MoWI to promote the reform process (which implies decentralising the sector), there are a number of factors which run counter to this objective. These include the goal of organisational

[9] Interview with a representative of a development agency, 16/11/2009.
[10] Interview with an NGO representative, 21/10/2009.
[11] Interview with a donor representative, 16/11/2009.

growth through recruiting personnel and equipment, and the preservation of competencies and mandates to justify the control of funds.[12]

In contrast to the MoWI, theNational Assembly does not have much influence on national water politics and policy implementation. The Parliamentary Committee on Agriculture, Water and Livestock lacks the required resources and expertise to control the activities of MoWI effectively. Members of Parliament are usually not concerned with sector-wide issues. Their interest seems to be limited to water projects of their respective electorate, to whom they are directly accountable. "The first priority is: What are the concerns in the constituency?"[13]Therefore, oversight and control of MoWI through the Parliament, which would represent a horizontal accountability mechanism, is limited (Lawson/Rakner 2005).

Development agencies, particularly the World Bank, are probably the most powerful group of stakeholders outside the executive. Their funding of capacity development interventions and infrastructure investments has been used to drive water sector reforms and to force MoWIto comply with agreements.[14] The power relationship between donors and the MoWI is changing profoundly because of the transition from a fragmented, project-based aid delivery system towards a harmonised, sector-wide approach to planning (SWAp), basket funding and budget support. In contrast to the project-based approach, which permitted close control of the investments and implementation on the local level, the influence of donors is now exercised at the national level (through policy dialogue): Instead of assessing success or failure of individual projects, topics such as budget planning, the institutional framework, the reorganisation of the bureaucracy, and questions regarding political commitment are now central to discussions between the MoWI and donors. "That has really turned around the sector [... and, D.N.] helped Development Partners to have such an influential position at national level which was not the case before."[15]

Influence of donors is also based on expert power. Their advice has been incorporated into the water policy and the sector strategy. Foreign experts act as agents to transfer knowledge and function as intermediaries between global water discourses and national water politics (Evers 2005). However, their formal mandate and real influence are limited. Donors

[12] Interview with an expert, 19/10/2009.
[13] Interview with a staff member of the water administration, 18/11/2009.
[14] Interview with an NGO representative, 28/10/2009.
[15] Interview with a donor representative, 13/11/2009.

"push, but it is not at all cost. I think there is always a very good co-existence, donors know that 100% of their ideas will not be accepted [...]."[16]The co-existence of institutional interests of development agencies[17] and MoWI leads to a situation of mutual dependence where none of the actors is able to impose its willunilaterally.

Civil society organisations (CSOs) function to control the executive and to articulate societal interests by contributing to political deliberations. NGOs possess expertise and information on local realities and needs. Their basis in the grassroots and their neutrality provide NGOs with a strong legitimacy to exercise oversight and promote equity in service provision. The power relationship between civil society and the MoWI is twofold: On the one hand, NGOs are recognised as stakeholders, allowing them to participate in the dialogue between donors and MoWI. Furthermore, they contribute to transparency by publishing annually the Water and Sanitation Equity Report (TAWASANET 2009). Accordingly, some representatives of NGOs, MoWI officials and donors interpret the interactions between MoWI and civil society as a cooperative power relation based on mutual trust and respect:

> This is exceptional in the Ministry of Water, that they [the NGOs, D.N.] have been given a space to present a different perspective and sort of provide a critique of what is happening in the water sector. This is a big step forward for the water sector.[18]

On the other hand, there are indications that the influence of civil society in the water sector de facto is low. The political organisation of civil society on the national level is still in its infancy and has improved only recently with the establishment of new NGOs and the umbrella organisation Tanzania Water and Sanitation Network (TAWASANET). "Open spaces" (as in the Water Sector Working Group of donors and MoWI) to articulate the views of CSOs certainly exist, but do not provide them with channels to influence policy decisions effectively. They do not control resources – such as funds or authoritative control – which are really relevant for the MoWI. Additionally, capacity development of donors is mainly targeted at state institutions. An NGO representative offers the critique that the MoWI categorizes civil society as a "secondary audience" and that decision-making is still donor- and state-centred.

[16] Interview with an official of MoWI, 16/11/2009.
[17] Despite the official statements indicating altruistic motives, donors have a number of particularistic interests. These include the maximisation of their programme portfolio and resources to expand their operations as well as the pursuit of particularistic (foreign political) objectives of their home governments (USAID 2010, Easterly 2006). The need of donors to ensure future aid commitments from their governments leads at times to an "official optimism" which is not necessarily grounded in the real prospects of sector development.
[18] Interview with a donor representative, 13/11/2009.

"So far, one cannot say that civil society has any significant influence on the events in the water sector."[19] Civil society really acting as a watchdog in the water sector still seems to be a long way away.

To summarise, MoWI and development agencies are the actors with considerable resources and powers at their disposal to influence water politics. The relations between donors, MoWI and NGOs contain both cooperative and conflictive aspects. Donors exercise a certain influence on the agenda-setting and policy development in the water sector and provide for external accountability. However, their influence on policy implementation seems to be limited. Also Parliament, civil society and the media do not seem to be capable of holding the executive sufficiently accountable. Accordingly, the policy ownership[20] of political/bureaucratic elites and administrators as well as their intrinsic commitment to implementing the reform programme play a paramount role.

3.3 Policy Ownership and Commitment

The respective influence of domestic and external actors on policy-making affects the policyownership of a sector ministry. The interviews indicate that the Tanzanian water policy of 2002 can be understood as an "amalgam" of external influence and of domestic policy learning and conscious acceptance of the reform strategies (NPM, IWRM, decentralisation).

On the one hand, external players, particularly of the World Bank and German development cooperation, were perceived as important drivers of reform.[21] The Tanzanian water sector displayed a strong donor dependency during the 1990s and before. Attracting new funds for the sector from donors required the acceptance of IWRM and NPM by the government (Therkildsen 2001). An NGO representative emphasised that "the bigger issues that emerged, when the water policy was being prepared, were largely issues that were put on the table at least, if not

[19] Interview with a representative of a development agency, 20/11/2009.
[20] Policy ownership refers to a situation where a recipient country sets the major policy directions and exercises leadership in the implementation of development policies and strategies. Ownership is one of the principles of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. The degree of ownership of a sector development strategy can also vary considerably within a sector. Therefore, political and technical ownership can be distinguished. For example, strong political ownership is expressed by a Minister chairing monthly meetings with donors. Technical leadership refers to the willingness of lower management levels to implement changes (ODI 2008).
[21] Interview with a consultant, 15/10/2009.

taken to the final policy, mostly by the World Bank."[22] Donors were directly involved in policy-making through advice and the implementation of pilot projects in various regions of Tanzania. They advocated the application of NPM and IWRM. However, an NGO worker warns that wherever "policy reform is coming along to replicate that model[IWRM, D.N.] without the ownership of local practitioners and stakeholders, there is a danger that you will wrest ownership of the whole thing away from them [and put it, D.N.] into the hands of the consultants and donors."[23]

Although external actors played a significant role both in initiating and designing the reform, there is also evidence of *domestic policy learning*.[24]Ministry officials state that the transfer of foreign concepts into the policy happened consciously and was not forced through external change agents.[25]According to Ministry officials and other stakeholders, the negative evaluation of the old policy and increasing social and environmental pressure during the 1990s made the urgent need for reform "obvious" to domestic decision-makers. External advisors were merely seen as spin-doctors with limited direct influence. It was Tanzanian officials who steered the work of the policy design team and developed the policy in-house, "consultants did come in to guide it here and there, but they were not involved on a full-time basis."[26]This is in line with the positive connotation of the new policy by the MoWI. Ministry officials often refer to the policy document as a progressive framework for sector development. A former Director of the MoWI states: "The Ministry of Water has formulated the policy and the Ministry was very strong in the ownership of that policy, and it would not like to deviate from that."[27]

To summarize: Due to the combination of external and domestic factors in the policy process, the National Water Policy of 2002 can be located in the middle of the *policy-transfer[28] continuum* with the two opposite ends of "external enforcement" (through conditionalities) on one side, and "voluntary lesson-drawing" on the other. There is evidence that

[22] Interview with an NGO representative, 28/10/2009.
[23] Interview with an NGO representative, 21/10/2009.
[24] Policy learning refers to a change of behaviour, perceptions and goals of actors based on new information. The learning process comprises paradigms, ideas, convictions as well as specific institutions (Blum/Schubert 2009).
[25] Interview with officials of the water administration, 06/11/2009 and 18/11/2009.
[26] Interview with a MoWI official, 27/10/2009.
[27] Interview with a MoWI official, 04/11/2009.
[28] A policy transfer can be defined as the "use of knowledge about institutions and administrative structures in one place for the development of institutions in another place" (Blum/Schubert 2009:165).

Tanzanian policy-makers were conscious of the need for reform and drew lessons from the failure of the first National Water Policy.[29] They integrated concepts from the international discourse as well as experience with local practices into the new policy. This suggests that the National Water Policy of 2002 is in principle politically owned by the executive in the water sector.[30]

However, the policy represented merely a broad, long-term framework for sector development rather than a prescription for specific institutional change. It allowed for divergent interpretations by stakeholders on how to proceed with the reform. Despite the policy ownership of the executive, donors and NGOs still express their doubts on the actual commitment of the Ministry to implement it. The Water Sector Development Strategy, which was endorsed in 2006 with a delay, specified a new institutional framework and re-allocated resources, powers, and competencies between sector institutions. Specifically, administrative and fiscal decentralisation and the creation of an executive National Water Board would have led to a loss of power for the MoWI. According to a programme manager at a development agency, at this stage of the reform process "struggles for power" started and "change resistance became visible." Although "the National Water Policy is owned by the Tanzanian government, one has to recognise that the ownership of the NWSDS [National Water Sector Development Strategy, D.N.] is not yet fully developed."[31]

Officially, the MoWI and other government authorities assure there is strong commitment and leadership by the executive to implement the policy(MoWI 2009, Mushi 2009). From their perspective, delays and problems in the implementation phase are caused by the "capacity gap", the lack of qualified personnel and finance, weak technical and logistical capacities, deficient infrastructure, and bureaucratic procedures of procurement. A *technocratic view* of the implementation process is manifest in a statement by a Director of the MoWI, who emphasises:

> It is capacity, capacity. But we are committed. [...] Some of the donors, they think we are operating as if we are in Europe. This is Tanzania and you can imagine the capac-

[29] The policy moved away from a centralised structure and the view of water as a "free, god given good".
[30] This conclusion should be understood as a preliminary conclusion, which should be taken with some caution. The institutional affiliation of the interviewees as well as the cultural background of the researcher coupled with interactional effects in face-to-face communication/qualitative interviews influence statements of informants.
[31] Interview with a representative of a development agency, 20/11/2009.

> ity is not all there [...].Communication, transport and other things; these are not well-developed in Tanzania. [...] The only challenge I can see [...] is the capacity.[32]

However, a number of factors raise questions about the official pro-reform "talk" and the government's real commitment to reform. A former MoWIDirector suggests that foreign advisors already had a strategy in mind before consultations started. Accordingly, decision-makers in the Ministry initially rejected their propositions on the design of the institutional framework. A Deputy Director summarizes: "The problem was that change. You know, this is a very big change for us, [...] to move from performing to just monitoring and policy-making. [...] It was a bitter pill to swallow."[33] In line with this statement, NGO and donor representatives and former staff of the Ministry observe only a limited willingness of the leadership to promote the reform. Lower level civil servants in the water administration also doubt the commitment of the bureaucratic elites (Hepworth 2009).

Donors pressured government and the national assembly to adopt the new, mutually agreed water laws in 2009 by making the adoption of the water acts a precondition of continued budget support. Development agencies criticised insufficient compliance with agreements and demanded stronger leadership from the Ministry: "We cannot assume that the only thing which is lacking here is money, rather it lacks incentives, control and leadership."[34] Several former Ministry officials emphasised the limited readiness for organisational change of management and lower-level staff in the Ministry itself. In addition to the three groups of a change process identified in the previous chapter, there seem to be three varying attitudes to change inside the MoWI. They range from active support to a neutral stance and to active and passive resistance. A consultant estimates that only 10% of the staff of the MoWI has a pro-reform attitude; 20% are deemed to have a neutral, indifferent opinion; and 70% are estimated to reject the reform.[35] NGO representatives assume that most members of MoWI's middle management belong to the group of those resisting passively; active resistance and open criticism are more frequent at the leadershiplevel.[36] An NGO worker points out:

> There is always a bit of a divide within government on how to respond [to new policy approaches promoted by donors, D.N.]. Some people genuinely buy into the new ideas

[32] Interview with a Director of MoWI, 10/11/2009.
[33] Interview with an official of MoWI, 04/11/2009.
[34] Interview with a donor representative, 16/11/2009.
[35] Interview with a consultant, 15/10/2009.
[36] Interview with NGO representatives, 21/10/2009 and 28/10/2009.

> and are quite supportive. There are others who verbally would say that they are supportive, but essentially are doing so to get the funds; they will not be genuinely supportive to what is being proposed. Then, there are others who are against the change and would say so. My [general, D.N.] experience […] is that the first and third group are very small groups. The much bigger group is the group in the middle, [people, D.N.] who are in some way more or less resistant, but would not necessarily say so. In many cases a significant proportion of staff within the MoW […] would simply say that is what the World Bank wants us to do. Therefore, that is what we do.[37]

The interviewees emphasised the "internal politics" of the MoWI as an important factor of reform. Confirming the findings of Mollinga (2007), they reported that the mindset of officials still seems to be influenced by the far-reaching responsibilities and powerful position that MoWI held in the past. The Ministry's staff is still dominated by engineers who have a predominantly technical view of water management and neglect its political and institutional aspects: "It is an engineering affair and it has been an engineering affair."[38] The internal functioning of MoWI points to the prevalence of neo-patrimonial norms[39] of behaviour such as the importance of personal power relations between "strong guys", and corrupt[40] and clientelistic practices (such as providing loyal supporters with positions of leadership). Officials are said to act often according to particularistic and personal interests rather than to support organisational goals and written agreements. These factors indicate a lack of accountability in policy implementation. They explain the reluctance of many bureaucrats to accept the reorganisation and formalisation of administrative structures brought about by the IWRM, NPM and decentralisation. Opinions by the interviewees concerning the commitment of the management and staff in the water administration cannot solely be ascribed to their institutional affiliation. They reveal an overlap of public and private spheres in the water administration, which is a common phenomenon in public bureaucracies in Sub-Saharan Africa and in Tanzania (Chabal/Daloz 2001, Hyden/Mmuya 2008, Montgomery 1987).

[37] Interview with an NGO representative, 21/10/2009.
[38] Interview with an expert, 05/11/2009.
[39] Neo-patrimonialism can be understood as the overlay and parallel existence of informal personal power relations (patrimonialism) and "modern", legal-rational bureaucratic structures. The distinction between the private and the public is formally accepted, and public reference can be made to this distinction, but in practice this separation is not always observed. The informal networks and exchange relations of patrons and clients are often based on principles of reciprocity (Erdmann/Engel 2006).
[40] Weak procurement capacities, the lack of transparency and delayed monitoring reports enable corruptive behaviour as a general practice. A representative of a development agency estimates losses due to corruption at around 40% of expenditures.

Apparently, ownership of the water sector reform strategy is less strong than the ownership of the policy itself. Domestic policy makers seem to support rather the broad direction of reform than the specific institutional changes prescribed by the strategy. This supports the finding that a generic policy framework is easier to transfer from one political system to another than a more specific reform programme (Blum/Schubert 2009). The empirical evidence confirms the assumption that the MoWI must be understood as an internally heterogeneous and complex actor consisting of various alliances promoting or opposing change. The micropolitical conflicts between these groups as well as between donors and MoWI strongly affect the feasibility and outcome of the reform. These conflicts will be illustrated by reference to the decentralisation reform as well as the establishment of the National Water Board (NWB), which is an important element of the IWRM.

3.4 Micropolitical Conflicts – Between Talk and Action of Reformers

Devolution represents the strongest type of decentralisation and is therefore highly susceptible to micropolitical conflicts. A water expert identifies two opposing micropolitical alliances regarding decentralisation: "gradualists" and "decentralisers". *Gradualists* reject the decentralisation policy (although they partly use a pro-reform rhetoric). According to their "talk", delays in the reform are merely caused by administrative barriers such as a lack of knowledge and "misunderstandings" about the change process. By applying the micropolitical tactic of *rational reasoning* they argue that it may not be an appropriate strategy for reform. They refer to *empirical evidence* that the absorptive capacity of local implementing agencies to handle funds and manage projects has not yet been developed. Therefore, they suggest that decentralisation should be implemented more slowly or even be abandoned. Indeed, these concerns cannot be explained only in terms of a vested interest in retaining power and resources, but are objectively justified to some extent.

The *gradualists* delay and undermine the decentralisation process. Large projects are still implemented without involvement of local authorities, the development of technical capacity on the local level is not supported, and important policydocuments are not sufficiently distributed. Administrators "take their time" accomplishing tasks.[41] Although funds are in-

[41] Interview with an NGO representative, 28/10/2009.

creasingly directly channelled from the Ministry of Finance to local authorities, the MoWI still influences their allocation. "Despite the rhetoric of decentralised implementation, decisions are made at the central level. […] The decision of who gets what, when, and how is made at the Ministry of Water and Irrigation."[42] In contrast to the rhetoric of the gradualists and their micropolitical tactic of rational reasoning, many stakeholders and former MoWI officials assert that the primary interest of gradualists is retaining power:

> I saw it [...]:The biggest hindrance to the decentralisation was the Ministers themselves, because at one time one of the Ministers made a comment at a management meeting: 'Oh, this is how it looks like.' One Minister said: 'Look, you people keep on saying we decentralise, keep on shrinking yourselves, you probably shrink yourselves into nothing.' That kind of comment [from a big man, D.N.] keeps a lot of message. [...] You know, power is sweet, [...] and power comes from controlling money.[43]

This illustrates the discrepancy between "talk" and "action" in the course of reform. At the level of talk pro-reform statements dominate the picture in order to reduce external and domestic pressure for innovations. However, the actionlevel seems to mainly reflect established routines and the mindset of the past era of centralised institutions. Unwillingness to decentralise authority and control of resources also results from the fact that the reform poses a risk to personal privileges (Richards et al. 2008: 18). Consistent with experience of other decentralisation reforms (Rondinelli 1989), MoWI aims to retain resources such as information, control of the sector budget, and the financial and technical management of projects. Decision-makers try to retain the centralised responsibility for procurement and human resources that is a necessary means for the clientelistic allocation of rewards and jobs.[44] Therefore, decentralisation implies high political costs for the centre.

In contrast, the *promoters of decentralisation* can be located (not surprisingly) mainly outside the MoWI. They assess the implementation of the decentralisation policy as slow or even see a "re-centralisation". Decentralisers regard the arguments of the gradualists as justified to some extent; however, they insist on deepening the decentralisation process by building the capacities of local authorities:

> They [the MoWI, D.N.] have a point, but my argument is: you cannot stop the process of decentralisation for that fear [the capacity gap in local level institutions, D.N.].

[42] Interview with a representative of a development agency, 20/11/2009.
[43] Interview with a former official of MoWI, 26/10/2009.
[44] Interviews with consultants and NGO representatives.

> Building capacities and exercising regulatory responsibility more effectively, that is how things go. We cannot argue that these bureaucrats at the Ministry headquarters, that they fell from heaven, while those in the district councils came from hell. [...] There is no reason why the capacities of the people of the lower level could not be built. And we cannot keep on concentrating power.[45]

Donors and NGOs attempt to establish their position by using the micropolitical strategies of *exerting pressure* and *referring to higher authorities*. Donors made decentralisation a precondition for continued budget support and argued that decentralisation in the water sector is part of a multi-sectoral reform supported by the President's Office.

A similar conflict between promoters and opponents of reform can be identified regarding the establishment of a National Water Board (NWB), which is supposed to ensure inter-sectoral coordination on the national level and monitor Basin Water Boards. The major point of contention between policyadvisors and the MoWI Management was the transfer of powers and responsibilities from the Ministry to the new institution: Should the NWB possess executive powers independent of the Ministry, or should it merely have an advisory function?

Development agencies argued in favour of an administratively and financially autonomous institution, which would have the authority to make decisions on inter-sectoral planning and disputes independently of MoWI (Hepworth 2009). They justified their stance by arguing that there was a need to ensure an equal representation of the views of other sectors on water management: The MoWI "cannot speak for all other sectors."[46] The representation of interests of other sectors (such as the ministries of industry, health, environment etc.) and joint decision-making are core elements of the IWRM and would prevent a conflict of interest for the new institution. Proponents of an executive NWB invoked *expert knowledge* and attempted to justify the reform with international best practices and experiences in other sectors (*reference to empirical evidence*). Although the positions of the proponents of an executive NWB were considered in the reform strategy, they were reversed in the subsequent Water Resources Management Act.[47] Due to an intervention by MoWI Management in the legislative process, the NWB was reduced to an advisory body in the Water Resources Management Act (2009). Again, at the talklevel, the opponents of a strong NWB justify the reversal of that provision with apparently *material/factual reasons*. They also refer to *empirical*

[45] Interview with a consultant, 15/10/2009.
[46] Interview with a representative of a development agency, 20/11/2009.
[47] Interview with a consultant, 15/10/2009, and an expert, 19/10/2009.

evidence by emphasising dysfunctional outcomes of that innovation. They claim that the predecessor of the NWB did not perform well and that transferring executive powers to the NWB would lead to duplications and inter-institutional conflicts. [48]

However, there are indications that despite official pronouncements to the contrary, *political motives* played a major role in that decision. The transfer of authority and funds to the NWB would have implied further loss of power for MoWI and would have run counter to the Ministry's organisational interest to retain as many functions as possible. "You ask yourself whether you need another body to replace the Ministry, why should you? You should not. The Ministry is supreme in that particular sector."[49]Furthermore, the establishment of an executive NWB would have implied uncertainty for the MoWI concerning its future interactions with the new institution. This concern points to an *administrative barrier* to change. The result of the micropolitical conflict between the Ministry and external advisors was a reduction of the scope of innovation in the new water act. The NWB was finally established as an advisory body: "What the policy says and what the practice says may be quite different."[50]The conflict also reveals the limited influence of external advisors and donors to push through contested institutional changes.

4. Conclusion

The findings on the political dynamics of the Tanzanian water sector reform contradict the general proposition that ownership of a new policy by domestic stakeholders is a strong predictor of the political will of governments and administrators to implement that policy. Successful reforms require not only a policy framework which is accepted by all stakeholders, but also continued commitment to implementing it and the will to transform a concept into real changes even if they imply a loss of power.

The empirical evidence has shown that institutions cannot be easily "fixed" or "designed" by domestic or external water experts. The institutionalisation of the National Water Board and fiscal and administrative decentralisation in the water sector led to the redistribu-

[48] Interviews with officials of MoWI, 04/11/2009 and 17/11/2009.
[49] Interview with an official of the water administration, 17/11/2009.
[50] Interview with an NGO representative, 28/10/2009.

tion of resources and power between sector organisations. Therefore, these changes were highly contested; accordingly, their design and effectiveness depends on bargaining processes. In the case of Tanzania, opponents of institutional reform prevailed, in part, over the proponents of change. The decentralisation proceeds only slowly, the National Water Board did not become an executive body. Rather, the MoWI attempts to retain decision-making powers in terms of sector investment and water resources management.

Fixing the pipes and water institutions requires not only technology, finance and adequate institutional arrangements, but also consideration of the politics of reform and mobilising support for the changes. UNESCO's (2006) suggestion that achieving international water targets requires governments to intensify their actions and commitment to implement existing water policies, plans, and laws remains valid. However, the realisation of policies also depends on the approach of development agencies to policy advice. Directive transfer of policies is often doomed to failure. Instead development agencies need to gain a better understanding of the political context of their interventions so that they can manage the micropolitics of reform. They need to consider their position in the triangle of power, which includes donors, government and civil society. Additionally, they need to strengthen internal champions and agents of change, some of whom may be found in lower tiers of government or civil society. When it comes to implementing far-reaching institutional reforms, "power is at the core of getting things done" (Hyden/Mmuya 2008). Therefore, policy advisors and water sector reformers need to act in a politically sensitive and process-oriented manner. Coping with the water crisis and improving the water sector performance requires actors to treat water policy and water politics not as two separate tracks, but rather as interdependent tracks that have to be addressed to allow institutions delivering clean water and safe sanitation to work for citizens.

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