Background of the study

It was the first president of the United Republic of Tanzania, Julius Nyerere, who made a powerful statement on the need for participation of the people in communities for development. He stated that:

‘Development is the participation of people in a mutual learning experience involving themselves, their local resources, external change agents and outside resources. People can not be developed; they can only develop themselves by participation and co-operative activities which affect their wellbeing. People are not being developed when they are herded like animals into new ventures.’ (Nyerere 1968)

In this statement people are understood to be an important instrument in their own development. Actual and sustainable development can be obtained by making the people who benefit an integral part of the development process. This includes involvement in the decision-making and in the phase of implementation. Nyerere also recognises the importance of external resources and agents of change in facilitating development.

There are examples where participation contributed to development and that prove the value of Nyerere’s statement. In Nachingwea District, in the Southern part of the country, for example, community members at one time reasoned that a proper office for the District Headquarters was essential for the improvement of the district planning and the provision of services from the local government. The old, dilapidated groundnuts storage facility they had been using as the District Office simply wasn’t good enough. As a result, the services were not being adequately planned or delivered. After some members of the local community had visited other District Headquarters and had seen their modern offices the community decided that they had had enough of the existing situation. The community wanted a proper office for their District Headquarters. If the central government was not going to build it for them, then they would build it them-
selves. In 2003 the community members decided to rely on their own resources. They embarked on an ambitious 1 billion Tanzanian shilling (Tsh) building project to construct a new District Headquarters. Once the project began, other stakeholders stepped in to support this community initiative. This included the local business community and the central government. This building was completed in 2007, has 84 rooms and houses the offices of both the District Commissioner and District Executive Directors (Department for International Development 2006).

In this example we see the value of participation for development. Development depends mainly on local communities taking their own fate into their hands. It is therefore no surprise that the many international organisations, such as the World Bank and World Health Organisation, emphasise the need for participation in local development. Supported by various scholars, these institutions consider community participation a core element of sustainable development, particularly for social service delivery (see for example: Dola & Dolbani 2006; WHO 2002). The link between participation and development can be seen as a part of the broad concept of ‘democratic decentralisation’, which puts much emphasis on the links between people and local governments as a strategy for development.

The emphasis on the concept of participation is also reflected in the Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania of 1977. Indeed, it has been the argument of all government administrations since the independence of Tanzania in 1961. The Constitution shows a strong recognition of the importance of participation in achieving the much sought social and economic development in the country. It declares the establishment of devolved local governments (articles 145-147) as a milestone for promoting mass participation, local democracy and well-being of communities through provision of a wide range of social and economic services.

However, since independence the efforts to realize this strategy have left the government in a conundrum. Most of these efforts have been changes in the institutional setup. Some of the remarkable changes include the abolition of the Local Governments Authorities (LGAs) in 1972. These LGAs were replaced by a de-concentrated system. In 1982 the LGAs were again re-established. Both changes had the enhancement of community participation as a strategy for sustainable development as their goal. However, these changes did not contribute to community participation or improve the social service delivery as was expected.

The failure to realise community participation for local development is often associated with the longstanding practices of central government officials and the passive attitude of communities who believe it is the responsibility of the government alone to provide the public services. The most recent government initiative to enhance participation of local communities could therefore be considered a new attempt to break through these longstanding practice and attitudes. The intended system is a system in which both government officials and citizenry recognise the role of community participation in local development. The question that remains is: to what extent do the current institutional arrangements really facilitate participation of the people for local development?
Statement of the problem

The argument that participation contributes to development has been the dominant policy in the Tanzanian Local Government administration to date. The adoption of the Policy Papers on Local Government Reform in 1998 can be seen as a new attempt to put emphasis on the bottom-up planning process. The reforms envisage that through bottom-up planning the development programmes will respond to local needs and bring about a sense of ownership to facilitate implementation.

The principle that guides this reform is the principle of Decentralisation by Devolution (D by D). The policy theory on D by D indicates that the institutional arrangement created through the reform process facilitates participatory planning. One invention of this is the establishment of Opportunity and Obstacles to Development (O&OD) methodology. This methodology is designed to enhance participation in the bottom-up planning process.

However, according to various scholars, such as Devas (2005: 7), the institutional arrangements require certain qualities to be able to facilitate this process of Decentralisation by Devolution. These include the attitude and commitment of the politicians and officials involved in the planning process who take steps to ensure that the results reflect the views of the citizens, the ability of the poor to organize, mobilize and use their voice and the resources available to implement the agreements, since there is little point in going through the process if there are no resources to implement what is agreed on. Participation requires more than just creating an institutional arrangement that supports it. People have to actually use this arrangement to achieve real Decentralisation by Devolution.

Despite the emphasis on participation, the experience of the local government administration in Tanzania leaves much to desire. There are still administrative practices that show the central government is rather dominant in the decision-making on what has to be done at the local level. The local government sometimes appears to be left with limited discretion to act as an autonomous institution that is able to respond to local needs and demands. The central government influence over the local government can be exercised in many ways. Quite often this influence is related to the planning procedure, on allocating the (public) money.

According to the Local Government Expenditure Review of 2007 the local government authorities depend on the central government financing for more than 90% of their funds. Most of these central government funds are conditional grants. They are earmarked for specific areas. As a result, local preferences expressed through local participation, are quite often only supported if they fall under these earmarked categories. It is therefore interesting to see whether or not the LGAs are still able to support participation and contribute to local development within the boundaries of these limitations.

There are examples that indicate that LGAs do not have real autonomy. A famous recent example is the policy of constructing a dispensary in every village and a secondary school in every ward. Just after coming to power in 2005, the fourth government administration announced that every local government must ensure that there is a dispensary in every village and a secondary school in every ward. The announcement
was actually the implementation of the election manifest of the Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) for the 2005 general elections (CCM 2005). This political party won the election, so the promises were put into policy. Although the intention might be considered desirable, as every citizen would wish to be close to the point of service delivery, the approach was actually a contradiction to the philosophy of Decentralisation by Devolution. After all: the implementation of the election promises was a top-down policy that violates the principle that the needs and demands have to be identified by the local people.

Some LGAs might have a good road network and transport services which make the need for a dispensary in every village or a secondary school in every ward less urgent as the existing facilities are already easily accessible. As such, these LGAs might press for more urgent needs, like shortages in equipment, buildings or staff in the existing facilities. Yet through this central policy these LGAs are forced to construct more dispensaries and secondary schools.

There are indications that the LGAs staff and leaders perceive the central government directives as political and sometimes unrealistic. The indication arises from the arguments often made by the LGAs that if the government had for so long failed to enable the available primary facilities to deliver quality service, adding more facilities would complicate the situation instead of solving the problem. Since the resources are limited and the focus will be on construction of new primary facilities, there is a danger that the service provision in old facilities will continue to deteriorate because more resources will be directed to the new facilities. In this regard, people in most LGAs would rather see the existing facilities being improved before taking a move towards constructing new ones.

Considering such experiences, the purpose of this study is to examine the extent to which the LGAs are able to realize development in a situation where they have limited resources themselves and depend largely on central government transfers. Development depends to a large extent on participation. After all it is the local community that has the knowledge of existing needs and has to implement in practice any decision with regard to the development (Van Dijk 2006: 32). The overall objective of the study is to examine the extent to which the institutional arrangements under the policy of Decentralisation by Devolution (D by D) facilitate this participation of the local people. Do these local people have a voice in the bottom-up planning process and does it contribute to development? This overall objective is divided into the five specific objectives:

1. To show development changes (if any) at the local level.
2. To examine the extent to which local people participate in the bottom-up planning process.
3. To assess the extent to which the bottom-up planning process contribute to local development.
4. To establish important factors for participation in local development.
5. To give recommendations for possible improvement of participation for local development.
Therefore the central question of the research is:

*To what extent do the government institutional arrangements in Tanzania facilitate or impede participation for local development and what improvements can be made?*

This central research question breaks down into the following sub-questions:

1. **To what extent is there an infrastructural development of primary facilities?**
   The Policy Paper on Local Government Reform (1998) provides that the main objective of the reform is to improve service delivery. The first question addresses the possible development in these primary facilities’ infrastructure as part of the overall improvement of public service delivery. In this research only the development in education and health sectors is studied.

2. **To what extent do the local people participate in the bottom-up planning process?**
   In view of the local government reform, the bottom-up planning is intended to facilitate participation in the local communities. Decisions on improvement of the local facilities should be related to local needs. A response to the needs expressed through the bottom-up planning process is supposed to create a sense of ownership that facilitates the implementation of the decisions. The second question in this research therefore examines the extent to which local people participate in the bottom planning process.

3. **To what extent does the bottom-up planning process contribute to local development?**
   The effort to enhance participation in the bottom-up planning process is based on the notion laid out in the local government reform policy papers, that involvement of the people will facilitate local development. The answer to this question is therefore an attempt to establish the extent to which the bottom-up planning, as a participatory approach, does contribute to local development.

4. **What factors facilitate or impede participation for local development?**
   Development is associated with many factors. The answer to this question will show the possible factors that facilitate or impede participation in the bottom-up planning process. To answer this question a comparison can be made between the observed participation for local development and the use of the bottom-up planning process.

5. **What changes can be made to improve participation for local development?**
   The answers to the previous four questions will provide a basis to formulate some recommendations for improvement that might enhance local participation.

**Significance of the study**

This study is significant with regard to both theory and policy. Theoretically it shows the gap between the theoretical perspective of participation and the actual practice of participation in the Tanzanian context. Sometimes there may be variations to the point where a particular actor (stakeholder) can influence the common goals. However, participation is expected to bring in a mutual agreement of the local development activities. For instance, in view of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (1994 as cited in Cornwall 2002: 36):
'participatory development stands for a partnership which is built upon the basis of a dialogue among the various actors (stakeholders), during which the “agenda” is set jointly and local views and indigenous knowledge are deliberately sought and respected. This implies negotiation rather than the dominance of an externally set project agenda.'

In this opinion, the study tries to show how participation is practiced in a particular context and whether or not there is a connection between participation and local development.

The significance of this study in relation to policy is linked to the ongoing local government reform in Tanzania. The study will provide some policy insight to the reform process on community participation. It will inform policy makers about the existing gaps between policy theory and practice. The study also shows the relevance of choices in the institutional arrangements that might facilitate or impede participation for development.

Organisation of the study

The study consists of twelve chapters, divided in three parts. Part I consists of the following six chapters that contain the theoretical part of the study. Chapter 2 shows how participation is embedded in the overall concept of decentralisation and its relevance in public governance. Chapter 3 provides the institutional arrangements of centralisation and decentralisation under which the government processes are carried on. It intends to shed light on the relevance of some important structures involved in the study. Chapter 4 provides an overview of decentralisation in Tanzania. The Tanzanian history shows a change from more central to more decentral and back again. This chapter brings into focus some theoretical descriptions of the bottom-up planning process which is the core of the study. In chapter 5, the delivery system of the two specific social services, health care and educational services, are described. This chapter also shows the relevance of the infrastructure for the improvement of both services.

Based on the background information provided in the previous chapters, chapter 6 contains a description of the theoretical framework of the study. In this chapter the hypotheses and variables are highlighted and described. Chapter 7 is about the research design and methods. The chapter provides guidance for the empirical part of the study.

Part II provides the empirical part of the study. It consists of chapters 8, 9 and 10. These chapters describe the six cases involved in this study. Each chapter presents two cases selected from one district. The chapters begin with a brief overview of the relevant district, followed by a systematic description of the bottom-up planning process with regard to a facility for health services (a health centre or a dispensary) and with regard to a primary school.

Part III contains the comparison of the cases and the analysis. In chapter 11 the cases are compared and the hypotheses of the study are tested. Based on the theory, the empirical study and analysis, chapter 12 provides the conclusions and recommendations.
PART I

Theoretical framework