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Legacies of mistrust: Why colonial imprints on the implementation of fiscal reforms in Mozambique and Mexico matter

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National authorities across Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa have implemented various forms of fiscal decentralization over the past three decades with equivocal results. The design of such reforms has long rested on theories based on the experiences of high-income countries' efforts at increasing local autonomy, accountability, and basic service efficiencies. Critics of the global advocacy for fiscal decentralization, however, point to several challenges with its implementation across diverse political economies that differ significantly from those in high-income environments. Nonetheless, these critiques often obscure the impact that colonial regimes and their legacies have on current efforts to fiscally decentralize. In two post-colonial environments where fiscal decentralization projects have unrolled, namely Mozambique and Mexico, we show how colonial imprints remain critical to understanding efforts at fiscal decentralization. Our focus in these cases is on how race-based caste systems introduced under colonial administrations fed the development and evolution of dual governance systems across spaces and peoples that bred mistrust between residents, local authorities and central authorities. We argue that the conflicting rationales in evidence between stakeholders involved in fiscal decentralization projects today are rooted in the social mistrust and power struggles born from these colonial experiences. In conclusion, we contend that fiscal decentralization reforms must explicitly grapple with these spatialized and racialized legacies of mistrust and the diverse rationalities guiding stakeholders in both the design and evaluation of public policies meant to strengthen local autonomy, transparency, and efficiencies.

Keywords: fiscal decentralization, Mozambique, Mexico, colonialism, racism

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Introduction

National authorities across Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa have implemented various forms and levels of decentralization over the past three decades, often with encouragement from or under conditionality of loans from international organizations and bilateral donors. Indeed, by the end of the twentieth century, the promises of decentralization were de rigeur in the development industry, with the conditionality terms offered in international loans often prescribing decentralization as a means to improve fiscal spending and accountability. The World Bank, for example, strongly advocated for decentralization across administrative, political and fiscal arenas since the 1980s. However, the results of such efforts to empower and hold accountable local level authorities while also producing efficiencies in the use of the public purse have shown only equivocal results.

One of the major motivations for moving from a centralized system of government to a decentralized one across lower and middle-income countries has been a dissatisfaction in public services under centralization. Several scholars have indeed found that such dissatisfaction is alleviated by the incorporation of citizens into local public service provision decisions, which in turn improves public sector costs and performance (Baiocchi 2001; Fung and Wright 2003; World Bank 2004; Speer, 2012; McMillan, Spronk, and Caswell 2014; Veiga and Kurian 2015). Such findings reflect theorized aspirations of decentralization in practice, or more precisely how moving decision-making to the most local levels of government would best reflect the local-level preferences of residents and generate greater local autonomy, efficiency, and effectiveness of public spending on service delivery (Bahl, 2008; Bonet & Cibils, 2010; Tanzi, 2001; von Braun and Grote, 2000).

However, several scholars highlight the deep challenges in achieving other objectives of decentralization reforms in practice. Faguet (2014) provides an overview of decentralization's impact on local governance, noting how reforms that have promoted political competition and accountability have also often introduced fiscal threats. In a volume reviewing the decentralization experiences of ten African countries, for example, Dickovick and Wunsch (2014) note that while subnational authority has grown under decentralization reforms, improvements to accountability, autonomy, and capacity at the local levels of government remain deeply mixed and/or weak. Ironically, they find that decentralization can strengthen or more deeply entrench existing national power and national elites, leaving local governance largely unchanged (Dickovick and Wunsch 2014). Similarly, across Latin American countries, scholars have found significant variance in how well decentralization reforms have achieved stated objectives. Reform impacts on efficiencies in the provision of services, as well as equities therein, have been heterogenous (Bossuyt 2013). Simpser et al. (2016) assert that globally municipal budgets increased under fiscal decentralization, but this has not necessarily improved local accountability. With regard to questions of governance, Dell'Anno y Teobaldelli (2015) find positive effects on corruption emergent from decentralization reforms, while others like Fan et al (2009) find that decentralization reforms create more levels of government and a larger number of public employees associated with more corruption.

In an effort to explain the variation in performance of decentralization reforms, Smoke (2015) points first to the complications in how different scholars have used different measures and frames for understanding decentralization outcomes, and then to how the plurality of institutional arrangements, the national political economy and bureaucratic environment, international development assistance, and local political dynamics all critically shape the complexity and design of decentralization reforms as well as of course the capacity to actually implement them. The combination of these factors, according to Smoke's summary of extensive empirical literatures, is often used to relate why or how decentralization efforts meet

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the ground. However, he also points to how political economic considerations and attention to context matter much more to understanding decentralization in practice than is often relayed within the expansive literatures evaluating the reform.

Smoke's critique is helpful in reviewing the literatures examining the performance of fiscal decentralization in particular, which often stop at identifying the outcomes and the constraints of fiscal decentralization in practice without engaging in the more rooted histories from which those constraints were born. Prud'homme (1995), for example, argues that failures in the reform's implementation stem from basic assumptions that fiscal decentralization leads to allocative efficiency. Instead, he notes that in the context of lower-income environments, there is not a great deal of variation in regional preferences for public spending, as the fundamental desire across localities is to satisfy basic needs. Prud'homme also notes that the logic of voting reflecting residential preferences for services and determining local election outcomes presumed in fiscal decentralization advocacy is likely flawed in some country contexts where election outcomes are often instead determined by affiliations and loyalties that are inherited (e.g., ethnicities and tribes) or politically fixed. In such contexts, he argues that local governments are not likely to have the resources, the will, or the support to implement policies aimed at local preferences. Like Prud'homme, Bojanic (2018) also finds the implementation of fiscal decentralization reforms across countries, such as in the Americas, problematic from a lens of income inequality. He shows that the introduction of fiscal decentralization reforms accentuated income inequality within lower and middle-income Latin American countries instead of mitigating it. Similarly, Tanzi (2001) highlights the challenges of unequal distribution of wealth within lower-income countries operating under fiscal decentralization due to natural resources found in specific regions—Nigeria and Indonesia being examples. Citing the case of Argentina, Tanzi (2011) further argues that decentralization makes tax reform and sharing more challenging, but that such latter reforms are needed in order to pay national debts which remain in a state of inertia in part driven by decentralization. Falletti (2010), referencing Latin American experiences, concludes that decentralization reforms do not always put more power in the hands of governors and mayors. Rather, the success of decentralization initiatives to improve accountability, enhance local services, and enable local empowerment largely depends on who initiates reforms, how they are initiated, and—critically their sequence or the order in which decentralization reforms are introduced.

What falls aside in the above discussions about the motivations, critiques, and advocacy around fiscal decentralization in practice across diverse regions is how deeply the adoption of decentralization reforms on the ground is rooted in colonial experiences with political and fiscal institutions and further complicated by the legacy of institutionalized racism via caste systems that were often spatialized and used to exert control over former colonies. Colonial legacies feature much more prominently in the literatures examining economic histories and the implementation or performance of political and administrative decentralization—particularly in African contexts—than in policy examinations of fiscal decentralization.¹ However, as the perception and framing of fiscal decentralization reforms have increasingly transitioned from being positioned as technical exercises, for example, in the determination of the appropriate scale of specific tax administration, into more participatory and democratically oriented

¹ A few key economic history, law, and political science papers examine fiscal systems with a critical analysis of colonial administration and legacies thereof (for example, Acemoglu and Robinson 2001 and 2010 Gardner 2010, Dickovick and Wunsch 2014). Such texts that examine more deeply how colonial legacies bear upon modern governance arrangements and the potentialities of local governance powers from decentralization, however, are not the norm in the broader literature on fiscal decentralization. Shah (2004), Smoke (2006), and Faguet and Posch (2015) for example, point to but do not dwell on the specific colonial administrative experiences that have led to diverse institutional arrangements and politics, particularly at the local level, in their examinations of fiscal decentralization within lower and middle-income countries.

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exercises of fiscal power like participatory budgeting, we argue that insights from a discussion of colonial legacies with a focus on colonial legacies of institutionalized and spatialized racism are critical for understanding how and why fiscal decentralization operates as it does across countries in the global South.

Institutionalized racism in the colonial regime manifested in dual governance systems for different peoples across different spaces, feeding distrust between actors in such systems. Here we argue that the legacy of such systems at play in countries with deep histories of colonialization help explain the divergence in objectives between how advocates of fiscal decentralization reforms intended to improve efficiencies and transparencies in public spending, and those that adopted the reforms for other reasons. Several scholars have already explored the conceptualization and importance of parallel institutions or the interplay and evolution of imposed colonial and indigenous institutions active in colonial and post-colonial state-building periods (Ekeh 1975, Davidson 1992, Mamdani 1996, Finot 2001). Within planning literatures, Watson (2003) discusses the urban development epistemological imprints of such dual institutions in terms of the conflicting rationalities at play in planning interventions pursued by public authorities in cities like Cape Town, where upgrading interventions have met with resistance from the presumed beneficiaries of projects despite 'participation' in project designs.

In this article, we contend that conflicting rationales emergent from legacies of distrust between dual governing, racist institutions in former colonies help explain how fiscal decentralization reforms have been operationalized as they have in former colonies, and why such reforms often fail to achieve the objectives that their proponents forward. Employing a critical analysis of historical and legal precedents as well as secondary resources, we trace how the operationalization of fiscal decentralization reforms in practice reflect colonial heritages of dualistic exercises of power—and mistrust between actors therein—in contexts of both recent and early decolonization, namely Mozambique and Mexico. We argue that social mistrust born of racist colonial administrations meant that paternalistic relationships were leveraged to build social security and gain rents within marginalized spaces and peoples. In Mozambique and Mexico, with the entrance of reformed State practices in post-colonial eras—as seen in participatory fiscal reforms—such paternalism translated into a strengthening of patrimonialism within governments. In the next two sections, we detail how the objectives of two different fiscal decentralization reforms in these diverse contexts interact with local political realities that emerged from diverse yet consistently racist colonial administrative spatial and political legacies, revealing how distrust between public officials at different scales of government as well as between local authorities and residents feed conflicts between the intentions of actors involved in the implementation of reforms. The two fiscal decentralization reforms we study are participatory budgeting in Mozambique and the national '3x1' remittance-matching program in Mexico, the latter of which actually began as a subnational initiative for directing the investment of remittances in localities before evolving into a national program with decentralized implementation. In conclusion, we highlight how fiscal decentralization theories need revision in their application within geographies of the global South in which local rationales and political experiences are deeply shaped by extractive and spatialized racist colonial administrative histories that have widely influenced public perceptions of the openness and authenticity of public sector efforts to localize decision-making, particularly in the fiscal realm.

Fiscal Decentralization in Mozambique

The rootedness of control in pre- and post-independence decentralization

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Mozambique has the unenviable history of being one of the last countries in the world to decolonize. The country fought for and won independence in 1975 from the Portuguese, led by the Mozambique Liberation Front, or Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (Frelimo), which today remains the dominant political party in power across all scales of government throughout much of the country. This reality complicates the notion of separate powers between the government, at multiple levels, and the political party itself. In Weimer and Carrilho's (2017) review of the political economy of decentralization in Mozambique, they stress that despite the administrative decentralization, or devolution, of management and planning to local levels of government in the country since the end of the country's post-independence civil war in the early 1990s, Mozambique remains fundamentally controlled by the Frelimo central government—both politically and economically—and the connections between political and fiscal decentralization remain critical. The fidelity to centralized control of both politics and the public purse is in part a reflection of the ongoing conflict between Frelimo and its main political revival and former civil war nemesis, the National Resistance Movement (*Resistência Nacional de Moçambique*, or Renamo). Given Renamo's strength in Mozambique's central provinces, and Frelimo's dominance in elections over much of the rest of the country—including in national elections, which it has consistently won—there is a lack of incentives for Frelimo to comply with the promises of decentralization made during the Peace Accords ending the country's civil war in 1992 (Bueno, 2019; Vines, 2013).

The administrative exception to this reality was the creation of autarquias or independent municipalities, of which there are now 53. The first municipal finance law, 11/1997, and its 2008 reform give autarquias the power to manage, collect, and budget their own sources of revenue. Autarquias also have the unique right to hold local elections, and also provide some basic services, leveraging mostly intergovernmental transfers and international funds therein, with own-source revenues providing the smallest portion of municipal budgets (Weimer, 2012). Maputo city, the capital, is by far the most well situated of autarquias in regard to both political and economic power. However, Frelimo's influence means that even in autarquias like Maputo, Frelimo has the ability to sway traditional authorities and municipal leaders at the most local levels, where the party's interest remains in voter mobilization, especially with the recent gains of new political parties like the Democratic Movement of Mozambique (*Movimento Democrático de Moçambique*) and growing clashes with old foes like Renamo since 2013 (Macamo, 2017). Critics note local level elites tend to support Frelimo out of concern that they may otherwise suffer financial and political disadvantages (Ferrant, 2018; Macamo, 2014).

This tension and arms-length cooperation—between the center and the local nodes of authority—is not unique to Mozambique and reflects a deeper colonial, race-based administrative construct used by the Portuguese and others across the continent. Within Mozambique, the Portuguese colonial administration mobilized the segregation of Mozambicans into a local hierarchy that spanned labor systems and political administration. A practice of forced labor, called *chibalo*, for example, exempted Africans with European ancestry as well as a small number of Mozambicans referred to as *assimilados*, or those the Portuguese had deemed 'civilized' (Penvenne, 1981). Similarly, the *indigenato* regime, instituted in the early 20th century, positioned the majority of Mozambicans as *indigenas* or subordinates to chiefs of communities defined as tribes with a common culture and subject to traditional (read indigenous) law, while *assimilados* and colonialists were subject to Portuguese colonial law (O'Laughlin, 2000). This dual legal system also had a spatial materialization in the creation of two distinct territorial units: the *conselhos* in urban areas and the *circumscrições* in rural ones. The latter were broken down into *regedorias*, which were headed by an appointed Mozambican official, the *regúlo*, who was in turn supervised by

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higher-level (*posto*) colonial officials (*chefes de posto*) (Isaacman and Isaacman 2018). In Mozambique, O’Laughlin explains that the *regúlo* became a hereditary position, and that ‘when Mozambicans moved into urban areas, they were [still] governed by a local *regúlo* without particular regard to their ethnic origin; the boundaries of semi-urban *regadorias* were adjusted with the growth of the cities’ (2000, p. 17). As such, black Mozambicans living in cities often found themselves subject to both colonial law and traditional law, and both urban and rural governing constructs, with *conselhos* but particularly *regúlos* seen as the local face of the colonial regime.

Post-independence in 1975, the Frelimo-led national government worked to institute a sharp break with colonial administrative legacies by removing practices like taxation and by nationalizing housing and other resources. In Maputo, Frelimo also instituted a governing system that went deep into neighborhoods and encouraged loyalty to the political party of freedom fighters with new administrative positions. Outside of the central Municipal Council of Maputo, led by the city mayor, governing positions were decentralized within each of the city’s seven districts, making the capital a hybrid of both urban and rural administrative norms (See Figure 1).

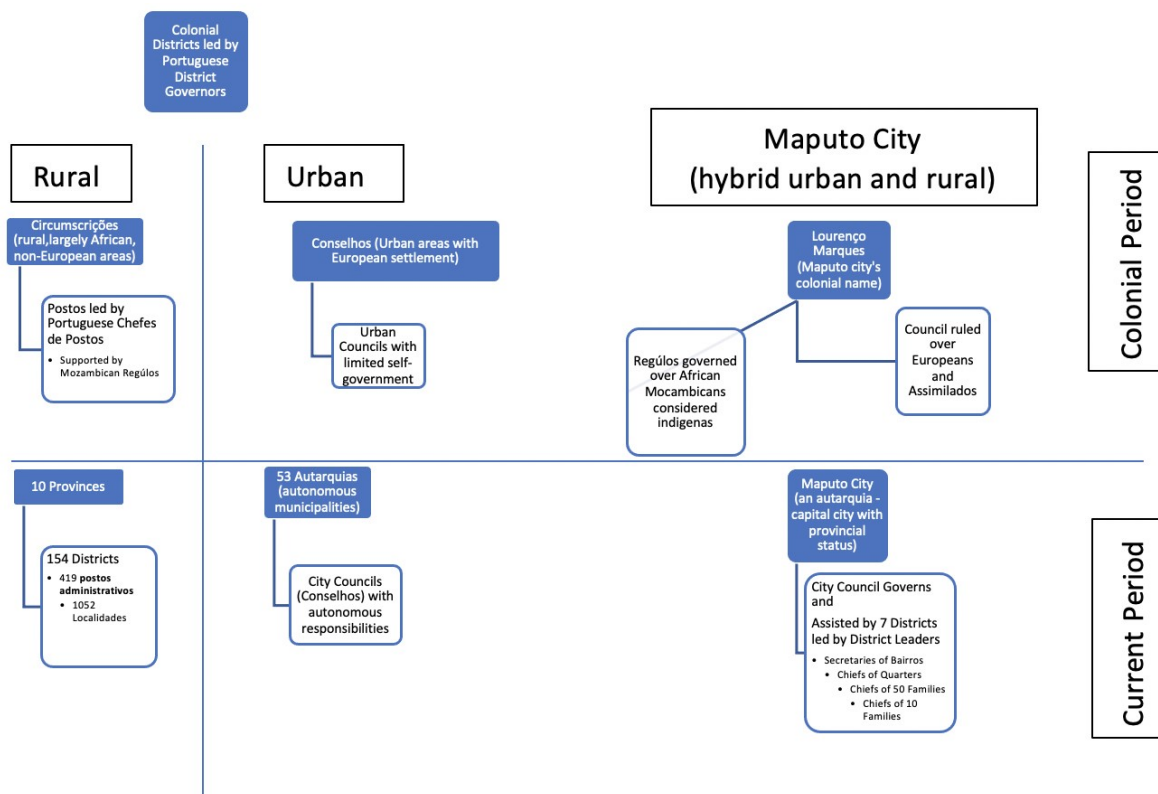


Figure 1. Legacies of Colonial Political Administration in Mozambique and its capital, Maputo

Mimicking the provincial administrative construct, every municipal district in the capital city of Maputo today remains led by a district head, but under the municipal district the hierarchy is led by *bairro* or neighborhood secretaries, and then chiefs of neighborhoods or ‘quarters’, chiefs of ‘50 families,’ and ‘chiefs of ten families,’ which were all created for the census of 1980. These local positions often corresponded to hierarchies and the specific lineage of leaders who acted as heads under the colonial *regulado* (O’Laughlin, 2000). Another pertinent

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example of this reproduction of former organizing architectures was in the neighborhood level 'dynamizing groups' Frelimo originally established to mobilize Mozambicans during the fight for independence. After independence, individuals were elected into these dynamizing groups—but only to replace the regúlo as a local authority (O'Laughlin, 2000). The fidelity of all these groups are primarily to Frelimo as a political party, as opposed to the institution of local government. Frelimo also worked to shape urban and rural labor forces. Quembo (2012) describes how in 1983, Frelimo launched a coercive labor program, Operation Production, sending unemployed urban residents from Maputo and other cities off to work on rural state farms in a style reminiscent of chibalo. Finally, Frelimo's passing of municipal law 2/1997 only allowed for locally elected governments in autarquias and not in any rural areas, where instead 'traditional' authorities or community councils were given limited governing power over the largely native, black Mozambican population, further institutionalizing a rural-urban administrative divide rooted in part in the system of racialized control under colonial rule (Buur and Kyed, 2006).

Mozambique's post-independence experience is again far from the exception, as several scholars of post-independence across African countries have noted that the centralized control and extraction mechanisms instituted under racist colonial systems were reconstituted in the political architectures of newly independent states (Bleck and van de Walle, 2018; Burton and Jennings, 2007; Mamdani, 1996; Schneider, 2006). Indeed, the racialized and spatialized tensions across the country have remained over the past two decades, even as Mozambique abandoned some of the control mechanisms instituted under the early Frelimo socialist regime and introduced stronger market-based reforms in line with much of the international donor community's push for greater democracy and more neoliberal economic policies. These efforts have mostly centered on introducing transparencies in practice while still allowing for Frelimo's central fiscal control. For example, greater transparency over budgets was mandated for all subnational provinces and autarquias in a 2008 reform of the municipal finance law. This effort included the digitalization of fiscal accounts through a national accounting system (SISTAFE) and a new fiscal management system for autarquias (SGA), both of which received major donor-funded support. In rural areas, an effort at fiscal decentralization also took the form of the 2005 introduction of a law allocating an annual District Budget for Local Initiatives, known as the '7 million' budget—whereby seven million meticaís were allocated to District governments each year. However, this mechanism took on a centralized nature as well. As Gonçalves explains, district administrations began by using the money for public infrastructure projects previously identified by the district administration and District Local Councils. However, early in 2006, uncertainty about how to use the money began to grow among administrators as speeches by central government figures began to indicate specified intended uses for goals like food production and job creation (2013: 615). Cahen too (2011) argues that the 7 million budget is an excellent example of how well Frelimo was able to recover and centralize the support of traditional chiefs across the country after having disavowed many of them in a modernist push post-independence. He notes that 'all over the country, the huge majority of so-called "community authorities" are members of the [Frelimo] party and, more recently, the components of the advisory local councils which deal with the local budgets of '7 millions of meticaís' are closely controlled and composed by state and party members. In the past, the communal village was the way of creating the state apparatus in the country and the bush ...but now it is neopatrimonialism and state clientelism.' (2011: 5). The introduction of participatory budgeting in Mozambique's cities, then, is perhaps the latest mechanism of both fiscal decentralization and political democratization which has grappled with the legacy of centralized political control and continued disjuncture between dual systems of governance for different racialized (and spatialized) populations.

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Experimenting with Participation

While Dondo was the first city in Mozambique to introduce participatory budgeting, it was a combination of external linkages and internal experiences like that of Dondo's that influenced the capital city's launch of participatory budgeting in 2008. As with other formally introduced decentralization reforms, participatory budgeting's arrival in Maputo very much reflects the city authorities' engagement in the international circuit of policy ideas and exchange fora for municipal professionals (Carolini, 2015). In particular, the former and once again mayor of the capital city, Eneas Comiche, played a critical role—both because of his clear internal influence on municipal management but also because of his long and wide engagement in international circuits of policy leadership and exchange. Comiche participated in early World Bank and UN-backed conferences promoting participatory budgeting held in South Africa, but also visited and later sent emissaries to Porto Alegre, Brazil, where participatory budgeting was first introduced (Nylen, 2014). At the same time, Comiche, while widely popular in the city, was facing a power challenge within Frelimo before municipal elections, and thus was looking for a way to strengthen his position with the popular vote (Nylen, 2014, Carolini 2015). The participatory budget held potential therein—and was further in line with the portfolio of municipal reforms that the World Bank wished to support with the introduction of ProMaputo, a series of initiatives to improve fiscal municipal performance and basic service provision.

While the participatory exercise did not save Comiche from falling out of favor with Frelimo, participatory budgeting was instituted city-wide by the next Frelimo-approved Mayor, David Simango. Under Simango, the exercise faced challenges from the start. The first years of the reform saw revision upon revision of the time-line, administration, and project-level intents of the participatory budget, reflecting different contextual obstacles in instituting a participatory reform under conditions of what has been described as a party-based or 'competitive' authoritarian regime with little civil society organizational strength outside the political party system (Nylen, 2014).² While the participatory budgeting initiative remains a presence within the local governing structure of budgeting, its operations work under the constraints of the existing architecture of power as opposed to opening it up to the wider group of residents within each of Maputo's seven districts. For example, in the very rural municipal district of KaTembe, where participatory budgeting was first launched and celebrated in Maputo, the Consultative Council—which includes the district leadership, bairro secretaries, and Frelimo-connected local elites from business and sometimes religious organizations—led the exercise, with votes for action items cast by 'elected' as opposed to all residents (Carolini, 2015). The same dominance of existing leadership groups was found across other districts of Maputo (Nylen, 2014). Indeed, in the third iteration of participatory budgeting, the city envisioned a new methodology that would exclude wealthier central city districts (Nylen, 2014). These are the same city districts where the majority of foreign nationals live, alongside relatively wealthier mixed race and black Mozambicans.³ As such, not only was the participatory budgeting exercise no longer a democratic fiscal reform that aimed for the whole city, regardless of socio-economic characteristics, as originally intended, but its implementation within the remaining included districts would still be subject to the legacies of Frelimo-controlled leadership reflected in the roles of district leaders, bairro secretaries, and other neighborhood appointed chiefs of families. It also again reflects the differentiated administration of funds for different spatialized, racially distinct settlements first introduced under the colonial regime— save that

² According to the Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index (2020), on a scale of 1 to 10, Mozambique receives a 3.65 and is classified as 'authoritarian,' scoring 2.58 on a scale of 1 to 10 for its electoral process and pluralism.

³ It is of interest that other districts like KaTembe were also excluded—not because of their wealth but because of their access to other national funding sources (Nylen 2014).

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now with wealthier, racially diverse neighborhoods are excluded while lower income, largely black Mozambican neighborhoods are included.

Political fidelities clashing with reform rationalities

One of the major obstacles to participatory budgeting's institution as intended (e.g., as a democratic, transparent fiscal governance reform) has been the colonial legacy of control mechanisms in government's relationship with civil society. While most note the discord and mistrust between residents and government in rural areas, even in the capital of Maputo, residents do not have extensive experience or histories of self-administration—and instead are used to both the pre- and post-independence oversight of *conselhos*, dynamizing groups, and other constructs of patrimonial control over popular voice (Filipe, 2019). This reality complicates attempts at improving fiscal decentralization and strengthening democratic voice through initiatives like participatory budgeting, which place a particular demand in theory on the universal exercise of local-level voice and self-administration.

While international development institutions today recognize how critical local contextual inputs are in accepting or rejecting the premises of decentralization reforms (World Bank 2018), historically there has been much criticism launched at international efforts to roll out decentralization across several countries where the reforms were not necessarily welcomed. Africanists, for example, long argued that the introduction of policy and planning reforms from international institutions ignored contextual politics, institutions, and histories. As Bunk (2018) notes, the donor community historically ignored the instrumentalization of decentralization reforms by the political elite in Mozambique, instead focusing on aspects of technical implementation in their continued push for formal decentralization reforms to enhance democracy and to spur financial efficiencies in the tradition of decentralization in the West's experience. Bunk and others like Weimer (2012) position this donor oversight as an example of what is often referenced as a now well-established game that local elites play with donors, reflecting their divergent interests and objectives in the implementation of reforms. Similar to how Watson (2003) highlights the conflicting rationales between the urban poor and municipal professionals at the local level of urban planning in South Africa, here the deviations have been between national and international actors, with the former—embodied in the Frelimo political party administration—attempting to use the latter's push for decentralization reforms as a means of securing political loyalty from localized reform beneficiaries and, perversely, of centralizing control over the country's political apparatus. Erk further criticizes the roll-out of decentralization reforms by bilateral development agencies and international organizations as a 'decontextualized and unconditional embrace of formal institutional blueprints without due attention to structural and contextual local factors' (2015, p. 410). Participatory budgeting in practice, even in Mozambique's most capacity-full city, reflects these challenges of reform implementation without contextual integration.

Problematically, however, it is not simply that context has been ignored or depoliticized in the international circuit of development reforms—and in particular decentralization—exported to Africa, but that context is itself has been often blamed for the failures of such reforms. This point is made forcefully by Erk who argues that the contextual environments into which reforms have been introduced in Africa since the 1990s are often pinpointed as the drivers for the failures of reforms—an ex-post consideration of context which centers blame on the 'recipients', as opposed to an ex-ante one, which would more appropriately point to the failures of reform advocates to consider contextual realities and histories to begin with (Erk, 2015, 2014). Others too note how 'good governance' is often cited as the missing ingredient in the implementation of decentralization reforms across the African continent. For example,

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scholars working on accountability and principal-agency problems note how decentralization reforms were perceived as a means of minimizing rent-seeking behaviors (Hiskey, 2010; Wunsch, 2014). The potential that decentralization reforms would bring in theory are thus linked to the enhancement of local control to ‘reduce decisional and organizational costs through smaller and less heterogeneous populations; to utilize social capital, social pressure, and existing social infrastructure to discourage free riding; and to reduce the operational costs of large organizations by enhancing the capacity of smaller, subnational governance institutions’ (Wunsch, 2014). However, such decentralization theory fails to grasp the reality of the different realms of local control and the legacies of local socio-political patronage in the wake of racist administrations in African countries like Mozambique. For example, Weimer and Carrilho (2017) apply Ekeh’s (1975) formulation of two publics on the continent—the civic public and the primordial public—in their discussion of decentralization in Mozambique. The former sphere—the civic public—represents formal and codified institutions, often with racist colonial legacies, that are mostly mimicked and resisted on the ground, while the latter—or the primordial public—encompasses informal, but well-defined and hierarchical social rules of engagement that are well-known and followed. In the context of participatory budgeting, this reality works against the assumed relevance of the exercise as a means of overturning traditional budget oversight, as not only is the exercise now delimited to certain neighborhoods, but the civic public in Maputo remains attached to Frelimo as opposed to local government itself, and the primordial public tacitly governs what priorities should be at the neighborhood level.

Cornwall leans on Lefebvre’s conceptualization of the social histories and political life of spaces and the connectivity between different social spheres of power therein to call for ‘situating... dynamics with regard to patterns of interaction in other domains of association [outside that of public participation]: the mosque or church, the clinic, the field, the home’ (2002, p.7). This is evidenced in the constitution and dynamics at play in the way that participatory budgeting was introduced and operationalized in Maputo, where the Consultative Council—much as the bairro-level secretariat and quarter chiefs—are often constituted by the same individuals as those in Frelimo’s local-level party structure—and sometimes held by such members by over a decade (or more). This reality reflects the importance of Cornwall’s analytic use of Lefebvre and the overlap of different social—and in Mozambique, racial—spheres of power. Participatory budgeting does not so much empower the ordinary resident in Maputo. Its exclusion of neighborhoods follows a racialized administrative dynamic still present in the city. Further, it has created another avenue of access to finance and political power for the district’s existing leadership, again dominated by fidelity to Frelimo as a political party.

An Experiment with Homegrown Decentralization in Mexico

Early traditional decentralization reforms and a step in a new direction

Mexico is a federal republic whose fiscal structure is defined by the Fiscal Coordination Law (Ley de Coordinación Fiscal, LCF), which was passed in 1953. Prior to this, according to the 1917 constitution, the central government and federal entities (the states) had equal taxing authority, which resulted in a competitive system and efficiency losses. Over the years, several national fiscal conventions were held in an attempt to coordinate taxing authority and distribution of national income, eventually resulting in the 1953 LCF which held that states coordinating with the federation would suppress local taxes on trade and industry in return for transfers from the central government (Cantú de la Cruz, 2003; Escobar Latapí, 2012). The LCF underwent two major reforms in 2007 and 2013 with the goal of increasing tax collection

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at the subnational level and modifying some of the funding formulas for the Municipal Development Fund and Hydrocarbon Taxation Fund among others in order to enforce fiscal federalism. The overarching goal of both reforms was to make states less dependent on central government transfers (Carolini et al., 2019).⁴

In contrast to the more traditional forms of fiscal decentralization embodied in the LCF reforms, which attempted to increase local tax collection, the Mexican federal government has also launched other programs that specifically target territorial inequalities by strengthening local authorities and communities with greater fiscal power—one of the main objectives of fiscal decentralization. While these programs are not orthodox representations of fiscal decentralization reforms as conceived in higher-income countries, here we argue that they represent compelling, if complicated, alternatives to traditional fiscal decentralization projects. One such program is the Priority Attention Zones (zonas de atención prioritaria, or ZAP). According to the 2004 General Law of Social Development (Ley General de Desarrollo Social, LGDS) Article 43, ZAPs receive federal funds to boost local budgets, with the transfer volumes determined by a ZAP's level of social lag (including educational gaps, lack of access to healthcare, and quality of built homes) and the percentage of the population living in extreme poverty (Carolini et al., 2019; CONEVAL (Consejo Nacional de Evaluación de la Política de Desarrollo Social), 2020). According to a report by the National Evaluation Council of Development Policy (Consejo Nacional de Evaluación de la Política de Desarrollo Social, CONEVAL), between 2005 and 2012 there was an 8.6% increase in access to basic housing infrastructure in the ZAPs. This diminished the gap in access to basic housing infrastructure between non-ZAPs and ZAPs from 20.8% in 2005 to 13.4% in 2012 (CONEVAL (Consejo Nacional de Evaluación de la Política de Desarrollo Social), 2020). As of 2015, the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía, INEGI) had identified 25,286 towns with a very high or high degree of marginalization in 698 municipalities with a total population of 8 million people as potential beneficiaries of the ZAP program (SEDESOL (Secretaría de Desarrollo Social), 2015).

Another initiative, Tres por Uno (3x1), also serves a purpose traditionally sought by fiscal decentralization reforms. While the 3x1 program is typically categorized as a social spending initiative, it embodies an alternative form of fiscal decentralization in that it combines subnational funds with private funds from Mexican citizens living and working abroad, and federal funds to implement social and community development projects at a local level—in short, amplifying local entities' access to funds for local development. The funding associated with 3x1 is significant for municipalities. According to Simpser et. al. (2016), 20% of total public works spending in approximately 30% of participating municipalities were 3x1 expenditures. 3x1 builds formalized connections between hometown associations formed by Mexican citizens abroad and their home communities in Mexico, combining their support with funding at the federal, state, and municipal level to support local projects giving all three entities a say in the project selection and implementation process. Simpser et. al. (2016) highlight 3x1 as a particularly compelling case of decentralization reform to consider because it is evidence of the fiscal, administrative, and political decentralization reforms which have led to local governments having increasing influence over the implementation of redistributive spending policies. Further, the program is unique in that it is a national government initiative that formalized and expanded upon a long held grassroots tradition of Mexican citizens abroad investing in their hometowns.

The 3x1 program was not, at least initially, a top-down approach like ZAPs, but rather a

⁴ In Spanish, these funds are referenced as 'aportaciones y participaciones.'

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bottom-up one born from the realities of migration, which strongly shape the Mexican socio-economic landscape. Nonetheless, the program came to confront the challenges commonly associated with colonial legacies of centralized control, the deep racial inequalities whose origins can be traced to the Spanish caste system, and generalized distrust between disadvantaged social and ethnic groups and public officials.

A unique initiative founded on place-based realities meets a centralist legacy

3x1's origins can be traced back to the informal community projects funded by Mexican migrants beginning in at least the 1970s if not earlier (Malone and Durden, 2018). The program's first formal antecedent was the foundation of a 2x1 program in the state of Zacatecas in 1992. The initiative worked by matching every US\$ invested by migrant social clubs in hometown associations (HTAs) with another US\$ given by the state and municipal governments. In 1998, Zacatecas extended this subnational level initiative to a cooperation with the national government, forming 3x1 whereby every dollar invested through the HTAs was matched by the federal, state, and municipal governments (Hamann, 2007). In 2002, the program was expanded nationwide (Malone and Durden, 2018).

As the name indicates for every \$1 migrant groups contribute, the federal, state, and municipal governments contribute a total of \$3 more. Project selection is under the control of community groups known as the Comité de Validación y Atención a Migrantes (COVAM), which is composed of representatives from the three levels of government and the migrant association in question (Simpser et. al., 2016). This architecture differs significantly from the typical fiscal decentralization narrative, which fully entrusts local governments to decide on the ideal mix of goods and services for their populations. Rather, 3x1 incorporates the priorities of a Mexican population spread around the world for socioeconomic reasons but still with strong connections to their homes and a desire to make an impact there. Again, in its origins the program was a cooperation between the state government of Zacatecas and the Federation of Zacatecan Clubs, an associate of Zacatecan hometown associations, which did not involve the federal government. In an attempt to spread a decentralized development program across the nation, the central government also got a seat at the decision-making table.

The impact of 3x1 has been debated extensively over the years (Iskander 2005). From the time the national program began in 2002 to 2007, 27 out of 30 Mexican states participated and by 2008 the total budget between migrants and the three levels of government grew from \$424 million to \$1.7 billion. On the ground, one study found that 3x1 magnified local public works budgets, increasing access to public sanitation, drainage and water, though not electricity (Duquette-Rury, 2015). There is also evidence that 3x1 projects tend to be implemented in more disadvantaged areas that traditionally lack public works spending (Burgess, 2005).

Colonial legacies produce mistrust and mixed results

As Lopez (2009) indicates, the goal of expanding 3x1 into a nationwide program was to reach 'marginalized' communities with reference to Mexico's indigenous population. In reality, the country's colonial legacy and the corresponding Spanish caste system continues to impact who has the resources to migrate or not and the level of trust Mexicans living abroad may have in Mexican public officials at home.

During Spanish rule, a racially based caste system was imposed and used to maintain control over the colony. Society was broken down between European-born Spaniards, who occupied

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the top socioeconomic sphere of society, followed by Mexican-born people of Spanish descent (*criollos*), people of mixed European and indigenous descent (*mestizos*), indigenous people and finally, people of African descent. In this social hierarchy, the indigenous and Afro-Mexicans were the most marginalized with the least social protections (Layson et al., 2017). The indigenous population of Mexico is often so marginalized that its members have less access to the resources needed to undertake a journey abroad and as a result, have a shorter history of migration and weaker migrant networks abroad (Lopez 2009). This reality has strong implications for the outcome of a decentralized funding scheme based on remittances.

As previously noted, 3x1 was rolled out nationally based on its success as a 2x1 program in the state of Zacatecas. Zacatecas has the smallest indigenous population as a percentage of the total population of all Mexican states—0.29%. As of 2009, Jalisco had received the most federal support for the 3x1 program and its indigenous population is also among the lowest in the country, 1.16% of the total population. Jalisco has a long history of migration, beginning in the mid-20th century, whereas a state like Oaxaca with a much larger indigenous population (47.56% of total population), has a migration history going back approximately 30 years (INEE (Instituto Nacional para la Evaluación de la Educación), 2000; Lopez, 2009).

The legacy of colonial patterns of settlement and segregation means that today, some areas of Mexico produce more migrants than others, making 3x1 an unreliable strategy for addressing fiscal inequalities across regions. As Rocha Menocal (2007: 5) states — ‘while the programme is intended in principle to reach those sectors of the population/communities that are poorest/most marginalised, given the way the programme operates, this cannot be guaranteed in practice. Migrants select the communities that they want to work with, but this does not guarantee that it will always be the poorest communities that are selected.’

Relatedly, Rocha Menocal (2007) also indicates that one of the initial challenges of the national rollout of 3x1 was the mistrust the migrant communities harbored of local authorities whom they perceived as corrupt or uninterested in migrants’ challenges. The program has been known to reflect a degree of politicization. Rocha Menocal (pg. 5, 2007) claims that this tension is specifically linked to conflicts around political party affiliations, for example, in the state of Puebla. Mexican citizens originating in Puebla but living in the US were strongly opposed to the leadership of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) and ‘resent[ed] the party as partly responsible for their leaving Mexico in the first place.’ Thus, the idea of participating in a partnership with the local government controlled by the PRI was out of the question. Similarly, in their study of the political economy, Simpser et. al. (2016) also found empirical evidence that despite the project selection process being managed by the COVAMs, municipalities’ disbursement of funds appeared to be timed with the end of the electoral cycle and that when determining infrastructure spending to match 3x1 projects, municipal governments protect ‘politically-sensitive budget items,’ like personnel salaries, at the expense of debt service.

The development of a local elite that monopolizes power at the municipal level is also problematic for the implementation of fiscal decentralization reforms, for as Smith and Revell (2016) argue in their analysis of the impact of fiscal decentralization in the city of León, local elites in Mexico have national aspirations that often conflict with local priorities. What these scholars do not dwell on, however, is the further link between the establishment of local elites and the colonial caste system, which excluded individuals of indigenous origins from positions of power. The assumption behind fiscal decentralization initiatives is that local leadership will better understand the demands of their constituents than national leaders and act accordingly. This does not take into account, however, the particular challenges for many Mexicans in

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overcoming the legacies of a colonial administration in which some racial and ethnic groups were entirely excluded from leadership, even at the subnational level, and left with patrimonial systems that depended on elites who historically did not act in their best interest. The UN's Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) has pushed to the forefront the notion of a 'culture of privilege' in the region, which is inextricably linked with colonial history and to this day perpetuates a system in which the historical elite have better access to positions of power at every level in both the public and private sphere (2018). Another product of colonialism in Mexico according to Finot (2001) is that the local level of government has always been seen operating on the margins of the official centralized government. In the case of 3x1, there was an explicit effort to incorporate and formalize the local governments' involvement in transnational development initiatives. It was nonetheless, met with hesitation by citizens abroad. In the context of 3x1, in order to cope with this distrust, migrant communities 'demanded playing a bigger and more direct role in supervising and overseeing the executing of the development projects they supported' (Rocha Menocal 2007).

What is perhaps perverse in how 3x1 as a national program has fared is that it began on a very local level, working between HTAs and the state and municipal governments of Zacatecas. But as the program drew the attention of the federal government and was instituted nationwide, it became apparent that Mexican citizens abroad did not all share the same level of trust with decentralized programs as implemented by the central government. This harkens back to Falletti's (2010) observation that the success of decentralization reforms depends greatly on who initiates them and how they are initiated. In this case, the original program was initiated in a single state working with migrants specifically from that state. As this expanded to a program initiated on a national level with federal level decision makers involved, distrust at the local level grew. Krannich (2016) points out that a potential alternative to 3x1 could be the *usos y costumbres* program which grants indigenous communities in Mexico a certain degree of political autonomy. However, this often leads to elder males in the community occupying positions of leadership at the exclusion of women and the youth. In her study based in Oaxaca, Worthen explains that even efforts to reform patriarchal traditions fail because indigenous women have felt that reforms actually 'exacerbate their exploitation within the local terms of gendered collective labor' and create 'tension over women's political roles instead of ushering in women's participation' (2015:914, 915). Ultimately, even alternatives to traditional decentralization programs cannot escape the implications of a colonial past and the many ways in which societies were divided under colonial rule with the purpose of maintaining control.

Conclusion

As Watson (2003) highlights, even when planners attempt to recognize variations across communities and cultures, there is still a tendency to lean towards assumptions and a desire to create common truths—such as what works to leverage remittances for development in one state could work in all states, or what works to enhance participation in one community or country will work in all—when in fact there are deeper conflicting priorities rooted in complicated colonial histories and rationales that are not readily apparent today.

Decentralization in the Western paradigm has been viewed as a way to increase autonomy and to improve accountability and service efficiencies in subnational entities. This is the logic that steered its implementation under the influence of international donor organizations in participatory budgeting in Mozambique as well as in earlier traditional and new forms of fiscal decentralization in Mexico. While prior critiques of the implementation of decentralization reforms in the global South have highlighted the possibility that decentralization can increase

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regional inequalities and that greater fiscal authority and spending power at the subnational level do not necessarily equate with greater accountability, here we introduce a new consideration by exploring the impact of colonial legacies—and especially racist governing institutions—on the implementation of decentralization policies. This institutionalized racism often facilitated the establishment of dual governance systems that became nodes of societal distrust which are still evidenced today. In practice, the racism and its reproduction in dual governance systems rooted in colonial administrations can help to explain some of the divergence between how advocates of fiscal decentralization perceive its potential benefits and its actual impact.

While Maputo's Mayor Comiche in Mozambique sourced international expertise in his implementation of participatory budgeting, 3x1 in Mexico was a homegrown alternative to other more traditional forms of decentralization. In Mozambique, dominant classes and their members, determined under the Portuguese colonial administration and often with racially biased criteria, continued to impact who filled leadership positions, even in a post-colonial and decentralized system. This complicated stated objectives to increase citizen participation and accountability of leaders, who were more likely influenced by the dominant political party, Frelimo, instead of the general public. In Mexico, 3x1 began as a homegrown effort at the subnational level and was based on the realities of a low to middle income migrant nation, as opposed to a high-income country. Nonetheless, the colonial legacy of a Spanish caste system that greatly disadvantaged indigenous groups, to the point where they had fewer resources to be able to migrate and to try to improve their living standards elsewhere has meant that the program has a limited capacity to address deep regional inequalities. Further, when it was adopted at the national level, 3x1 confronted the realities of parallel governing institutions and distrust between different levels of government and citizens, evidence again of the impact of racial dynamics in colonial regimes.

In conclusion, subnational government is inherently complex in post-colonial contexts in which racially based caste systems were institutionalized under dual governance systems that have led to deep and lingering societal mistrust. In this context, the assumptions behind fiscal decentralization as applied in high income countries in Europe and in North America do not resonate in the context of Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa. A reconsideration of methods for improving efficiency and accountability with an explicit discussion and understanding of the often spatialized colonial legacies of race and power is necessary in order to develop and adapt more appropriate tools than Western-style fiscal decentralization. In the case of Mexico, as in much of Latin America, there is a need to dismantle the 'culture of privilege' by defending historically disenfranchised groups and ensuring their active and equal participation in the public realm at every level of government. This goes hand in hand with a progressive tax reform and greater social protections that work to counter historical inequalities across space. In Mozambique, legacies of spatialized privilege and racial differentiation remain entrenched in how administrative reforms like participatory budgeting are rolled out and implemented. Even though more recent efforts have aimed to enhance the resources afforded to the poorest—and most uniformly black African—neighborhoods, these efforts are problematic in that they again entrench the idea of dual governance systems across spaces and peoples, and in that they allow for yet another venue of elite capture by privileged groups aligned with the very centralized power of the dominant political party. Thus, an exercise meant to enhance transparency and broad popular participation instead breeds further illusions about decentralization power.

Evaluations of participatory fiscal reforms in the global South like 3x1 and participatory budgeting often remains positioned in terms of the efficiencies achieved or in terms of how

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well they encourage broad participation (Cabannes 2018; Malone and Durden 2018; Sintomer et al 2013). However, here we have considered another avenue for understanding and evaluating participatory fiscal initiatives. In analyzing the success of reforms like those forwarded in Mexico and Mozambique, scholars and policy makers would do well to first consider how legacies of racialized and spatialized power sit across the contexts in which reforms are forwarded and to examine how well the actual design of reforms and their implementation incorporate such realities and the rationales they have institutionalized among participating stakeholders—before considering the reform’s ‘success’ in terms of efficiencies and numbers of participants gained. Colonial legacies of mistrust ingrained in the differentiated treatment of peoples across spaces are difficult to unravel in political contexts keen on the uptake and scaling up of championed policies. However, these fiscal participatory policy reforms unravel on the ground precisely because their design and implementation did not consider the histories of peoples and spaces in targeted sites. This should change if fiscal reform is to even begin helping to address the deep roots of spatial and racial inequality born from colonial administrations.

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