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IFPRI Discussion Paper 00721

October 2007

Understanding Policy Volatility in Sudan

Khalid El Harizi, International Fund for Agricultural Development
El Sayed Zaki, Independent Consultant
Bettina Prato, International Fund for Agricultural Development
and
Ghada Shields, Independent Consultant

Development Strategy and Governance Division

INTERNATIONAL FOOD POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE

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ABSTRACT

In this paper we present the findings of a qualitative investigation into some dimensions and implications of policy volatility in the realms of natural resource (NR) governance and devolution in contemporary Sudan, with particular reference to Greater Kordofan. Our goal is to map out some aspects of the interplay between volatility, disempowerment processes affecting both state agents and the rural population, and certain problems of governance that are characteristic but not unique to Sudan. In particular, we argue that volatility is a dimension of poor governance worthy of investigation in its own right, as it is a primary ingredient of what we may call a "self-disempowering state," where adaptive learning in policy processes is impeded and successful devolution faces particularly complex obstacles. The policy domain that we consider for analysis includes laws, regulations and policies enacted under the label of "Decentralization, Land Allocation and Land Use," as well as large development projects supporting the decentralization or devolution of NR management to local communities in the region.

Keywords: Sudan, IFAD, Kordofan, Policy Volatility

1. INTRODUCTION

Like many other developing countries, the Sudan has had a turbulent political history of conflict and social strife during the last half century. This has had disempowering effects on the livelihoods of the population in general and the rural poor in particular. A similar instability has characterized the design and implementation of government policies[1] in various realms: frequent changes in policy orientation, overlapping policy decisions, and selective or ineffective enforcement processes have all combined to produce a volatile policy environment. In turn policy volatility, defined as a largely unpredictable mode of change in some or all of the components of a policy domain (for example the rules, players, outcomes, and enforcement of policy processes and outcomes), has had vastly negative effects on the adaptive capabilities of the population, notably the poor. As a mode of change characterized by its lack of predictable patterns (that is, by a deficit of the institutionalization of processes and outcomes), volatility is by definition disempowering for agents whose strategic choices depend on the possibility of learning how to respond appropriately to opportunities shaped by policy.[2] In addition, volatility can be both the cause and effect of broader governance problems, affecting in particular the ability of state administrations to develop appropriate policy solutions and to nurture institutions that encourage people to invest in sustainable resource use and livelihood strategies.

For much of the rural population of Sudan, policy volatility is both directly and indirectly disempowering, as it undermines both their capabilities and those of state agents involved in the realms of poverty reduction, natural-resource (NR) conservation and management, and economic development. In addition, volatility is both a symptom and a factor of weak governance in other realms, notably human and social development, which presuppose a certain degree of sociopolitical security, people's trust in public institutions, and equitable popular participation in public affairs. Progress towards all these goals is hindered by the volatility of policy processes, from decision-making to implementation and enforcement, and this lack of progress is in turn a contributing factor in the perpetuation of such volatility. In recent years, this interplay has been particularly visible in the repeated efforts by the Sudanese state to reform itself in the direction of decentralization and (in some cases) devolution[3] in several domains that are of

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[1] The term "policy" refers to a range of tools through which official decisionmakers (notably state agents) orient public action and limit the set of strategic choices available to stakeholders in a given domain.

[2] The notion of (dis)empowerment as a process of (failed) adaptation of agents to a changing opportunity structure, which presupposes a link between agent capabilities and relative predictability of change and opportunities (or constraints), is articulated in various documents issued from an IFAD–IFPRI research project led by K. El Harizi on "Empowering the Rural Poor under Volatile Policy Conditions in the Near East and North Africa Region."

[3] While decentralization is a rather general term that refers to the redistribution of aspects of government authority on a territorial basis, devolution more specifically refers to a form of decentralization involving the dispersion of some legislative and executive powers over specific matters from a central government to elected bodies such as regional or municipal authorities. While decentralization can also refer to processes of administrative deconcentration, devolution requires that local bodies targeted by a redistribution of authority from the central government be accountable to their local constituencies for specific matters (these may include for instance NRM, health services, agricultural policies, etc.). In addition, they should be financially and politically autonomous from the central government at least in their routine operations.

special relevance for rural livelihoods, such as natural-resource management (NRM) and local government administration. In the authors' view, the volatility of state policies in these domains is partly a reflection of failed attempts to reform the governance system in the recent past, but it is also a factor that impedes progress on this front, despite the emergence of new enabling conditions, particularly with the end of the North–South war. Understanding the various dimensions of this problem is thus a precondition for the improved design and implementation of policy and institutional reforms that may sustain the political and administrative transformation of the federal state. Furthermore, reaching such an understanding may help to shape devolution reforms conducive to the broad-based empowerment of the rural populations, while also increasing the state's ability to meet the challenges of equitable development and rural poverty alleviation.

While the concept of volatility has been applied and studied extensively in relation to financial markets, and more recently to describe the fluctuations in some countries' economic performance (see for example Caballero 2000 and Easterly, Islam and Stiglitz 2000), to our knowledge it has not yet been used to characterize policymaking processes. This is possibly because most English-language academic literature on policy processes is based on the institutional and political framework of relatively stable democratic systems (notably the United States). While certain theoretical frameworks (notably the punctuated-equilibrium framework proposed by Baumgartner and Jones 1993) acknowledge the presence of important discontinuities in policy processes in American public life, the tendency is to take incremental and relatively predictable processes of change as a given in consolidated democratic systems. Confronted in their experience as development practitioners with a picture of generalized inconsistencies in policy processes (notably in implementation) in Sudan, the authors thus made an innovative choice to apply the concept of volatility to both processes and outcomes of policy design and implementation. Nevertheless, the introduction of this concept to illuminate specific dimensions of these processes and outcomes may be relevant for comparative analysis in developing countries where the institutionalization of public administration is not yet fully accomplished. Moreover, our decision to focus our research on the domains of NR governance and decentralization and/or devolution makes this study complementary to much contemporary literature concerning the interplay of rural development, empowerment, and good governance.[4] The reason for this important convergence is that both of these policy domains – NR

[4] For the purposes of this research, natural resources include arable land, water, forests and rangeland, while resource users include a range of players such as state agencies, rural communities, and private interests or operators. Several research centers working on development and poverty alleviation have contributed much to the literature on decentralization and natural resource governance, at times with specific attention to policymaking processes. These include ODI, IFPRI, IIED, and IDS. Some of this literature stresses the role of political economy factors in shaping policy processes that affect the link between decentralization and NR governance in ways that may be both positive and negative for the rural poor (see among others Baumann and Farrington 2003 and Shackleton et al. 2002). Many of their conclusions are in line with those that can be drawn from the Sudan case, although the authors of such studies do not pause to reflect on the specific implications of policy volatility, but rather look more broadly at problems of poor governance, incomplete devolution, and inequitable political economies affecting policy processes in relation to natural resources.

governance and decentralization and/or devolution – are of the utmost importance for the livelihood strategies of the majority of the rural population in Sudan, as well as for the processes of empowerment or disempowerment that affect them. In addition, both domains provide an excellent laboratory in which to investigate the relevance of various models of policy process to developing countries similar to Sudan.[5] This includes models of bureaucratic organization and decision-making processes in consolidated democracies and, more rarely, in other kinds of states (for example neo-patrimonial, rentier, "failed" or fragile states, etc.), as well as models of policy processes driven by rational choice, institutions, advocacy coalitions, and belief systems involving state and non-state agents.[6]

Without directly investigating the relevance of any particular model to the policy process in Sudan, in this study we link volatility to a policymaking environment characterized by the overlap of certain features of bureaucratic organization with others that are typical of neo-patrimonial states, where policies serve in part to shore up political alignments based on a mix of personal, ideological, ethno-regional, and conflict-related ties. The former features may include "bounded rationality," resistance to change, a tendency to focus on sectoral specialization and to resist inter-agency collaboration and policy integration, and a built-in contradiction between technical and political rationalities in both policy processes and outcomes. All of these may also be present in consolidated democracies, where they are however generally moderated by the effects of accountable political institutions and of relatively transparent debate on potential or actual policy issues, options, and process rules.[7] As for the features of the policy process typical of a neo-patrimonial state where policy serves in part to feed exclusionary political alignments, there is first of all a tendency to appoint civil servants at all hierarchical levels on the basis of personal, ascriptive, or ideological bonds. This tends to make for low domain-specific expertise among policymakers or implementation agents, weak institutional memory, principal-agent problems at all levels of the administration, a tendency for individuals at all levels to redefine decisions or implementation modalities that had been decided previously or elsewhere, and an incentive structure not based on performance or policy effectiveness in public administration. Other relevant features include the use of policies and implementation processes as tools to reward or punish different rural groups against the background of domestic conflict (which among other things makes for little information and public debate about policy issues, little interest in knowledge generation to inform policy decisions, and

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[5] This appears to be the case, for instance, in Ascher's *Why governments waste natural resources: Policy failures in developing countries* (1999), which takes the case of natural resource policy as a key entry point into structural problems (notably inter-agency conflict combined with lack of political accountability) in policymaking in a number of developing countries.

[6] A classic reference concerning decisionmaking processes in bureaucratic environments is Allison's *The essence of decision* (1971). For a review of theories on the policy process (with a focus on the US context) see, among others, Sabatier's *Theories of the policy process* (1999) and Birkland's *Introduction to the policy process: Theories, concepts, and models of public policy making* (2005).

[7] The effects of relatively open debate and learning in shaping public stances on policy issues, including people's perceptions of their interests and their "beliefs" or ideological orientations, are particularly emphasized by authors writing in the "advocacy coalition" framework. See Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith's *Policy change and learning: An advocacy coalition approach* (1993).

restrictive rules of access to the policy process). Finally, an important feature of this process is that policymakers and enforcement agencies have little or no accountability to the public at large (while they may feel accountable to the clientele of specific elites, both individually and as a group). The combination of these factors makes for a weak governance environment, in which the interests, agency, and capabilities of the rural poor are often marginal in policymaking. In addition, this combination produces volatility effects that are worthy of explicit investigation because of their ability to disable adaptive learning both among the rural poor and for state agents.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Besides the notion of volatility, the main conceptual tools employed in this research are largely in line with the vocabulary of contemporary debates on policy processes. In this vocabulary, policymaking is the process of setting and achieving goals that the political leadership deems desirable for its constituency, whether that is a narrow interest group or the public at large. Questions about the legitimacy of the leadership, the nature and size of its constituency, and its relative openness to integrating into policy decisions the views and interests of groups outside that constituency are all-important issues to consider when examining how policy goals are set. Policy options are defined as alternative strategies or courses of action that can be pursued to achieve these goals, with the understanding that only those that are developed to a level close to an actual action plan represent effective options in a policymaking process.[8] In relation to natural resources, for instance, the concepts of policy and policy options refer to a range of instruments and decisions that orient public action and thereby expand or constrain the range of strategic choices that are open to NR users. A policy decision can be institutionalized in a law or expressed in other forms such as decrees, executive ordinances, strategies, action plans, guidelines, programs, and projects. A peculiar problem in volatile policy environments is that not all important policies are traceable to explicit statements of policy decision or to instruments such as laws and action plans. Some policy decisions may not even be officially announced. However, even in these situations there may be a series of actions taken and decisions made by government officials that share a common orientation or pattern of behavior, and thereby reveal or de facto produce a policy orientation that could very well contradict the current legal framework.[9]

Policy processes are understood here as taking place in policy arenas that link them to political processes, in line with the teachings of several strands of literature in political science.[10] A policy arena is a specific type of action situation with its own rules and with a set of players that engage in repeated interactions, make alliances or coalitions, and learn from their past experience. A policy decision generally represents the outcome of such an interaction (Ilchman and Uphoff 1998), therefore policy outcomes depend on the rules of the policymaking game as well as on the objectives, talents, knowledge,

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[8] In the rest of this paper, the term "policy solutions" will actually mean "effective policy options."

[9] In doing so, caution must be exercised in order not to fall into the opposite error of attributing all observed policy impacts to policy objectives, aware as we are that divergence between intentions and results of actions is the rule rather than the exception in human action.

[10] Attention to this linkage is characteristic of constitutional theory, where constitution-making is generally conceptualized as the consolidation of a political configuration into an institutional and regulatory framework for policymaking. See for instance Elazar's "Constitution-making: The pre-eminently political act" (1985). Within given constitutional configurations, there is of course much space for the "political," that is, not merely institution-driven processes of formulation and negotiation of policy options. The literature on interest groups in public administration theory is perhaps the most obvious example of how this space may be articulated conceptually and analyzed. With specific regard to constitutional democracies, see Grossman and Helpman's *Special interest politics* (2002) and Phillips et al.'s "Public interest groups in the policy process" (1990). The link between the political and analytical dimensions of policy processes in general is also stressed by Stone in *Policy paradox: The art of political decision-making* (2001).

resources, and strategies of the players involved in different stages of policymaking processes. For policy design, these players can promote competing options or cooperate in developing a specific policy. Similarly, at policy implementation these same or other players may twist the approved policy depending on their institutional or personal power, for instance by stretching a policy decision beyond its intended domain or resisting it according to their particular interests and goals.[11]

As policy processes are embedded in policy arenas where a variety of political factors interact (for example patterns of alliance, interest and power distribution, basis of legitimacy, prevailing ideological culture and beliefs, etc.), they are rarely in line with the stages heuristic proposed by some US scholars in the 1970s and 1980s. According to this heuristic, the policy process follows an established sequence of logical stages.[12] In ideal terms, the process would start with the analysis of issues and causes, followed by the identification of available options, their appraisal to determine their comparative worth, and a conclusion presumably based on criteria that maximize the collective utility or welfare. This kind of sequence may actually describe formal self-representations of policymaking process in most countries, including Sudan. But looking at the substance of processes taking place in Sudan yields a more complex, dynamic, and in some sense "messy" picture of policymaking than the logical sequence often associated with "rational public choice" in consolidated democracies. In this picture, what makes the application of a stages heuristic problematic is not so much the presence of feedback relationships between, for instance, evaluation and agenda setting, or legitimation and implementation (which are also common in consolidated democracies). Rather, it is the presence of abrupt discontinuities, repetition or duplication of certain stages, and lack or incompleteness of others (notably comparative assessment of different options, validation, and evaluation). In other words, it is the presence of different causes and signs of volatility that chiefly undermines the possibility of identifying stable policy cycles and drawing empowering lessons from them, particularly when it comes to marginal groups like the rural poor. This does not mean that individual participants and observers of the policy process do not develop a sense of the rules surrounding the process, as will become obvious later as we discuss the results of interviews with some of these participants and observers. Rather, what is undermined is the ability of participants to develop reliable adaptive strategies on the basis of a system of observed rules, a system that presupposes that these rules remain valid irrespective of personal idiosyncrasies, clientelistic alignments, environmental "shocks," etc. This situation is especially problematic when it comes to policies that have the potential to be greatly

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[11] Note that this approach to defining a "policy arena" is in principle compatible with a variety of theories of the policy process, since we assume that the various agents with a stake in certain (potential or actual) policy issues may be driven by interests but also by beliefs, patterns of alliances, resources, etc. Some of the implications of "messy" policymaking processes in non-democratic and fragile states are documented by Brock, McGee, and Gaventa in *Unpacking policy: Knowledge, actors, and spaces in poverty reduction in Uganda and Nigeria* (2004).

[12] The limited relevance of this heuristic to substantive policy processes even in consolidated constitutional democracies has often been argued. Nonetheless, this model remains a formal reference for policy processes in many countries, often in combination with an interest-driven rational choice model and/or by an ideology of "scientific" approaches to policy challenges that persists in some development discourses.

empowering but also disempowering for marginal groups, such as NR and devolution policies in the case of the rural poor.

One particularly interesting aspect of the policymaking picture in Sudan (and many other developing countries) is the degree to which policymakers are exposed to processes surrounding donor-funded projects (which in the case of Kordofan are primarily projects co-funded by the International Fund for Agricultural Development – IFAD). These include processes that aim to identify issues, options, and stakeholders, mobilize resources, implement, and evaluate, notably in the domain of NR management and conservation. This exposure appears to have both positive and negative effects on policy processes, their effectiveness, and their volatility in Sudan. In particular, exposure to the increasingly participatory design and implementation approach of many projects seems to be changing some policymakers' perceptions of what an effective policymaking process ought to be about, and providing an avenue for learning that is quite different, though often complementary, to that provided by exposure to state-driven policy processes. In addition, the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders in shaping project design, the need for project teams to make policy choices, and the fact that development projects increasingly support both investment and policy reforms, have transformed some of the more innovative large development projects into policy arenas in their own right. This evolution has far-reaching implications in Sudan because the bulk of budgetary resources allocated for NR management, rural poverty eradication, and conflict transformation or peacebuilding is channeled through development projects, mostly with external funding (which partly obviates state assumption of responsibility for investment in these realms). Under these conditions, development projects are thus important policy arenas, although they may not be commonly perceived as such.[13] Other important policy domains, such as land management, decentralization, and/or devolution, in which external financing agencies have not been very engaged until recently, have been designed and implemented with the sole involvement of the federal government, states, or the "Native Administration,"[14] so these domains have benefited less from outside stimuli for change. Nevertheless, volatility continues by and large to characterize all these domains, despite their different exposure to such stimuli.

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[13] Performance indicators of development projects typically underestimate their contribution to collective and institutional learning as the latter is often embodied in individuals and not amenable to measurement.

[14] "Native Administration" refers to a system of authorities and institutions rooted in ethno-tribal custom, which was consolidated with a degree of official government recognition under British colonial domination. Although the authority of NA institutions and leaders has been greatly undermined by state policies since the 1970s, in many parts of rural Sudan (notably in Central and Western Sudan) they still play a significant role, especially in NRM, the administration of rights of access and use of land, water, and pasture, and the management of resource-based local conflicts.

3. WHAT ACCOUNTS FOR POLICY VOLATILITY IN SUDAN?

In this section we put forward some mutually complementary hypotheses that were formulated at the beginning of the field research and concern policy volatility, its main features, and its causes. In this type of exploratory research, the aim is not to use fieldwork to test the validity of these hypotheses, but rather to use them to guide the design of the data collection and analysis protocols. However, since an expected outcome of the research was to finish with empirically grounded research hypotheses on the nature of policy volatility, we did feed our field data (notably interviews with policymakers) back into the hypotheses and thereby challenged and refined them.

Hypothesis 1: The fragmentation of policy arenas generates contradictory policies.

Our first hypothesis links policy volatility to decisions made in many largely independent but partly overlapping, un-coordinated, and competing policy arenas, namely federal administration, state and local government, Native Administration, and large development projects. Overlapping and fragmented policy arenas with their own specific players, rules, strengths, and weaknesses tend to produce conflicting policies and practices, even under conditions like those prevailing in consolidated democratic systems. In less stable conditions, these conflicting policies are likely to contribute to overall policy volatility, unless they can be prevented by making all policy arenas operate in full coordination and with homogenous goals and visions (which may in turn require a clear institutionalization of national goals and values – something that is often associated with consolidated states, whether democratic or not). Given this realization, one cannot exclude the possibility that the decentralization process that has taken place in Sudan over the past several decades has contributed to the fragmentation of the policymaking process in many policy domains and has therefore been a factor of volatility. Similarly, the well-known difficulty that donors have in coordinating their respective operations and approaches and in channeling resources through government institutions may have added to the problem, as it has resulted in a multiplicity of decision-making locations and processes.

Hypothesis 2: Policy processes that are excessively skewed in favor of ideological or ascriptive considerations (or both) rather than concrete problem-solving inhibit adaptive and incremental collective learning (which prevents adaptively and incrementally changing policies and produces volatility).

The second proposition focuses on the cultural and political environment of policymakers in the Sudan, which is often characterized as a mix of militaristic, ethno-tribal, and religious discourses that place a premium on the preservation of ascriptive or conflict-related alliances rather than on the achievement of concrete solutions to public issues such as rural poverty, environmental degradation, etc. In this regard, we hypothesize that a certain kind of ideology (notably a mix of religious, ethno-tribal, and militaristic ideologies about the nature of the political realm), combined with widespread formal and substantive

attachment to social norms linked to religious and ethno-tribal identity, may significantly contribute to volatility. In particular, we assume that relative disregard for factual evidence – or at least the relegation to a minor role of such evidence in policymaking when compared to respect for patterns of alliances of an ascriptive or ideological character – is a source of volatility, because these attitudes inhibit adaptive learning processes and discourage the investment in knowledge production needed to examine alternative policy courses. This does not mean that decisionmakers are never aware of what is ineffective in certain policy processes and outcomes, but rather that this awareness does not translate into learning within the policy process itself. The negative effects of this fact are amplified by dysfunctional (or absent) democratic processes at local and national levels, which obstruct channels that might put experience-based alternative perspectives into policy debates (whether these perspectives come from marginal interest groups or from occasionally "marginal" policymakers).

Hypothesis 3: Policy volatility is a result of a scarcity of effective policy options.
Our third hypothesis links policy volatility to the scarcity of effective policy options. This scarcity reduces the ability of the state and of society to find satisfactory responses to old and new problems. Pressure to find solutions without having effective options at hand results in superficial policy changes within the same narrow set of already familiar options. Inadequate planning capability is also a major obstacle to the expansion of the range of options available to the political leadership.

Hypothesis 4: Policy volatility is a reflection of the volatility of the external environment.
This proposition recognizes that policy arenas are not isolated from the country's economic, institutional and social environment. Policy volatility can thus reflect the instability of this environment, including phenomena as different as market price volatility, recurrent droughts and conflicts, and political instability. In a context such as Sudan, this proposition bears considerable weight, although it does not help us to understand the process by which environmental instability becomes linked to policy volatility, let alone suggest instruments to address such a process and possibly reverse it.

As already mentioned, these hypotheses are largely complementary. This can be illustrated by the mixed effects of external funding on political commitment and therefore on policy continuity and volatility. While external funding generally helps government in the short term to accelerate collective learning (Hypothesis 2) and to expand the range of available policy options (Hypothesis 3), it may in the longer run weaken government planning capabilities (Hypothesis 3 again). In other words, repeated policy cycles where external capabilities de facto substitute for internal planning capabilities tend to generate patterns of behavior and norms in the policymaking community that feed a vicious circle, where more recourse to external aid produces even fewer internal planning capabilities, which in turn justifies increased recourse to external aid. All of this tends to result in volatility both because of the multiplicity of (inside and outside) players that have influence on decision-making (Hypothesis 1), and because of the

erosion of internal capabilities to plan and execute policy built on progressive learning. Frequent shocks of a diverse nature (Hypothesis 5) then put pressure on policymakers for immediate responses that rarely build on accumulated knowledge or experience, thus further feeding volatile processes and outcomes.

4. SAMPLING

Understanding policy volatility in the realm of NR-related decentralization or, more rarely, devolution, requires an understanding of how policies are typically made and implemented in Sudan. It is particularly necessary to analyze the way decentralization and devolution policy arenas work and the rules that govern them – which are not to be confused with the rules that govern the behavior of agents whose strategic choices are affected by these policies. The underlying assumption is that these rules (a term that should not necessarily suggest predictability and full institutionalization of policy processes) affect the modes of change that characterize policy design and implementation, including in this case the coexistence of incremental changes, trends, and volatility. Relevant questions include: Who are the decisionmakers in these policy arenas? Who participates and who is excluded from the policymaking process? What is the level of public involvement in policymaking? What are the profiles (identity, interests, goals, resources, skills, perceptions, and attitudes) of key players in the policy process? Are there coalitions and alliances between some of these stakeholders? Who works and coordinates with whom? What are the rules of the policy process? How are roles and responsibilities distributed among the participants? What information is available to those people designing or implementing policies? What level of discretion do they have?

Answering so many questions about a vast policy domain and covering a long period of time (from independence in 1956 to today) would be impossible without access not only to extensive secondary literature but also to reliable and knowledgeable informants. Accordingly, our study builds on the results of interviews with about thirty Sudanese policymakers or people involved in the policymaking process in various capacities and at various levels during the past few decades.[15] Prior to conducting the interviews, a chronology was established of the main policy decisions made by the government in the realm of decentralization and/or devolution of authority (see Appendix A). This chronology served as a reference during interviews and as a framework for interpreting interview data about specific policy processes and outcomes.

Given the exploratory nature of this research, ensuring rigorous statistical representation of respondents or selection of policies was not important. The selection of respondents was based instead on criteria such as: Does (or did) the respondents have a decision-making role in devolution and NR policies? Is he (or she) widely perceived to have been either an active participant in policymaking or a knowledgeable observant of policy processes?[16] The authors' knowledge of the Sudanese scene and

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[15] One of the authors, Dr El Sayed Zaki, was also a respondent in his capacity as a former policymaker at the federal level. As a consequence, he did not participate in the analysis of data from his own interview.

[16] Note that the sampling methodology adopted for this research was not meant to investigate perceptions, dimensions, and implications of volatility from the perspective of groups marginal to the policy process, including the rural poor. Nevertheless, some respondents represented groups of poor rural stakeholders or local ethno-tribal communities. Greater and more direct attention to perceptions of the policy process among the rural poor is given in the Sudan case study issued from the same research project on which this paper is based (notably in the chapter on natural resource-based conflict in Kordofan).

information provided by some respondents about other active participants were also put to use in the sampling of potential respondents. However, in order to achieve some balance among respondents and to increase the possibility that a wide spectrum of perspectives would be represented, a number of additional steps were built into the selection process. First, the sample includes three women who were actively involved in policymaking or policy implementation. This recognizes that although women are not highly visible in any policy sphere in Sudan, they are nevertheless significant policy players, whose perspectives on the policy process, its participants, and its rules need to be integrated into this analysis.[17] Second, it was considered necessary to represent more or less equally the two states that make up the study area. Ten interviewees were thus chosen from North Kordofan and eleven from South Kordofan, with the remaining twelve from the central/federal level of government. Third, interviewees were chosen on the basis of a classification that included a wide range of roles and responsibilities, including ministers and former ministers at state and federal levels, administrative executive officers (commissioners) at local government level, NA members at tribal and sub-tribal levels, parliamentarians, academics, as well as representatives of civil society institutions such as non-governmental organizations (NGO), members of opposition parties, and development project managers (mainly from projects supported by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)). As the period under review often embraced the whole career of the respondents, it was frequently the case that the same interviewee was able to provide more than one perspective on the same issue or aspect of policy processes, as well as to reflect on these differences.[18]

The response of the people approached for interview was generally positive and no one declined to participate in the research. There were however three cases in which the study team encountered some problems and three prospective respondents were consequently replaced. In two of these cases for practical reasons the subject could not participate. The third case was less clear: lack of time on the prospective respondent's part or the political sensitivity of the issues to be discussed may both have played a part in the decision not to participate.

The interview was based on a methodological note by two of the authors, which was translated into an interview guide that allowed interviewers to systematically cover each topic and still retain the necessary flexibility to tailor questions and to sequence them in a way that was appropriate for each

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[17] Further integration of women's perspectives in this regard may be pursued through gender analysis of the policy process. However, this sort of analysis exceeded the scope and possibilities of this research, at least during the exploratory phase that provided a basis for this paper.

[18] In some cases, the ability of interviewees to share analytic observations on processes of change in certain policy domains, their rules, and their outcomes, can be seen as evidence that learning processes do take place among policymakers in spite of the presence of volatility in the policy processes in which they have been involved. Again, this does not contradict our argument that volatility disables learning, since we specified that what is disabled is specifically *adaptive* learning *in the policy process.* In other words, what volatility hinders is a kind of learning that yields an understanding of policy issues, solutions, and processes as relatively predictable objects, with regards to whether it is possible to articulate increasingly effective strategies to achieve stated policy goals (for example NR conservation, effective devolution, etc.).

respondent (see El Harizi and Zaki 2004. For the interview guide see Appendix C). The interview guide was divided into eight sections: three identified the interviewee and his or her professional experience, one explored the theme of policy volatility in general, and one each discussed policymaking in NRM and in decentralization or devolution. The seventh section focused on policy outcomes and the eighth on the rules of entry and exit in the policy arena. On average, it took about eight hours to complete each interview.

The interviews were conducted by one of the authors[19] with the help of a senior government administrator fluent in both Arabic and English. The respondents who preferred to speak in Arabic were interviewed in Arabic and their interviews were then translated into English. In the process, the interviewers' field notes were used to complete and check the individual interviews as necessary. The interview analysis used the broad structure of the interview guide. In addition, thematic narratives were developed to summarize the experience of twelve of the respondents who provided the most thorough responses. All of this material was used to write this paper.

[19] Dr E. Zaki explained the purpose and questions to all respondents and conducted directly 25 interviews. His own interview was however conducted by K. El Harizi and R. Birner, and taped and transcribed by G. Shields. Seven respondents filled in their questionnaires either in electronic form or on paper.

5. THE DECISIONMAKING COMMUNITY: BOUNDARIES AND COALITIONS

Boundaries

In Sudan, policy decisions have historically been initiated by the bureaucracy or civil service. The legislative assembly does not as a rule initiate legislation, only endorses it, and this is true at both the federal and state levels. Nevertheless, the various authoritarian regimes that have ruled Sudan during most of its independent history have traditionally controlled entry and exit to and from the decision-making process, contrary to other political systems where the bureaucracy plays a key role in policymaking. In addition, particularly since the 1970s, government elites have actively interfered with the process of designating local representatives, be these Native Administration, members of local governments, or union leaders. Irrespective of the particular ideological orientation of the regime, this has generally meant that designations have been made on the basis of personal, ascriptive, or conflict-related ties with members of the ruling elites. As a result, the majority of the population (notably from rural areas) has been ill-represented in policymaking forums at both national and local levels, and their interests have often been poorly reflected in policy decisions that concerned them. Relevant examples at the macro level include the timing of decisions about crop prices in relation to the growing and harvesting season, unfavorable exchange rates that for a long time taxed rainfed agriculture, and taxation policies. With regard to policies that directly affect NR users, an example of the effects of poor popular representation, let alone participation in decision-making, is the priority long given by the government in its agricultural strategies to large-scale mechanized farming operated by urban and foreign investors. This priority partly reflects a broad development vision held by the government of Sudan particularly in the 1970s. However, the policy process that led to this choice at the time and in subsequent periods, as well as the mode of implementation chosen by the government, have been marked by scant consideration for the rights and needs of access to resources by traditional users (notably pastoralists), and by a tendency to use agricultural and NR policy to strengthen clientele ties. Though this cannot be regarded as the only cause for the failure of mechanized farming schemes as drivers of rural development in Sudan, it has no doubt contributed to making the results of this policy unsustainable in economic, social, and environmental terms.[20]

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[20] In recent years several authors, members of civil society, and also political representatives in Sudan have stressed the importance of popular participation, notably for certain aspects of NR governance such as prevention or management of resource-based conflict, environmental sustainability, and the continued mutual integration of pastoral, farming, and agro-pastoral livelihoods in rural areas (especially in conflict-prone areas in Western Sudan). There is also a large literature on the importance of participation for pro-poor NR governance and development. See Narayan's *Empowerment and poverty reduction: A sourcebook* (2002), which posits broad participation in policymaking as one of the components of empowerment processes necessary for development. Different dimensions of participation (notably in situations of social heterogeneity) are also explored as necessary ingredients of effective devolution of state authority in a recent collection of essays edited by Kimenyi and Meagher, *Devolution and development: Governance prospects in decentralizing states* (2004).

Within this context of a general lack of concern for the population at large (and notably the rural population) or for their participation in policy decisions, our interviewees identified three factors that could make a positive difference as far as participation by certain rural groups is concerned. These three factors could enable certain rural stakeholders to participate in the policy process, at least on an episodic basis, although they do not guarantee or in any sense "institutionalize" this participation in such a way as to enable sustained learning and adaptation. These factors are:

- Size of land ownership and security of land tenure;
- Engagement in commercial agriculture (for example horticulture) as opposed to subsistence agriculture; and
- Level of organization.

In other words, at least episodic participation in policymaking by the rural population appears to respondents to be a function of assets, recognition of entitlements, and capacity for sustained mobilization. As for rural elites (who are actually increasingly resident in the main urban centers), they may participate in policy decisions in many ways, notably by controlling farmers' unions and the NA. In addition, these elites mainly consist of members of "important families," who may be already heavily represented in certain government institutions (including elected institutions such as the national assembly), partly as a result of a policy of cooptation or politicization of ethno-tribal elites promoted by the national government, particularly in the 1980s and 1990s.[21] At the other end of the spectrum of rural society, traditional farmers and pastoralists have hardly been involved in decisions that directly affect their livelihoods and welfare. This is largely because these social groups are generally not organized, often live in remote areas, and have not been a source of significant political or economic support for most post-independence governments.

Exclusion from the policymaking process may also in some cases result from a deliberate strategy of exit or resistance on the part of rural people with regard to such processes. This strategy may be partly linked to the fact that rural people in many areas have continued to recognize the NA's role long after it was officially abolished in the early 1970s. Conversely, they do not recognize the land tenure system introduced by the government in 1970 and continue to believe that it is their right to protect customary entitlements on land and other natural resources. Customary norms are thus still enforced (though with generally limited effectiveness) through NA authorities and institutions (notably village sheikhs). Villagers continue to turn to these authorities in situations of stalemate competition or conflict over resources, unless such conflict pits them against private investors or the state, in which case sheikhs have minimal or no power. In extreme situations, such as cases in which villagers have found their customary

[21] There is no nobility in Sudan, but there are a number of well-known leading families who usually draw their power and prestige from a mix of political, religious, economic, and ethno-tribal sources.

rights challenged by the state or by other parties in ways that have prevented effective recourse to NA institutions, "exit" may take the form of open revolt against government authority. More often, a significant degree of reluctance or lack of interest in interacting with government authorities or with the formal decision-making processes exists among rural communities, adding to the disempowering effects of the state's lack of open-ness to popular input in policymaking.

While rural people often do not trust government institutions and agencies that deal with natural resources, and thereby tend to avoid participating in them, it is not uncommon for them to participate in other initiatives and agencies, such as farmers' and pastoralists' unions or village associations created in the framework of donor-sponsored rural development projects. However, these organizations are primarily seen by rural people as channels through which they can put pressure on the government to obtain better services and to capture a share of the national income, rather than as avenues to participate in decision-making or to influence policy.

Coalitions

The current federal government is the result of a political coalition unified by commitment to Islamic governance principles, and reconfirmed in 2005 by the results of a Comprehensive Peace Agreement with Southern rebel forces. This political system does not work on a truly democratic basis, however, since the emergence of other coalitions that may challenge the ruling group is actively inhibited by the government. In particular, the government tends to encourage division among political and social forces and often resorts to cooptation when a group manages to mobilize significant support and to establish a network of alliances.

To gain effective influence on the policymaking process in the Sudanese context, several interviewees suggested that a policy coalition would ideally need to be composed of a leading sector ministry supported by unions and grassroots organizations as well as by an international funding agency. In addition, they identified a number of coalitions or alliances that typically appear in association with diverging positions in recurrent policy debates. These coalitions and related cleavages include:

- Political (security) versus technical ministries at federal level
- Federal versus state governments and agencies
- Regional competition between states for federal resources
- Public sector unions versus government (due to resistance to administrative and liberalization reforms)
- Farmers versus pastoralists
- Investors (mechanized farming) versus traditional farmers and pastoralists
- Native Administration leaders versus new/formal institutions such as unions and government structures

- Agronomists versus veterinarians within technical departments

The most powerful lobbies at the federal and state levels are the security/military apparatus, the federal administration, and the Gezira irrigation farmers and Gezira Corporation. Businessmen and merchants also tend to work together and may have a lot of clout in particular policy processes. In addition, mechanized farming schemes are a sort of pension scheme for senior civil servants who can influence policy decisions, partly in the context of a persistent coalition between urban merchants and senior civil servants.

As far as rural areas are concerned, the "hierarchy of clout" is the following:

- Country-town dwellers
- Native Administration
- Mechanized farmers (merchants)
- Teachers
- Horticultural producers (pump irrigation)
- Gum arabic producers
- Traditional farmers
- Pastoralists and nomads
- Women

Farmers' union leaders appear to have a strong relationship with their base and membership, but this is not a guarantee that they will represent fairly the range of interests of their constituency. For instance, poor farmers made poorer by adverse policies tend to have particularly little power to lobby through the unions to change these policies. In addition, while farmer and pastoralist organizations can articulate their needs and address decisionmakers, their capacity to confront their problems is generally limited.[22]

[22] The organizational strength of farmers' unions actually varies with the situation of their membership, as it is positively correlated with land tenure security, proximity to town markets, productivity (income), size of membership, and regular relationship with government (even in the sense of a dependency relationship).

6. RULES IN USE IN THE POLICY PROCESS

As a legacy of the British civil service, it is common practice in Sudan to first shape policies in ad hoc technical committees established to review particular problems and their potential solutions, and then to prepare recommendations to higher level political authorities (for example ministers and councils of ministers). The agenda, scope, and membership of such commissions or committees are controlled by these political authorities through written terms of reference. A study of the rules in use in these committees provides important insights about the way policies are made. Interviewees were asked to describe position, authority, and information rules operational in the committees or commissions.

Position Rules

Positions rules concern roles and responsibilities within the commissions. Two groups of people seem to have more clout, namely those who have "extra powers" and those who have particularly strong vested interests. In decentralization policy processes, for example, state governors and commissioners play an important role. Roles and responsibilities in a committee are distributed among members after the issue is broken down into sub-issues, and depending on their respective authority, role in government, knowledge and expertise. Although not explicitly mentioned in the interviews, age is also a factor, with a premium for older members (as age is often equated with experience and maturity). Recently, however, inexperienced but politically well-connected young people have been placed in positions of responsibility in committees. This is regarded by respondents as part of a trend towards the increasing politicization of the membership of technical committees.

During the early years of independence, the British tradition of appointing committee members and more generally bureaucratic officials primarily on the basis of excellence was broadly adhered to. But political affiliation and loyalty criteria have progressively taken over, starting with the regime of General Numeiri (beginning in 1969), and especially after the harsh repression of the communist party and the establishment of the Sudan Socialist Union as a single ruling party. During the brief democratic episode of 1985–89, regional representation (meaning membership in important regional families who may influence the ballots) was also an important criterion for gaining influence in the committees. Political and ideological criteria have become important again with the current regime, but this is by no means a novel phenomenon.

There is no formal power of veto on policy within the committees, which essentially have only a technical advisory role similar to their counterparts in other kinds of political systems (including in consolidated democracies). However, committee members who have personal power or knowledge, or

who are skilled manipulators can, on occasion, influence the outcome of policy decisions.[23] Powers of veto remain in the hands of political authorities, who are free to accept, ignore, or modify the recommendations of the technical committees, which is the case for other political systems. In addition, the political staff of ministries and other decision-making bodies can make substantial changes to the committees' recommendations, and typically political authorities are not obliged to refer back to committee members or their chairmen to ask for technical validation of such changes. Interviewees mentioned several cases of chairmen and members of technical committees bitterly and publicly complaining about the disregard by political authorities of technical considerations stressed by their committees, as well as about the loss of credibility they suffered after the government adopted policy measures that ostensibly resulted from the work of the committees but actually contradicted their recommendations.

While there is no clear distinction between a technical domain and a political one, it appears from our interviews that so-called technical committees have little power even over matters in which scientific research and technical considerations are key for the evaluation of alternative options, since even their reports can be modified in unpredictable ways by political staff. This may be due to the narrowness of the constituency and clientele of the government elite, as well as to the fact that civil servants and the public sector in general are no longer an important part of this constituency, although they had been in the past, particularly under Numeiri. Whatever the case, the competition evoked by interviewees between technical (or at least knowledge- and investigation-based) and political (or rather ideological/clientelistic) criteria in decision-making points to a lack of consensus regarding how public interest should be defined in policymaking. While one may expect this lack of consensus to be primarily between the general public and the state, the reality is that it is also and perhaps most importantly a problem in the government machinery itself (hence the critical stance of several interviewees concerning the dubious "rationality" of policy processes in which they have participated). This situation is in itself revealing of the magnitude of the challenges that policy coordination and implementation pose in today's Sudan, as was also confirmed by our analysis of authority rules.

Authority Rules

Authority rules govern what actions are mandatory, authorized or forbidden in the course of the policy process, and affect participation modalities and procedures. Authority rules also define the amount of discretion that enforcement agents can exercise once a policy is formally adopted. In the Sudanese context, the need for broad public participation has gained wide recognition and acceptance in the realm

[23] Put differently, the possibility that a member of a particular committee will use certain sources of power to influence a policy decision cannot be predicted with certainty, nor can such influence be treated as an *institution*, despite the fact that relevant sources of power (notably personal bonds of clientele with top-level officials, religious-ideological or ethno-tribal affiliation, wealth, etc.) can generally be identified.

of project implementation. In political life, on the other hand, and more specifically in the realm of policymaking, there has not been as much progress or acceptance. Sudan has been marked by a combination of authoritarianism, warfare, and civil strife for many years. It may be that what little public involvement in strategic national decisions existed or at least was envisioned in the early independence period disappeared as a result of these disabling conditions.

Our respondents' narratives concerning the role of ad hoc committees suggest that there are few rules, if any, that define and restrict in an institutionalized (hence predictable and accountable) way what actions may be carried out by policymakers or by committee members, or what policy options committee members can consider. Furthermore, since issues are broken down into sub-issues and distributed among the members of the committees, each member can in principle organize a sub-committee according to his style or preferences. This apparently great degree of discretionary power of committee chairs and members should not suggest that there are no boundaries to the set of authorized or mandatory actions and policy options. Rather, such apparent discretion reflects the fact that these boundaries are not governed directly by rules, but rather result indirectly from the membership of a given committee (who is in and who is out, who leads and who follows), and most importantly from the interpretation on the part of its key members of what sensitivities, norms or taboos must be taken into account. These may be religious, humanitarian, or political sensitivities, true or imaginary, explicit or (mostly) implicit, and they often have to do with what would go with or against the wishes of specific individuals, sub-groups within the ruling party, clientele of certain high-level officials, etc. Such sensitivities and taboos are of course only partly predictable, and they tend to change with little notice depending on the issue at hand, timing, circumstances, and the political fortunes of individual politicians and their clientele.

In sum, indirect and/or informal authority rules, such as those that result from external and self-censorship of the participants in the process, are a key way by which the authorized and mandatory actions are defined in technical committees, but they also subject the limits and contents of such actions to unpredictable change. This is in sharp contrast with the theoretical view of a process in which participants freely debate the nature of issues and available options within clear and mutually agreed rules. Of course, it would be naïve to think that there are no such indirect and implicit rules governing policy processes in democratic states. However, in democratic settings the level of informality tends to be lower and formal rules are more transparent and/or amenable to debate and amendment by the participants in the process. In addition, even informal rules tend to be largely predictable in a consolidated democratic system, which enables learning and adaptive strategies on the part of policymakers and committee members, even in the absence of the formal recognition of specific rules.

The third and last aspect of authority rules concerns the discretionary powers of enforcement agents. The respondents' general view is that enforcement is a result of both the political will and the capabilities of those responsible for enforcing policies. Many such agents have only limited choices or

options to change policies, but they do have a great deal of discretion in applying or de facto disregarding official policies, as well as in applying them selectively or in such a way as to serve their own small clientele. Inaction is often in itself a powerful option that enforcement agencies use to influence the policy process when its outcomes are not in line with their own interests or with those of their constituencies. While the argument put forth by respondents that discretion results from political will and administrative capabilities has its merits, we would also contend that the high level of discretion enjoyed by enforcement agents can be a result of sheer necessity, for instance due to serious inconsistencies in many state policies (again, partly as a result of volatility both over time and across domains and levels of authority). An additional factor to consider is the widespread and strong resistance encountered on the ground in the application of some policies and regulations, as a result of the lack of broad-based participation in their formulation, particularly in rural areas.

Passive or active resistance to state policies is also often the only option for groups that do not belong to the constituency of ruling elites and therefore need indirect ways to protect their interests. Inertia in particular can be a powerful way to block the implementation of policy decisions that require people's participation (for example as resource users), at least in the form of compliance. When the state nationalized most tribal lands in 1970, for instance, it presumably did not anticipate that it would only be able to apply new land laws on limited portions of the national territory. However, the economic rationale of such laws led the state to concentrate its enforcement capability on the lands endowed with the highest agricultural potential. This resulted in its de facto quasi-abdication of responsibility for regulating land use in most of the national territory, where the potential for agricultural development was not great and so did not encourage direct state presence. In much of this territory, therefore, the non-implementation of land laws and non-abolition of customary tenure were the overwhelming "inertial" responses of rural people to the state's new policy. Elsewhere, however, active resistance occurred in the form of open rebellion and civil strife: this has been the case in the Nuba mountains, in the Eastern region, and most recently in Darfur. This state of affairs reflects the fact that land policies adopted in the 1970s (and ever since) have generally been made in narrow policy arenas, which do not include the variety of interests and stakeholders that exist in rural areas. Under such circumstances, enforcement agents have added incentives to use discretion to serve their individual interests or those of particular local groups, aided by the persistent gap between what most rural people consider legitimate and government policy.

Information Rules

Information rules affect first of all the knowledge or information sets of participants. In this regard, respondents suggested that even participants in restricted membership policy arenas do not have adequate information about the ultimate intentions and preferences of the highest political authorities. Second, information rules reflect what information is disclosed to the public and the media and when. In this

respect, there is agreement among respondents that the rule of not disclosing information to the public during the early stages of a policy committee's work is generally observed. Government routinely keeps most of its deliberations and proceedings classified for some period, as in most other countries. To the question of what information must be keep secret during the policy process, respondents stated that it is "the information that will create trouble," begging the question of who defines what "trouble" is and what it is in the public interest to know or not to know. A good example of information that is unlikely to reach the public concerns policy decisions that create risks of insider trading, such as decisions concerning the official exchange rate. Moreover, information about oil policies and oil exploitation contracts signed by the government with foreign companies has never been publicly disclosed, and few people know any of the relevant information, let alone all of it. Generally speaking, with security concerns still high on the government agenda, manipulation of and restrictions on information about many policy issues are the rule rather than the exception. The result is that much of the population (notably in rural areas) has virtually no idea, let alone full knowledge, of what information exists about some key policy issues and that it could demand to have access to, including NR issues.

7. AREAS OF CONSENSUS IN POLICYMAKERS' VIEWS CONCERNING DECENTRALIZATION, DEVOLUTION, AND NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The common elements that emerged from our interviews can be summed up as follows:

A consensus on the volatility of the policy process

Almost all respondents regard the policy process as marked by volatility in all its aspects, including rules, participants, outcomes (that is, concrete policy decisions and initiatives), and the mechanisms to implement and enforce policy decisions. In particular, it appears that outcomes, implementation, and enforcement are regarded by virtually all respondents as volatile, in the sense that they are marked by unpredictability, frequent changes, lack of awareness about or legitimacy of decisions among the public, and insufficient resources for implementation. As for the rules of the policy process and its participants, these are only specifically addressed by one or two of the respondents, although most hint at a relative informality of rules governing access to the policy process, in the sense that the possibility of influencing the process seems to depend on the lobbying capacities of different interest groups, which are in turn linked to personal or party connections with individuals in top decision-making posts.

A relative consensus on the main problems faced by Sudan concerning NR problems

Most respondents hold views about what are the main NR-related problems faced by Sudan that combine environmental, resource-related, and governance factors. In particular, they stress environmental problems such as desertification, deforestation, and drought, but they do so in the framework of complex governance problems, including lack of clear and equitable definitions of property and use rights, and lack of strategic vision for resource use and development based on a dynamic understanding of current and potential use patterns. In addition, domestic conflict and instability are mentioned by some as major factors that have shaped recent patterns of NR access and use and injected elements of instability, unsustainability, and fragmentation into the natural and social environment that must be taken into account by any future policies in this realm.

Agreement on the lack of political will as the main problem hindering decentralization and, more particularly, effective devolution

Respondents generally agreed that the current decentralization process has been hindered and prevented from turning into a full devolution process by resistance on the part of the federal government to yield decision-making power to states and local governments. This is despite the formulation and implementation of a series of Local Government Acts from the mid-1990s to 2003. Second, there is a consensus on the negative effects of decentralization policies that cannot support devolution process because they do not envision mechanisms for the financial autonomy of local governments or even contain financial initiatives that undermine such autonomy (for example the abolition of agricultural

taxes), resulting in an erosion of public services and of the capacity for policy implementation in many regions.

A relative consensus on some governance problems that compound volatility

The governance-related roots of policy volatility included the decline of the civil service, the existence of an ideologically driven political culture, and the predatory or neo-patrimonial attitude of policymakers towards public resources and political power. Though only explicitly mentioned by few respondents, the problem of a weak or declining civil service is one that is hinted at by many of them, particularly in discussions about the weakness of local government institutions in terms of human resources. The causes for such weakness are complex and go well beyond policy volatility. However, one cause repeatedly mentioned by respondents is an approach to government marked on the one hand by great, even predominant concern for ideological affiliations, both in the content of policy decisions and in the selection of policymakers and civil servants. Second, there is a rather predatory or at least neo-patrimonial approach to the administration of public resources, which are treated as sources of rent by top-level policymakers or by the ruling party. This situation feeds volatility because it makes policy serve ver-changing narrow interests, which correspond to individuals or groups succeeding each other in positions of authority. Moreover, policymaking and implementation posts are filled with political appointees driven by private interests and/or ideological concerns, rather than by institutional commitment, accountability concerns, or professional competence.

Significance of the democratic deficit in relation to policy volatility

With few significant exceptions, most respondents stressed the lack of popular participation in decision-making and the limited accountability of government institutions as the two main factors not only of poor governance but also of volatility, particularly in the domain of NRM. They noted in particular that the lack of popular participation in decision-making leads to poor generation of information about patterns of resource use and rights, as well as about the interests and concerns of primary stakeholders, so that policies are often suboptimal or even misguided. Moreover, policies made without sustained input from stakeholders are more difficult to implement, fund properly, and enforce. The limited accountability of policymakers, particularly with regards to populations outside the main urban centers, is also seen as a factor of volatility, since it inhibits mechanisms that would otherwise ensure adjustment of suboptimal policies or of their negative externalities, so that implementation processes tend to stagnate and/or to be occasionally interrupted by abrupt policy changes meant to be remedial.

To sum up, the picture of the policy process that emerges from these interviews highlights a number of problems, among which volatility is a cross-cutting aspect, though not necessarily the dominant one. The main problem that emerges is the weak, centralized, and dysfunctional system of governance, where democratic deficit, lack of strategic vision, patron–client approaches to public

management, and lack of mechanisms for information gathering and circulation feed off one another. The results underline the failure of decentralization and/or devolution policies to establish an equitable system for resource generation and service provision that can reach down to the grassroots level in the entire country.

8. ATTITUDES TOWARDS NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Perceptions about the Nature of Natural Resource Management Issues

When asked to identify the main issues that need to be addressed by NR policy in contemporary Sudan, respondents suggested that one of the greatest problems facing policymakers in this realm is the legacy of failed policy left by previous and current governments. In their view, few if any of the stated policy objectives of these governments have been achieved in the NR domain, and the absence of an effective planning and regulatory framework for NRM is the causal factor most frequently mentioned with regard to these failures.[24] Next come other (partly related) factors, such as conflict among resource users, inadequate policy implementation, poor management of drinking water, unchecked oil exploitation, and ignorance among policymakers about the importance and implications of cultural and environmental diversity. As for other NR-related issues that need to be put on the policy agenda, respondents spoke of ecological problems (droughts), demographic issues (population increase, overstocking, weak capabilities of local communities), technical issues (shifting cultivation, scarcity of relevant research and technological development), and a general lack of awareness among both users and policymakers about the seriousness of NRM problems (hence the rent-seeking mindset of both users and policymakers, the lack of political will, etc.).

Assessment of Past Policy Solutions

Interviewees were asked to characterize solutions to NR issues that have been tested in the past and to give their opinion regarding the effectiveness and impact of these solutions. In general, relevant solutions mentioned by respondents were conceived and implemented in the framework of donor-assisted development projects of various size and duration, in the absence of comprehensive national strategic programs. In all 16 major projects were implemented between 1980 and 2000[25] in the study area, not including NGO and government-sponsored interventions or emergency and relief operations. Financing institutions included the World Bank, IFAD, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the European Union, African Development Bank, Arab Funds, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) was also involved in a technical assistance capacity in particular for the Western Sudan Agricultural Research Project, as well as (through its Investment Centre) in the design of some of the above-mentioned projects.

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[24] This is in turn linked to the abolition of Native Administration, land tenure insecurity, weak budget and administrative capabilities, and is compounded by the effect of war on infrastructure and budget resources and by the lack of involvement of stakeholders in policy design.

[25] Especially in the aftermath of the 1983–84 drought until the early to mid-1990s. Thereafter, emergency and relief operations came to dominate, with few exceptions including in particular IFAD-funded projects.

Productivity-oriented investment projects as well as those focusing on a rationalization of NRM have generally had limited achievements or even failed altogether. This may be due in part to the fact that appropriate and affordable technical packages were not sufficiently developed by projects, which is a reflection of the weakness of adaptive research in the country as well as among existing donor agencies. Second, investment projects have had little impact because they could not substitute for the development of autonomous resources and administrative capabilities among states and local governments, who are primarily responsible for providing services to rural communities.

Some past projects embraced community-based development approaches (a bottom-up model of development), but they often failed to have durable impact because they did not take a holistic approach to empowerment – including both communities and government. Most of them did not encourage local government involvement or did not provide adequate support to local government structures. The fact that local government transparency and representativeness were questionable certainly played a role in the decision to disregard or to not encourage its involvement in rural development or NRM projects. However, the result was that the capabilities of local governments remained weak even in the aftermath of donor-funded projects, so that they were not able to take over project initiatives and carry them on after the project cycle.

Apart from externally funded projects, federal and state governments have also passed several pieces of legislation in recent years aiming to regulate and rationalize land use, forest plantation, tree felling, farming (including mechanized farming), grazing, stock routes demarcation, and wildlife protection. There appears to have been some continuity in orientation among these various policy decisions, notably as concerns land-use regulations. However, these policies were not always relevant or realistic, and they were rarely effectively implemented (in other words, volatility characterized policy implementation even when policy planning took place more or less incrementally). Most importantly, the disempowering effect of laws such as the 1970 Unregistered Lands Act, which abolished the NA and affirmed the state's ownership of all unregistered land, has not yet been mitigated or reversed by new land regulations, despite the formal abrogation of the 1970 Act as far back as the mid-1980s.

Vision of Future Natural Resource Management Strategies

When asked about their vision of a future strategy for NRM, interviewees mostly offered a number of general goals and guiding principles, although they also included some specific proposals. There was a consensus that the goal of such a strategy should be to ensure a rational and sustainable use of NR to support the livelihoods of resource users and to contribute to poverty reduction and food security. According to respondents, land-tenure security, land-use planning, productivity enhancement, and users' involvement are the key entry points for effective NRM. Moreover, they stressed that NR boundaries should be clearly demarcated and current patterns of land use clearly marked and acknowledged. These

are both potentially contentious issues, given the existence of overlapping layers of use and access rights to the same resources among primary NM stakeholders and between them and other stakeholders (including the state), and also given that current patterns of land use are likely to be regarded as illegitimate by at least certain categories of stakeholders. An important element of successful NRM policy should in fact be the provision of appropriate mechanisms to monitor compliance and to sanction non-compliance. Again, this raises potentially contentious issues, since respondents stressed the need to link improved enforcement to the protection of primary stakeholders from the claims of more powerful forces such as oil companies and the military. Somewhat less contentious are other proposals, such as offering alternatives to the use of natural resources for fuel and building material and the need to sensitize the public to outstanding NR problems and policies. Changes in property rights that depart from quasi-exclusive state ownership over land and other natural resources were also presented as necessary, along with a mix of devolution initiatives targeting resource users' communities and privatization.

It is worth noting that the vision of public interest outlined by respondents seems to differ significantly from the one that in their view has inspired past and current government policies concerning NR. This may signal a change in perspective and increasing awareness among policymakers about the preconditions for more effective and equitable NR policies and policymaking in general. However, this supposed increase in awareness has not yet resulted in adaptive processes of learning in the policymaking process itself. To a large extent, this change in perspective may be an effect of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) (whose implementation is facing some problems similar to those characterizing NR and devolution policies in recent years, including volatility). The influence of the peace process was noticeable, particularly in some of the recommendations made by respondents, including using oil revenues to finance NR conservation, providing better social services and infrastructure to rural areas, and developing new sources of income for rural people in order to reduce their dependence on NR. All these proposals appear in the CPA, making this document a marker of significant and even abrupt discontinuities with the Sudanese past, both recent and not so recent. In the same vein, many respondents recommended creating joint commissions and committees to work with the Native Administration to resolve conflicts under the umbrella of the Land Commissions provided for in the CPA. In their view, such commissions and committees should be representative of a broad range of stakeholders, especially local/indigenous people, and elected local planning committees should also be set up to decide on the rules of land allocation and use.

In sum, interviewees suggested that natural resource degradation has mainly been treated by various stakeholders (including the state) as an externality in the policymaking process. In addition, policy decisions have largely been driven by the government's preoccupation with capturing rents from NR, rather than by a genuine commitment to protect and develop them. The fact that decision-making has been the monopoly of a small group of people not sufficiently aware of NR issues or with different

agendas than NR protection and development has compounded the problem of rent-seeking, resulting in repeated policy failures, ineffective enforcement, and negative externalities for local resource users. Although developing a strategic vision for the future is not enough to begin to redress these problems, respondents appeared to have at least a general sense of what may be desirable in this regard. In addition, although they did not seem to believe that building incrementally on past policies would yield such a strategic vision or enable its achievement, many appeared hopeful that the CPA would bring significant discontinuities and opportunities to the policy process, which may set in motion a more predictable and accountable process of policymaking in the realm of NRM in the future.

9. ATTITUDES TOWARDS DECENTRALIZATION POLICIES

Assessment of the Rationale and Outcome of Decentralization and/or Devolution Policies

Decentralization policies have their roots in the colonial system of government, which was based on indirect rule. Prior to independence in 1956, local government and Native Administration policies were changed incrementally, approximately once every 10 years, following a process of a review of both the problems and the progress made in addressing them. With independence, the pace of enactment of new policies increased, particularly during the 1970s and the 1980s, and thereafter it accelerated markedly, with changes once every three years on average. Key decisions by post-independence governments pertaining to decentralization include the regionalization policy and the various local government acts that ultimately shaped the current federal system of government in Sudan.

The expected outcome of the regionalization process was ostensibly to bring decision-making closer to the people, to involve them in the management of their own affairs, and to develop the economic potential of different regions (in other words, a measure of devolution was at least declaredly an expected outcome of the process). This policy (or set of policies) was initiated in the early 1980s, and it originally benefited from a high level of political commitment on the part of the national leadership and a good level of preparation on the part of the civil service. Moreover, it benefited to some extent from the gradual way in which it was implemented. Nevertheless, the outcomes of the policy were far below expectations for a number of reasons (some of which were highlighted by respondents), such as the fact that implementation of the regionalization program was halted with the transition to a democratic regime after the departure of Numeiri. As to the reform of the federal system, which unfolded in particular between 1998 and 2002, its stated objectives were to ensure popular participation in local government on the basis of fair representation (meaning free elections) and to bring the decision-making process yet closer to the people. The 1998 Constitution and subsequent local government acts stressed the principle of subsidiarity to distribute decision-making power between various levels of government. This principle is indeed one of the important criteria for genuine devolution. Moreover, the regulations issued between 1998 and 2002 (and later) made some progress in paving the way for genuine devolution by enabling local governments to develop relatively independent sources of revenue. However, and though it is too early to assess the outcome of these policies, interviewees noted that their implementation has suffered from a paternalistic approach, the inadequate compensation of councilors, and the incompetence of executive officers. Confrontations within the ruling coalition, the state of emergency that justified postponing elections, and later progress in the peace process, together with the transition of Sudan's economy from one based on agriculture to one based on oil rents, have all contributed to a pause in the implementation process. Asked to assess the overall effectiveness of the decentralization policies, respondents thus declared that achievements were well below expectations (55 percent of respondents), average (28 percent), and not

cost effective (72 percent). As for the equity of policy designs, a majority (57 percent) stated that policies were equitable in their intention or design, but not in their outcome. Accountability was considered low or below average by 66 percent of respondents.

Attitudes and Perceptions about the Nature and Causes of Decentralization and Devolution Issues

As for NRM policies, respondents did not clearly differentiate between causes and effects when identifying outstanding issues in the decentralization policy realm. Overall, what they seemed to deem wrong with past and current decentralization policies can be grouped into two large categories of problems, namely volatile policy implementation and general lack of accountability (Table 1 for a sample of their statements).

Notwithstanding the limitations of the decentralization process, some authority and resources have been devolved, but devolution from states to local governments has in turn been resisted by state-level bureaucracies. At all levels of government, inefficient and non-transparent use of resources has been the rule, due to weak administrative capacities combined with a lack of accountability. In the eyes of respondents, what is required is not only a more equitable distribution of centrally collected revenues, but also devolution of fiscal authority to various levels of local government.

Table 1. Stated views about the main problems affecting the decentralization process

Volatile implementation
Incomplete devolution of powers marked by frequent reversals (from federal government to state and from state to local)
Important decisions still taken at the center and then formally endorsed locally
Inequitable distribution of resources between center, states, and localities
Strong grip on power and resources from the center
Lack of financial autonomy of decentralized structures
Frequent changes of policies: "policy has changed even before the public became acquainted with the policy and its accompanying legislation"
High turnover of policymakers and decisionmakers
Multiplicity of experiments of local government forms without prior thorough evaluation of past experiences
Lack of accountability at all levels
Lack of stakeholder participation in policymaking
Absence of democratic life (free and fair elections); lack of democratic processes that make decisionmakers answerable to the public
Decisionmakers are chosen by appointment. They are accountable to the president or to the governors, not to the people
Lack of accountability is also a cause for corruption and diversion of whatever resources are available

The underlying causes of this state of affairs were mainly identified as lack of political will, reluctance or even active resistance to sharing power and resources by the federal administration, and a

divergence of visions and expectations between government and the people about the ultimate goals of decentralization (Table 2 below).

Table 2. Views regarding the causes of policy volatility and lack of accountability

Lack of political will for an effective share of power and resources
The system is ridden with nepotism and favoritism (clientelism)
Leadership does not trust people's ability to govern themselves and administer their affairs
Lack of democracy
Important constraints to regionalization included resistance from central administrations and staff (alliance) and limited financial resources transfers
People equated decentralization with "returning the land to its owners"
Weak administrative capacities of the states and local governments and high dependency on federal resources
Weak institutional capacities (staff, planning, and policymaking) and states' inability to develop their sources of revenue feed off each other
Financial autonomy is weak, resources hardly pay for staff salaries, no budget for development services
Poor infrastructure in support of policy implementation
Executive officers during the colonial period were well trained. The appointment of incompetent officials has caused people to withdraw respect from them, which has reduced their authority
Lack of resources (human, technical, financial) hinders proper monitoring of compliance and diligent implementation of policies

Assessment of Past Policy Solutions and Vision of the Future

In the last part of the interview, respondents were asked to assess past initiatives undertaken to cope with problems in the decentralization process. Their first observation is that during the relatively brief periods of democracy (the last one was from 1985 to 1989) freely elected governments did not support devolution policies. As noted above, the regionalization policy was even abolished after the 1985 democratic elections. Attempts to devolve more powers, improve local administrative capacities by grouping smaller administrative units into larger ones, and organize partial elections, have not changed the situation in a substantial way. However, the creation of planning units to improve local capacities has had some positive effects, according to respondents. Similarly, community development activities (such as those promoted in IFAD-funded projects) have had some positive results, but these are not extensive due to funding limitations and to the local and not necessarily sustainable impact of many projects. Initiatives to promote civil society organization and to raise awareness among rural populations with regard to their civil and social rights have generally had poor results for a number of reasons. Finally, lack of financial autonomy and the poor implementation capacities of local government units in particular remain severe constraints to effective devolution.

When asked what should be the goals of decentralization in the future, interviewees did not propose a wholly different vision than the one formally hinted at by government policymakers in recent

years. Nonetheless, they claimed that certain paths towards this vision that have been tried in the past, for example via free elections, empowerment of local communities, and awareness-building, have largely failed because they were not implemented in an integrated manner or because they were necessary but not sufficient for effective impact. Instead, respondents emphasized the need for equity, efficiency and accountability in all government initiatives, and they also put forth a set of specific initiatives that the central government should undertake, without necessarily suggesting how these initiatives might be integrated into the policy process, given the particular rules that govern it. These recommendations included:

- Transferring adequate resources to local governments
- Sharing resources and powers equitably
- Developing trained, competent, and reasonably well-paid administrative cadres
- Promoting accountability at all levels of government
- Encouraging public involvement in policymaking
- Basing the implementation strategies of development operations on broad partnerships and projects, which should operate as enabling devices
- Establishing local planning committees elected by the population and supported by the state and federal governments with grants, training and advisory services

Food security, rational natural resource management for the welfare of a unified Sudan, and poverty eradication were the alternative ultimate goals of decentralization proposed by the sample of policymakers interviewed. To a large extent these goals are consistent with each other in that they give priority to the protection of people's livelihoods and of natural resources, contrary to what has happened so far in various government-sponsored decentralization processes. Nonetheless, it is unclear how these goals might be achieved with policy instruments under prevailing conditions given the rules of the policymaking process. In fact, it may be argued that these goals are partly about effecting changes in the policy process itself. On the other hand, in the absence of enabling rules in this process, it is difficult to see how adaptive learning and incremental change towards achieving these goals might be achieved, except of course through strong and explicit commitment and an acceptance of accountability by top-level policymakers with regards to such change.

10. CONCLUSIONS

Sudanese federal laws have gone a long way toward decentralization and even to some extend toward devolution, particularly with regard to NR policies. As a result, the overall failure of decentralization policies to promote effective devolution cannot be attributed to the lack of a legal framework, though this framework is marked by a degree of fragmentation (see Hypothesis 1 above), overlap of prerogatives and areas of policy work, and weak implementation and enforcement mechanisms (which are in turn partly related to Hypotheses 2, 3, and 4). In a sense, one may argue that some of the recent formal expressions of decentralization policy made by the federal government are too ambitious in their goals and in the vision of devolution that they reveal, when they are compared to reality. This is true not only in terms of the current weakness of implementation and enforcement mechanisms, but also in terms of the structure of policy processes at all levels of government. Although these processes are supposed to sustain a process of devolution, their clientelistic/ideological and volatile logic tends to lead in a different direction. The accumulated experience of the policymakers and observers interviewed for this research, while not amounting to an example of adaptive learning within the policy process itself, can nonetheless generate proposals that illuminate some problems in this process and some preconditions for a change of direction. In particular, respondents suggested that successful policies to devolve central government powers to lower levels of governments in the NR domain require:

- clear and unchanging political will of the leadership to share power and resources (which is particularly important given the role of personal goals and clientele bonds at all levels of the political hierarchy);
- converging expectations from decentralization, in other words the existence of a shared vision of what should be the goals and principles of this process (rather than a relatively volatile series of decisions, adjustments, and reversals);
- adequate administrative capacity and sectoral expertise at lower levels of government (which would also presumably enable the identification of policy solutions, in line with Hypothesis 3 above);
- downward and upward accountability; and,
- financial and fiscal autonomy of local government units.

Underlying all these preconditions for successful devolution is an equally necessary change toward a less volatile environment in relation to conflict, which appeared in the respondents' references to the CPA as a turning point in the history of governance in Sudan.

Interestingly, the argument of weak capacities and high dependency of lower levels of government on federal resources has been used by different groups or analysts both to advocate only limited forms of devolution and to call for more robust devolution, including the redeployment of budget and staff resources into local government. Implicit in both these views is the assumption that the state can

afford to spend the required resources to begin with, and that the matter is essentially one of equitable distribution. What does not seem to be questioned by respondents is the ability of the state to bear the cost and mobilize the human resources needed for effective decentralized administration in a country as huge and diverse as Sudan, especially if that means establishing a modern state bureaucracy with an effective presence at the grassroots level over the entire territory. The problem posed by decentralization policies is, however, not only one of more or less devolution of power or resources from the center to local governments, nor even one of more or less equitable distribution and power-sharing. Rather, it is first of all a problem of inventing the institutions and administrative forms of a devolved state that can be compatible with its capability to mobilize revenues and with the size of the Sudanese economy. Second, it is a problem of devising governance structures that can coexist – at least initially – with persisting forms of volatility (notably environmental and perhaps also conflict-related volatility), while managing nevertheless to cultivate people's trust in institutions and their own and the state's adaptive learning capabilities in the policy process.

The pursuit of such a vision for devolution and governance reform in the Sudan must confront many powerful opponents. In addition to the lack of political will and the resistance of the central administration (which is in itself a factor of volatility in light of contradictory formal pronouncements), there are proponents of centralization who equate it with positive notions such as nation-building and modernization, since decentralization (let alone devolution proper) in their eyes bears a connotation of tribalism, archaism, nepotism, and dissipation of scarce resources. Failed decentralization policies, the resulting fragmentation of the policy arena, and the growth of oil rents are likely to strengthen the opponents of decentralization at least in Northern Sudan in the near future. Free elections in the framework of the CPA may instead improve downward accountability and thus presumably strengthen proponents of decentralization and of devolution outside the capital and other main cities. However, more formal accountability alone will not solve the problem of poor/weak civil service and administrative capabilities, which requires in part government investment and in part a general commitment to de-link administrative appointments from clientelistic or ideological pursuits. As for the rural populations, they have never really governed themselves (possibly with the exception of times when the NA was the dominant authority structure in rural areas), and on the contrary they have often seen their livelihoods threatened by misguided economic and property rights decisions taken by the state administration. As a result, these people have an understandable tendency to choose "exit" as a preferred strategy of interaction with the administration and with its policies whenever possible. This tendency must be countered on a number of levels in order to make devolution policies successful and also to sustain reform of the policy process itself. In particular, it may be countered partly by tempering the volatility of policymaking, implementation, and enforcement processes through a rigorous and equitable application of a streamlined set of (largely existing) policies. Also, and most importantly, it may be countered by

rendering all these processes more participatory and driven by a concern for public goods like NR conservation and with the preservation of rural livelihoods. In addition, devolution should render such processes more predictable, based on the stable mobilization of resources also at the state and local level, as well as more transparent – to both policymakers and the public. The result may eventually be a transformation of local and non-local policy processes that may enable the reconstruction of a sense of trust and of policy effectiveness among policymakers and between them and the public. In turn, this may foster the possibility of adaptive learning on the part of both policymakers and the public concerning issues, solutions, and implementation strategies both in the form and in the content of policy processes concerning natural resources and devolution.

APPENDIX A: CHRONOLOGY OF KEY POLICY DECISIONS

Year	Political event	Policy Decision	Remarks
1899	Beginning of the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium	Title to Land Ordinance	The Title to Land Ordinance recognized as private property individually registered cultivated lands in the extreme north and central riverain Sudan.
1925		Land Settlement & Registration Ordinance	This policy act consolidated the 1903 Land Acquisition Ordinance, which empowered the government to acquire land for irrigation schemes and other public purposes, and the 1905 Land Settlement Ordinance, which established an adjudication system to settle claims to waste and unoccupied lands. Such lands were declared government property barring evidence to the contrary.
1932		Native Courts Ordinance	The Native Courts Ordinance consolidated a series of previous policy documents defining the judicial roles of Native Administration authorities, by setting up a system of local courts alongside state courts. Different authorities (e.g. *Sheikh, Omda*, and *Nazir*) were to chair different levels of tribal or sub-tribal courts.
1951		Local Government Act (or Ordinance)	The Act came in the wake of a series of initiatives paving the way for local government-building in the 1930s-40s, and it reflected a desire by the Colonial Government to circumvent demands for self-determination by the Sudanese nationalist movement. It represented a continuation of a process of devolution of powers that started roughly at the end of WWII, when colonial authorities created a Consultative Legislative Assembly and established the first Kordofan municipality in El Obeid, capital city of the province. The Ordinance sanctioned the creation of local councils appointed by the Colonial Government and entrusted with collecting taxes and providing social services. At the same time, local security and conflict management remained responsibilities of the Native Administration. Courts headed by the Administration and with both rural NA and urban membership retained judicial authority and large discretionary powers, only in some cases subordinate to the authority of Commissioners and to the state legal system.
1955	Mutiny of Southern army forces		In preparation for transition to independence, a series of changes were undertaken in the system of administration of Sudan prior to 1956, which often resulted in the marginalization of Southerners, particularly in the ranks of civil service and the army. The replacement of British officers with Northern Sudanese ones led to a mutiny in 1955, during which Southern soldiers killed hundreds of Northern officers and civilians.
1956	January 1: Independence of Sudan and formation of a coalition government under PM Azhari	Transitional Constitution	

	June: Azhari's government is replaced by an Umma-People Democratic Party's coalition		
1958	February: First general political elections confirm Umma-PDP government, despite Southern opposition. November: Coup led by General Abboud	Ratification of an aid agreement with the USA	The agreement with the United States aimed to stimulate the development of infrastructure and to help the Sudanese economy to reduce its dependence on cotton exports. However, the agreement did not significantly help Sudan confront its economic problems, notably scarcity of foreign exchange reserves, which was worsened by a government decision to sell cotton above world market prices and by an Egyptian embargo on imports of dates, camels, and cattle from Sudan.
1958-1964	Military government led by Gen. Abboud		Among other important policy initiatives, the Abboud government created a Central Council with government-appointed members from different parts of the country. The Council was to advise the government on selected issues, notably foreign policy and the budget.
1961		Local Government Act	The Act established local councils at the district (recently re-termed "locality") level, led by a government-appointed commissioner and with members from among local rural and urban elites, the NA, and leading civil servants. The main implementing party was the Ministry of Interior, which took over local government responsibilities from the Colonial Administrative Secretary.
1963	Southern forces resume armed struggle led by Joseph Lago and the Anya Nya		
1964	General strike and riots lead to fall of Abboud government		The main causes behind the fall of the Abboud government were reportedly his harsh and inconclusive handling of rebellions in the South and of the Southern question in general, and his unsuccessful economic policies.
1964-1969	Civilian government. 1965: National elections and (failed) government-sponsored peace conference on the Southern problem		This phase of civilian government was led by a series of prime ministers and parties for a short term each, due to great instability in party coalitions and to divisions within parties. This period also witnessed the emergence of some important parties representing the South, notably the Sudan African National Union (SANU) led by William Deng and Saturino Lahure. Part of SANU entered Parliament in 1965, while another part went into armed exile in Uganda. Anya Nya remained outside the formal political arena and was plagued by internal divisions. Under the Mahjub government (starting in 1965), the army led a major repressive campaign against Southern rebels. Conversely, the following government, led by Sadiq al Mahdi, briefly attempted to negotiate a peace agreement envisioning a degree of autonomy for Southern provinces.

1968		Establishment of a Mechanized Farming Corporation	The Mechanized Farming Corporation (MFC) was established as an autonomous agency operating under the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources. Among other things, the MFC managed state farms and provided technical assistance, credit, and market support to farmers in mechanized rainfed areas.
1969	May: Military coup by the Free Officers' Movement led by Colonel Jaafar Nimeiri	Creation of a Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) committed to "Sudanese socialism"	The RCC banned political parties and nationalized industries and banks. Under Nimeiri, the government initially included several Communist members, while later the Communists were persecuted. Under the umbrella of the Sudan Socialist Union (SSU), Nimeiri initially promoted top-down ideologically driven policies of state-building and development, similar to most single-party post-colonial regimes. However, the SSU and its program saw significant transformations during Nimeiri's rule, including a transition from state-led "socialism" to a combination of political Islam and economic liberalization.
1970		a) Native Administration Act b) Unregistered Lands Act	a) The Native Administration Act is generally considered as a watershed in government policy towards customary authorities and institutions, as it replaced such authorities with inexperienced tribal leaders chosen on a the basis of political clientele or affiliation. The NA was then formally abolished in 1971. b) In line with colonial land policy, the 1970 Unregistered Lands Act declared all waste, unregistered, and forest land to be government property, which gave the state the right to withdraw de facto recognition of customary land claims other than as usufruct rights. Moreover, the Act formally abolished the power of the NA to allocate land rights in rural communities and it dissolved the legal basis of the notion of tribal homeland, or *Dar*. In practice, the Act was mostly applied in riverain areas, while most rain-fed agricultural areas retained customary holding arrangements. From a legal point of view, however, the 1970 Act provided grounds for the state to challenge such arrangements, and this remained de facto the case after the 1970 Act was repealed by the 1984 Transaction Act. One of the purposes of the 1970 Act was to enable the state to have full control over the settlement of newly irrigated lands, particularly in the Rahad and El-Suki schemes. In these areas, the state intended to avoid the intricacies of the private ownership approach taken in the Gezira Scheme by preemptively declaring all land to be state-owned and thereafter granting usufruct rights to land claimers, mostly small-holders with 5-10 acres of land.
1971	Joseph Lagu proclaims the formation of the Southern Sudan Liberation Movement (SSLM)	People's Local Government Act	After abolishing local government structures set up by previous governments, the Nimeiri government set out to redefine the structure of local administration with the 1971 Act. Among other things, the Act abolished the NA and its functions (notably natural resource management and conflict resolution), and it established a four-tiered system of councils. This system included elected community councils in villages, neighborhoods, and pastoral encampments, followed by rural and urban councils, district councils, and finally ten provincial commissions. The Act reflected the populist

			"socialist" bent of the initial phase of the Nimeiri regime, while also ensuring a capillary presence of the SSU on the national territory. One of the lasting effects of the Act was the loss of institutional capital of the NA both in natural resource management and in regulating relations among rural resource users Furthermore, the 1971 Act marked a transition from partial reliance of local agencies on local taxation to their financial dependence on the central government.
1972	March 27: Peace agreement between SSLM and GOS at Addis Ababa		The agreement granted autonomy to three southern regions under a Southern Regional Assembly, a High Executive Council, and a Regional President appointed by the President of the Government of Sudan (GOS).
1974	Coup attempts and strikes against Nimeiri, followed by purges and state of emergency	Survey Department Act	The Survey Department existed since the beginning of the 20th Century, but the Act reflected a desire to modernize its work and regulate the use of then -new technologies, such as aerial photography and remote sensing.
1974		Livestock Routes and Veterinary Service Stations Act	The aim of the Act, whose implementation was the responsibility of regional Ministries of Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Irrigation, was twofold. Firstly, it aimed to establish stock routes for safe passage of transhumant herders and their animals from areas of livestock production to local and international markets. Secondly, it regulated veterinary services and standards to ensure the good quality of cattle, goats, sheep and camels sold on the market. Both goals reflected a primary preoccupation with the market (notably a desire to boost meat exports to oil-producing countries), rather than with livestock production per se. Production stock routes remained largely unregulated.
1975		Mechanized Farming Corporation (MFC) Regulations	This policy decision served to define MFC responsibilities in relation to the proper utilization of natural resources in areas of rain-fed mechanized farming. Such responsibilities included land clearing, land surveys, granting credit to licensed farmers, and managing state farms. Affected areas included what today corresponds to the states of Blue Nile, White Nile, South Kordofan, Southern Part of North Kordofan, and South Darfur.
1980		Regional Government Act	The Act divided the country into six regions, in addition to Khartoum as national capital. These were Darfur, Kordofan, and the Central, Eastern, Northern and Southern Regions. Each region was led by a governor chosen from among three candidates elected through an electoral college controlled by the Sudan Socialist Union. Regional Councils were also formed, with members chosen by locality councils and including representatives of professional, trade, and women's unions. Despite this decentralization effort, the political system remained based on autocratic principles, which greatly limited the space for power-sharing and participation.
1981		Peoples' Local Government Act	The Act divided regions into localities, more or less corresponding to the rural councils of the colonial era. Each was headed by a Commissioner and by an advisory Locality Council structured in the same way as Regional Councils. Accountability, financial capacity, and participation remained

			seriously limited in both locality and regional bodies.
1983	June: re-division of the Southern region into three provinces, opposed by the SPLM. September: Sharia is proclaimed as the basis of the legal system, triggering a resumption of civil war in the South.	Civil Transaction Act (amended in 1990)	The Act repealed a series of previous acts, including the 1970 Unregistered Land Act, without thereby invalidating regulations and laws issued under such acts. In particular, it re-stated state ownership over all non-registered land. Furthermore, it regulated matters related to civil transactions over land, including title to land, means of land acquisition, and aspects of land use. The Act forbad the use of privately-owned land in ways that might harm others or conflict with the provisions of the 1935 Public Health Act, and it declared the responsibility of the government to conserve surface and underground natural resources. The contents of the Act to some extent reflected the Islamic ideological orientation of the late Nimeiri period. Hence its application was temporarily suspended during the democratic period between 1985 and 1989. The Act was later re-enforced in amended form by the current government starting in 1990.
1983-1985	Protracted droughts and famine in the Sahelian Belt		The Sahelian droughts of the mid-1980s led to serious famine and to a disruption of farming and herding livelihood systems in much of Western Sudan, notably Darfur and parts of Kordofan.
1985	General strike and demonstrations in protest for food and gas price surges. April: Coup led by General Al-Dhahab.		Al-Dhahab's transitional government inherited an economic situation marked by famine in Southern and Western Sudan, with rising international debt and food prices and plummeting agricultural production. On the political front, the end of one-party rule led to an over-proliferation of parties.
1986	February: IMF declares Sudan bankrupt. March: GOS and SPLM issue the Koka Dam Declaration calling for a constitutional conference and for repealing the Sharia as basis of the legal system. June: Sadiq al-Mahdi forms a first coalition government that will last until August 1987 despite much factionalism.	Land Appropriation Act	The Act defined the right of the government to sell and rent state land, as well as to allocate it for specific uses and to grant licenses to investors. Land affected by the Act included that registered as government property according to the 1925 Land Settlement & Registration Act, as well as land expropriated for the public benefit or considered as belonging to the state by default based on the 1970 Act. The 1986 Act did not have a specific implementing agency; rather implementation responsibilities rested with the entire Council of Ministers.
1989	March: Sadiq al-Mahdi dissolves his second coalition government (formed in 1988). June: Coup led by Colonel Umar al-	Forestry National Corporation (FNC) Act	This Act repealed the 1932 Central Forests Act and Forests Subordinate Directorate Act, without thereby invalidating legislation issued under these two Acts. The main objective of the Act was to define the functions of FNC, notably the formulation of general policies concerning forests and environmental protection. In addition, the Act aimed to increase the size of areas to be preserved as forests to a

	Bashir and later by the Revolutionary Command Council for National Salvation, in coalition with the National Islamic Front led by Hassan al-Turabi		minimum of 20% of the territory of Sudan. Implementation was entrusted to FNC, to the Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Water, and to Commissioners and local councils in various regions.
1989		Forests Act	This is the most important Act concerning forest protection. It resulted from the merger of two Forests Acts issued in 1932 and 1974, aiming to regulate the protection of tree species, soil and water resources, pastures, and any other natural resources in forest areas. Under the 1989 Act forest areas were for the first time classified with respect to different kinds of entitlements including private and community ones. Implementation was entrusted to the FNC and to locality Commissioners (who were empowered to enforce the Act). Stakeholders included the Ministries of Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Water, the regional governments, landowners, and producers and traders of forest products such as wood and honey.
1990		Irrigation & Flood Control Act	The Act asserted state authority over the Nile and surface waters in general. In particular, it affirmed the power of the state to issue licenses for any activity concerning irrigation and discharge into surface water, as well as to specify the amount of water that each licensed party can draw and at what time. Implementation was entrusted to the Ministry of Irrigation and Water Resources. Stakeholders were primarily farmers and scheme owners.
1990		Agricultural Council Act	The Act aimed to establish an Agricultural Council to organize and develop the agricultural sector in coordination with concerned agencies (including research institutes). However, there is no evidence that this Council has been operative or effective.
1991		4th Constitutional Decree and Local Government Act (LGA)	Under the Constitutional Decree and the LGA, Sudan was declared a federal country with nine states (including Kordofan), 66 provinces, and 218 districts or localities. Furthermore, the Act redefined to some extent the setup, functions, and financial bases of localities, State Councils and Ministries, Governors, and central government agencies responsible for Local Government, Finance and the *zakat*. In particular, financial sources of local government expanded to encompass returns from investments and transactions, local taxes (e.g. on sugar trade and royalties), state transfers to localities (usually through the State Support Fund), and borrowing.
1992		Organization of Nomads and Farmers Act	The Act aimed to establish institutional structures to organize nomads and farmers and to assist in the implementation of state programs for rural development. A Higher Council for Farmers and Pastoralists was to be established to implement the Act. To date the Act is by and large awaiting implementation, and the organizational structures of pastoralists and traditional farmers remain very poor. The Farmers' Union mainly represents irrigated scheme farmers

			and mechanized farmers/traders, and it is a strong lobbying group on their behalf. However, the Union represents minimally the interests of the smallholder rain-fed sector. Though a Pastoralist Union also exists, it has very limited influence at the federal level.
1995		a) National Water Commission Act b) Water Resource Act c) Local Government Act	a) The National Water Commission Act repealed the National Commission for Rural Waters Act and the National Commission for Town Waters Act of 1986, without abrogating regulations issued under them. Its goal was to establish a national water commission to undertake water planning, coordinate water use, protect the environment, and carry out research on water sources and their sustainable exploitation. The National Water Commission was to be set up in the Ministry of Irrigation and Water Resources. b) The Water Resource Act is the main piece of legislation concerning freshwater. It states that water is government property and entrusts primary responsibility for its management to the Ministry of Irrigation at federal level and to the *walis* and the Ministries of Engineering Affairs at the state level. c) The Act canceled the 1991 LGA without invalidating regulations issued under it. One main aim of the 1995 Act was to plan village lands according to a Disposition of Lands and Physical Planning Act. Moreover, the Act aimed to define stock routes so they would remain clear of agricultural lands, and to provide for the development of pastureland, pest control, and development and conservation of farmland and forests.
1998		a) Constitution of the Republic of Sudan b) Local Government Act	a) The Constitution came into force in June 1998 after a referendum, reaffirming the federal structure of the country (with 25 states) and the foundational role of the *Shari'ah* in Sudanese laws and political institutions. The Constitution also determined the respective responsibilities and financial resources of the federal government, states, and local councils. b) The Act canceled previous LGAs without abrogating regulations issued under them. Its main goal was to organize the activities of local government authorities in each state. One of its provisions was the establishment of Provincial Councils based on criteria of population size.
1999	Crisis of political coalition between President al-Bashir and Hassan al-Turabi, removal of the latter from power, and temporary suspension of the Constitution	a) Nomadic Stock Route Act of North Kordofan b) Rangeland and Pastures Act	The southern part of North Kordofan represents an interface for cattle and camel herders, who settle there after the rainy season particularly in the locality of Shikan. Cattle herders have traditionally followed well-demarcated stock routes when migrating south. However, these were partially abandoned in the 1990s due to lack of investment in water points, rangeland, and markets along the routes, as well as due to war-related insecurity and the encroachment of farms into stock routes. Camel herders have not traditionally had well-demarcated routes, preferring to move freely to wherever pasture is available and to reach agreements with other tribes on where to move after each rainy season. At the time of the Act, government intervention was needed to regulate use of

		resources along stock routes due to emerging competition and conflict among herders and farmers. However, the State did not have enough resources to demarcate stock routes and to provide adequate water and markets along them, to protect rangeland from fires, and to sensitize stakeholders to the need to work together for stock-route development and rehabilitation. b) The main objective of the Act is rangeland conservation and development. Implementation has been seriously hindered by the fact that Rangeland and Pastures Departments are poor in staff, mobility, equipment and budget.
1999	Livestock Production Organization Act and Animal Disease Control Act	These Acts aim to organize the production of livestock for internal and export markets, whether on a mobile (nomadic or transhumant) or sedentary basis. In particular, they provide for a series of services to be made available to livestock producers, including veterinary and marketing services operating on the basis of revolving funds. The record of actions undertaken under the Acts is mixed: for instance, initiatives to concentrate livestock in small, "disease-free" grazing areas has had a negative environmental impact in some areas, while initiatives such as free animal immunization programs have been quite successful, also thanks to the support of livestock owners.
2000	a) Abolition of Crop Taxes, Presidential Decree b) Law Organizing Farming & Pastoralism in South Kordofan; c) Law Organizing Native Ad-ministration in South Kordofan	a) The Decree was passed by the President of Sudan at the advice of the Federal Minister of Finance and in the absence of approval from the National Assembly, on the expectation that reduced taxes would increase agricultural produce prices at the farm gate, thus stimulating agricultural production, and reducing the erratic levying of taxes on farmers on the part of various agencies at the state level. Despite the fiscal loss that would be caused by the abolition of the taxes, it was expected that rising oil revenues would more than offset it. In reality, since many states depend economically and financially on agriculture, their fiscal basis was greatly eroded by the decree. Its expected beneficial effect on farm prices and agricultural production was only felt by traders and large producers in the mechanized sector, thanks to their highly elastic supply functions. The Federal Government has attempted to compensate states for the fiscal loss, but federal transfers tend to be erratic and insufficient, which prevents planning on state budgets. As a consequence, some states have searched for alternative sources of revenue, including indirect taxes on agriculture, which are sometimes levied at collection points along rural roads. Moreover, states have generally reduced spending on agricultural services, since farmers no longer directly contribute to their budgets. Partly in response to this situation, the Federal Government in 2004 attempted to reinstate crop taxes, but it faced resistance by large mechanized farmers, traders, and foreign investors enjoying limited tax holidays.
2001	a) Local Government Act b) South Kordofan State Water	a) The LGA repealed some aspects of the 1998 LGA, notably by stating that *walis* can allow NA authorities to pass judgment in criminal and land acquisition cases, as well as to carry weapons in the pursuit of these judicial responsibilities.

	Corporation Law c) Environment Protection Act	c) This Act replaces the Higher Council for Environment and Natural Resources Act of 1991 and focuses on the role of various authorities at federal and state levels in environmental protection, entrusting overall responsibility for this to the Higher Council For Environment and Natural Resources. In reality, responsibilities for environmental protection are often taken up by various agencies involved in resource use rather than by the Higher Council.
2002	a) Rural Development Organizations Act b) South Kordofan State Law Organizing Agriculture & Pasture c) Forest and Renewable Resources Bill d) Agricultural Implements Use Act e) Zoning of NK for Agricultural Production.	a) The Act aimed to give legal status to village organizations concerned with training and institution building, community-based users groups, and rural micro-finance facilities created by development projects. Implementation was entrusted to State Councils of Ministers and state agencies. b) The Bill replaced the Forests National Corporation Act and the Forests Act of 1989, without invalidating regulations issued under them, and it established a Forests and Renewable Natural Resources Corporation with the same functions defined by the Forest National Corporation Act. The main goals included the organization of a Forests and Pastures Administration, enlarging the area allocated for forest reserves in Sudan to 25% of its territory, and paving the way for a Pastures Act in Sudan. Moreover, the Bill sought to settle disputes between states and Federal Government over the ownership of forest resources and royalties derived from forestry products. The formula adopted to solve such disputes has been one of revenue sharing, whereby states get 40% of revenue from forests located in their territory, while the FNC receives 60% (one third of which to be invested in forest development). One main problem faced in implementing the Bill is the lack of clear rationale and of sensitization campaigns in support of the 25% goal (forest land is only 11% of the territory), so that mechanized farmers for instance tend to ignore regulations that require that they keep 15% of their land under tree cover, and investors tend to use the trees for charcoal production. Oil exploitation has also taken a toll on forest reserves since many trees have been felled to make room for pipes and roads (it is estimated that a million hectare of forests was lost to oil production in less than 7 years). d) The main goal of this law was to prohibit the use of heavy agricultural and tillage implements such as the disc harrow on fragile sandy soils. However, there are high rates of violation of this law and penalties are not adequate. e) This policy decision set 13N as a demarcation line between farming and pastoral areas, declaring the area north of this line as not suitable for farming due to its high vulnerability to drought and desertification. This decision met considerable resistance from farmers north of 13N, who were not provided with the tools to change their livelihoods or compensated for income lost due to this decision. Moreover, the latter was not accompanied by appropriate measures to ensure the availability on local markets of agricultural goods whose local production was affected or prohibited.
2003	Local Government	The 2003 LGA called for more devolution of power to the

		Act	locality level, while simultaneously reducing the number of localities (or rather "administrative units") to about 20% of what they formerly were. The Commissioner was declared the head of the executive branch of the locality government, along with five administrative departments (Agriculture, Animal and Natural Resources, Finance and Planning, Health, Education, and Public Affairs, Engineering and Town Planning). Appointment of the Commissioner remained in the hands of the President, acting upon advice from the State Governor. The Locality Council was granted the possibility of filing a petition with the Governor for the removal of the Commissioner. As for other local government institutions, NA was not mentioned in the 2003 Act, and states were instructed to withhold any initiative in this regard until framework legislation was issued at the federal level. The main constraints to effective local government, such as lack of autonomous financial and human resources of localities were also not addressed by the 2003 Act.
2004	Comprehensive Peace Agreement between GOS and SPLM/SPLA (signed 9 January 2005)	Law Organizing Native Ad-ministration in North Kordofan	Among its various provisions, the CPA calls for a transitional period of co-existence between two distinct but integrated parts of the Sudanese Federation (a Northern and a Southern part), and it affirms principles of power-sharing, devolution of authority and resources, equitable redefinition and restoration of land tenure rights, and sustainable use and sharing of natural resources.

APPENDIX B: TWELVE POLICY INTERVIEW NARRATIVES

TST, Northern Kordofan

Identity and background of the respondent

TST is the *Mutamad*, or "Commissioner" of the locality of Shaikah, as well as a member of the National Congress Party for the State of North Kordofan and of the State Legislative Council and the Chairman of the State Cooperative Union. He is a professional politician with over 33 years of experience in local government, starting at the municipality level in 1972 and moving up to the locality level, where he has worked since 1994. Most of his contribution to the interview comes from his experience as a Commissioner, reflecting not only his participation in the policy process proper, but also his work as a local administrator.

Respondent's interest and involvement in the policy realm:

TST's experience and concerns with the policy realm mostly pertain to the decentralization process, whose cornerstones he identifies in the 1980 Regional Government Act, the 1981 People's Local Government Act (which divided regions into localities headed by Commissioners), and various Local Government Acts issued in 1991, 1995, 1998, and 2003. (Another Local Government Act was issued in 2001 that granted some judicial authority to the NA, but this is not mentioned by TST.) In particular, he attaches great importance to the 2003 Act, which reduced the number of existing localities and granted more powers to Commissioners as heads of their executive branches, though he stresses the negative effects of lack of devolution of financial powers to localities, which depend on top-down transfers for their operational expenses. His involvement in the policy realm is mostly confined to the level of implementation, for the very performance of his tasks as a Commissioner is in a sense a form of implementation of decentralization policies. His account of the policy process is also essentially an account of how he carries out his responsibilities, which he claims to do by seeking constant collaboration with various stakeholders such as the Native Administration, other local leaders, and unions representing farmers and pastoralists. In his view, the main obstacle to such "collaborative policy implementation" is recurrent competition between pastoralists and farmers over stock routes and farmland, combined with resistance by the NA and by local stakeholders to changes in property or use rights over land. Such problems are compounded by the weak organizational structure and high poverty level of stakeholders, notably farmers and, to a lesser extent, pastoralists.

Respondent's view of policy volatility

TST's view is that volatility is mostly present in the process and outcomes of decentralization policies due to lack of careful and informed planning, failure to properly consider the repercussions of policy decisions, the marginalization of civil service in the policy making process, and the lack of clear hierarchies based on competence in decision-making. Put differently, poor distribution of roles and responsibilities in the policy process, incompetence of policymakers, poor leadership vision, and lack of awareness of natural resources issues are regarded by TST as the main sources of policy volatility. To these must be added a tendency of the policy process to be driven by ideological and political commitments, while lack of information, risk aversion, and lack of interest in innovative policy solutions by policymakers combine to yield a repetitive, non-innovative policy process.

Respondent's views on natural resource policy issues

In TST's view, the main problems to be addressed in regard to natural resource management are conflicts over resource use, misuse of resources (e.g. overgrazing and over-cutting), and droughts and desertification. These problems are mainly due to human and political/administrative factors, notably "irrational" patterns of resource use and the failure of public institutions to take timely and effective decisions to improve these patterns. According to TST, this situation requires policy interventions that concentrate on improving use patterns, give primary stakeholders and the NA a substantive role in the policy process, and improve regulation of use rights to enhance environmental sustainability. In particular, local stakeholders must gain awareness of the environmental consequences of existing patterns of resource use, and they must be helped to overcome poverty so they can gradually invest in livelihood strategies based on environmentally sustainable resource use and participate more in representative institutions (including Farmers' and Pastoralists' Unions). At present, these are not initiatives that are being undertaken by policymakers. However, this does not mean that positive policy decisions have not been taken in the realm of natural resource management. For instance, TST was involved in the passing of a decision by the state of North Kordofan in 2002 to consider latitude 13 degrees north as the dividing line between pastoral and farming lands. In his view, this was a positive decision, and the State Ministry of Agriculture also provided to some extent for its effective implementation, e.g. by reseeding rangeland in areas allocated to pastoral use. However, the results of this decision were poor, due to the apparent lack of conviction of stakeholders (notably traditional farmers) that this was a good policy. Moreover, scant funding was allocated for implementation by the Bank of Sudan and the State Ministry of Agriculture, and no effective provisions were made to raise funding directly from stakeholders, e.g. via animal and land taxes.

Respondent's views on decentralization

TST's discussion on decentralization concentrates on the decision undertaken by the state of North Kordofan in 2003 to earmark 70% of resources allocated to localities for salaries, leaving the remaining 30% for social expenditures. TST was only indirectly involved in this decision, as an observer to discussions in the North Kordofan Council of Ministers along with other Commissioners. Like the latter, he was against the decision because he regarded the percentage allocated for social services as insufficient. Possibly as a result of the Commissioners' arguments in favour of changing the balance between operational expenditures (e.g. salaries) and social expenditures, the decision was later amended to allot 50% to each. The source of these revenues remained essentially the State Ministry of Finance, though localities are also empowered to raise their own fees and taxes.

Respondent's evaluation of policy outcomes

TST's evaluation of a policy outcome focuses on the 2003 LGA mentioned above, whose goals he describes as establishing a clear and equitable division of resources between states and localities, laying out a comprehensive vision for the development of localities, and making provisions for basic social services (e.g. health and education) at the locality level. The outcome of the policy appears to the respondent to be positive as concerns devolution of decision-making power. However, lack of correspondence between this kind of devolution and devolution of financial resources is a key problem of the 2003 Act particularly in certain localities, though others reportedly get more than their share of financial resources.

BMHA, Southern Kordofan

Identity and background of the respondent

BMHA is the *Amir* (i.e., the highest Native Administration authority) of the Hawazma/Awlad Abdul Aal, as well as a member of the Executive Committee of the Pastoralist Union. His background reflects the changing attitude of the Sudanese government vis-à-vis Native Administration since the late 1960s. From 1969 to 1985, in other words more or less coinciding with the period of de-legitimization of the Native Administration by the state, BMHA was an administrative officer in the local government. In 1985, when the attitude of the Sudanese government had become more favourable to some form of participation of Native Administration leaders in local administration, he became *Amir*, namely a government-appointed equivalent/substitute of the tribal *Nazir*. It is not clear from the interview whether BMHA or his family already held such title informally or whether they had held it before 1969, but it is a reasonable assumption that the title was indeed in his family.

Respondent's interest and involvement in the policy realm

BMHA's interest and involvement are mostly in the realm of natural resource management, with a particular stake in the role granted by government policies to the Native Administration. In this regard, he believes that the most important policy decision taken in relatively recent years has been the planning of mechanized farming schemes and the allocation of farmland to scheme farmers, which he claims originally took place without consideration for the impact of such allocation over stock routes. Second in line among important policy decisions is the declaration of state ownership rights over all unregistered land, including forest areas and rangeland, which also encouraged concessions for private use of forests as sources of timber. Another important decision, in whose implementation BMHA has been involved as a member of the Executive Committee of the Pastoralist Union, is the 2004 Pastoral and Farmlands Act. It is not clear how he judges this involvement, since his account of the participation in the Union as well as in other institutions (including the Native Administration) involved in the policy process deals only in part with the past couple of years. It seems nonetheless evident to him that neither the 2004 Act nor the Unions, in so far as they have been interlocutors for the government in the policy process leading to the Act, constitute strong, representative, and competent institutions for natural resource management, let alone for managing the social dimensions of resource use. Traditional farmers and institutions are especially weak, partly because of the poverty level of these farmers. However, the situation of the Native Administration is not much better: as an *Amir*, BMHA appears to have been rather isolated in the policy-making arena so far, and to lack the ability or perhaps the incentive to work with other players to influence the policy-making process. In his view, this is not only a problem of the Native Administration or of himself personally, but rather a general problem of South Kordofan, where he claims there is little political awareness and organization.

Respondent's view of policy volatility

BMHA argues that there is volatility in all dimensions of the policy process due to a variety of factors, including incompetence and lack of experience of policymakers and their lack of proximity and contact with local stakeholders. To these must be added a constant concern with political and security issues, at the expense of administrative and management concerns, multiple and overlapping sources of authority over policy, and lack of facilities, implementation powers, and resources in administrative bodies entrusted with policy implementation. When asked to rank a set of possible causes of volatility mentioned by the interviewer, BMHA chooses as the most significant one poor leadership vision, followed by suboptimal distribution of roles and responsibilities in the policy process and by insufficient information and awareness about natural resource management issues. The problem of poor vision may be linked in his view to a prevalence of ideological motivations over rational considerations (including scientific evidence) that characterize policy decisions on natural resource management. Another problematic aspect

of such vision is risk aversion, which combines with lack of information and force of habit to yield a stagnating policy process, where innovative options are hardly ever discussed.

Respondent's views on natural resource policy issues

According to BMHA, the main problems of natural resource management in Sudan are various recent changes that deprive certain resource users (notably pastoralists) from access to water, pastureland, and forest trees. This situation has a variety of causes, including over-cutting of trees, burial of ponds, farmers' encroachment into and cultivation of pastureland, and their blockage of access to water sites by pastoralists. According to the respondent, these factors are all symptoms of poor governance of natural resources, notably lack of appropriate administrative organization in this realm and lack of consultation of stakeholders by natural resource management authorities. In the past, he claims that situations that may deprive certain users from access to resources were dealt effectively by the Native Administration (e.g. through inter-tribal conferences). After the temporary replacement of the NA with popular committees by the May Revolution regime, it became more difficult to solve conflicts among resource users because the legacy of expertise and legitimacy of traditional institutions for conflict management was rejected by the government. At present, though the Native Administration has been reinstated in a weakened role in some aspects of natural resource management, there is still a need for policies based on sound assessment of the socio-economic conditions of resource users and, most importantly, on policymakers' consultations with users. Furthermore, sound policies must be complemented with adequate financial resources for implementation, as well as by public investment in the productivity of land and livestock, so as to discourage resource overuse. These are not features that characterize existing policy decisions, a point that the respondent makes also by reference to a 2000 policy organizing the relationship between grazing and farming. Unlike arrangements traditionally devised by the NA, this policy decision did not clearly demarcate stock routes, nor was it applied to all routes or to water sites, which left much room for encroachment by farmers onto areas needed by pastoralists for grazing and resting. BMHA argues that implementation of this policy decision is hindered by inadequate or inappropriately used funding, which is only in part raised from fees on animal sales and services offered to pastoralists, who do not feel that they have much at stake in this policy. Finally, no monitoring and evaluation mechanisms or systematic collection of information needed for enforcement have been set up for the 2000 policy.

Respondent's views on decentralization

BMHA regards conflict between local government and the Native Administration and the insufficient resources and field presence of government administration as the two main problems to be faced by Sudan in the realm of decentralization. In his view, these problems are partly due to lack of experience of the government administration in natural resource management, contrary to the case of the Native Administration, and partly to misuse rather than unavailability of financial resources. Some recent policy

decisions in the realm of decentralization have brought positive contributions to this situation. For instance, the 2003 Local Government Act represents a positive step according to BMHA, despite some limits such as the fact that the highest authorities at the locality level are appointed rather than elected. In terms of implementation, the Act suffers from inadequate sources of funding and poor facilities at the locality level, particularly since localities have very little ability to generate funds through taxes.

Respondent's evaluation of policy outcomes

BMHA's assessment of the outcome of a policy process in which he has recently been involved, namely the above-mentioned 2004 Organization of Pastoral and Farmlands Act, is overall negative. The goal of the Act was to decrease or prevent conflicts among resource users and to develop pastoral and farming activities. This was in theory a positive and equitable goal. However, the implementation of the Act did not facilitate its achievement, partly because envisioned sources of funding (such as the Pastoralist Union and the Animal Resource Department) did not contribute sufficient resources, and partly because implementation was not planned with due consideration for circumstances such as the farming and herding calendars. BMHA's view is that if the Native Administration were better organized and more vocal, it could play a positive role in the implementation of the Act, and the same applies to resource users' unions. However, at present this is not the case on either front.

AAA, Federal Government

Identity and background of the respondent

AAA is currently a member of the Higher Education Council and a member or former member of a number of educational and political institutions. He is former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Khartoum, former Chairman of the Agricultural Engineers Association of Sudan and of the Agricultural Research Corporation, former Minister of Agriculture and Natural Resources, former Governor of the Northern Region, and former Ambassador of Sudan to the United States, a country where he also achieved post-graduate education (MSC/MA and PhD).

Respondent's interest and involvement in the policy realm

AAA has been involved in various policy realms, including those of decentralization (as the former Governor of the Northern Region) and natural resource management (as Minister of Agriculture and Natural Resources and as the Chairman of the Agricultural Research Corporation). In addition, he was involved in policymaking in different realms as a member of the National Assembly under Nimeiri. He believes that the most important policy decisions concerning decentralization taken by the Government of Sudan in the past 30 years have been the 1980 Regional Government Act (which divided the country into six regions, each ruled by a Governor and a Regional Council) and the 2003-2005 Peace Process and

Comprehensive Peace Agreement. Among a list of other recent policy decisions in the realm of natural resource management, AAA ranks as most important the ongoing revisions of the Land Act and of the Gezira Land law, which will turn tenancy into usufruct leasehold for Gezira Scheme tenants. These are followed in importance by the Environmental Conservation Act, the Improved Seeds Act, and the Forests Act, all of which concern environmental sustainability and development. Among these Acts, AAA has been most directly involved in the reform of the Gezira Scheme, where he played an advisory role as the Chairman of the Gezira Reform Committee appointed by the Minister of Agriculture in cooperation with FAO and water users' associations. In this role, he collaborated with a number of players to encourage what is now an innovative policy-in-the-making, contributing to the formation of a coalition of stakeholders pressing for change, including the Farmers' Union, Water Users' Associations, FAO, and the World Bank. Thanks to the lobbying power of these institutional bodies (notably the Farmers' Union), the Committee has been able to carry out innovative work despite some resistance from the Gezira Board, whose members feared loss of power from changes in the Scheme, as well as from the Ministry itself, whose members have been reluctant to support innovative possibilities involving redistribution of key economic assets.

Respondent's view of policy volatility

AAA regards the policy process as volatile in all its aspects, including outcomes and decisions, process, implementation, and policy environment. In his view, sources of volatility primarily include poor information and awareness of natural resource issues by policymakers, poor leadership vision (including reliance on ideological rather than factual considerations in setting policy), and insufficient public involvement in decision making. Some of these factors may be decreasing in importance. For instance, government participation in the peace negotiations has highlighted the need for improvement in its information collection and management capacity as a precondition for its ability to define appropriate and viable new legislative and executive arrangements for the country.

Respondent's views on natural resource policy issues

According to AAA, the main problems affecting Sudan in the field of natural resource management include the social, economic, and environmental effects of recurrent droughts, deforestation, and a non-viable land tenure system. While not much has been done so far to address these problems in an integrated fashion, it is nonetheless possible to ameliorate the situation significantly via appropriate policy, particularly by promoting institutional reform within implementation agencies, and by investing in field-based research and development, which is now inadequately funded and relies minimally on input from local stakeholders. Furthermore, greater financial resources should be invested in agriculture (meant as a sector in which livestock production and farming are mutually integrated activities), rural market development, and physical infrastructure. The question of financial allocation for agricultural

development and natural resource development is consequently a key one, which the government has only begun to tackle with policy initiatives such as the 2000 Abolition of Crop Taxes. This policy decision, in which AAA was also involved in a consultative capacity as then-Chairman of the Agricultural Research Corporation, aimed to reduce agricultural taxation that was then too heavy, so as to facilitate more investment in agriculture (notably mechanized farming) and to improve agricultural productivity and the competitiveness of Sudanese crops on the export market. Despite such good intentions, this piece of policy was negatively affected in its quality and feasibility by the fact that it was issued by the President and the Minister of Finance with minimal consultation with other parties, and it also suffered from resistance on the part of states, whose budgets significantly depended on agricultural taxes. At present, reinstating agricultural taxes may be a good option according to the respondent, so long as the revenue collected through these taxes is invested directly in action-oriented research and development involving local stakeholders, with the aim of improving agricultural productivity.

Respondent's views on decentralization

According to AAA, decentralization of natural resource management faces a series of obstacles on the governance front, essentially due to the weak human and financial capacities of individual states, their poor infrastructure, and their financial, political, and technical dependence on the federal government. Some attempts were made in the past to develop the policymaking capacity of states and localities, by creating planning units and devising mechanisms to generate independent revenue at the state and locality levels. However, what is still needed is a reinvigoration of the regional government system, building on past policy decisions such as the 1980 Regional Government Act. At the time of the latter, AAA was the Deputy Chairman of the Decentralization of Government Committees chaired by Sudanese Vice-President Abdel Aleir, and in this capacity he was involved in the Act, which he regarded as a necessary step for the development of a decentralized system (which in turn he views as the only possible kind of system for a country as large and diverse as Sudan). While this policy was overall positive in its content, and though it was approved with virtually no opposition in the government, its effective implementation was hindered by inadequate funding through the federal budget. Enforcement mechanisms were instead better provided for, ranging from suitable land legislation to resource surveys, to research studies at the regional level in collaboration with the National Council for Research. It is not clear whether such studies and surveys have become the basis for the planning of natural resource management at the regional level, nor to what extent they have actually served as enforcement mechanisms for the 1980 Act.

Respondent's evaluation of policy outcomes

AAA's view of decentralization policies during the period from 1980 to 1985, when the focus of these policies was on developing a regional government system, is that they responded to a real need to develop the different potential of individual regions, to invest in their socio-economic development, and to

empower their population to manage their own affairs. Unlike other policies, these were well planned and studied according to the respondent. For instance, a committee was set up under the then-Vice President and AAA himself (then Minister of Agriculture) to study the most appropriate structure for a regional government system. Implementation was to take place through a series of policy documents, including the 1980 Act and the 1981 People's Local Government Act, and a gradual process of development of regional institutions was also envisaged (e.g. governors would initially be appointed and later elected). Despite this careful planning, however, the policy did not have a successful outcome because of the resistance of the central government to release decision-making power and resources to the regions, as well as the reluctance of qualified cadres to move to the regions. In addition, regional governments were unable to develop their own competent cadres and effective mechanisms to raise financial resources sufficient to cover their costs. Lacking sufficient resources and concrete support from the political leadership in Khartoum, the regional system set up in the early 1980s was vulnerable to failure as soon as changes in the political environment took place. Indeed, the change of leadership that took place with the advent of the Al-Mahdi regime marked the end of this regional experiment, despite its apparent popularity with regional constituencies.

AAO, Southern Kordofan

Identity and background of the respondent

AAO is Rain-fed Agriculture Manager at the South Kordofan State Ministry of Agriculture, as well as former Director General of the same Ministry and of the Mechanized Farming Corporation of Darfur and former Chairman of the Economic Committee of the Northern Kordofan Legislative Council. He holds a university degree in agriculture and is currently working on a MSC in the same field.

Respondent's interest and involvement in the policy realm

AAO's involvement in the policy-making arena has been through his participation in the institutions mentioned above, as well as through his participation in the state legislature of North Kordofan. His interests range from agricultural to decentralization policies, and he regards decentralization and economic liberalization as the two most important policy processes that have taken place in Sudan over the past couple of decades. In terms of specific policy decisions, he regards the dissolution of the Nuba Mountain Agricultural Corporation and of the Mechanized Farming Corporation as the most important policy decisions, followed by the abolition of boarding schools and of the Native Administration in 1970. His account of his involvement in policy-making in the agricultural realm stresses positive collaboration with a variety of players (notably ministerial agencies and government committees, the Farmers' Union, the Native Administration Commissioners, and also NGOs and donors). However, this account also highlights the existence of different agendas and power among these players when it comes to agricultural

policies. For one thing, NGOs, the Ministry of Agriculture, and the ruling party often have different views and interests in regard to agricultural policies. Furthermore, there are wide gaps in power, wealth, and interests between traditional and mechanized farmers, whereby only the latter group is generally well represented in the policy process (notably through the lobbying activities of the Farmers' Union), while traditional farmers and pastoralists are very marginal policy players. This situation, which allows traditional farmers and pastoralists to provide only minimal (or no) input into the policy process, is often conducive to suboptimal policy decisions according to the respondent. For instance, lack of such input in decisions concerning the creation of mechanized farming schemes, notably as regards mechanisms for land allocation, has led policymakers to be often taken by surprise by the negative socio-economic impact of such mechanisms, including conflicts between scheme-holders and pastoralist groups.

Respondent's view of policy volatility

In AAO's view, the policy process is marked by volatility on all levels, due to the fact that most policymakers are ideologically-driven appointees, and also as a result of Sudan's difficult socio-economic, security, and natural environment situation. Poor leadership vision, the weight of power coalitions and of party politics, and inadequate capacity for planning and coordination among policymakers also contribute to volatility, along with insufficient public involvement in the policy process. However, inadequate resources and risk aversion of policymakers tend to render this process rather predictable, since new policy solutions are rarely sought.

Respondent's views on natural resource policy issues

The main problems in the natural resources policy realm according to the respondent are lack of clear and systematic information about natural resources, lack of clear rules for ownership, tenure, and use, unstable government policies, and suboptimal utilization of land and other resources from a socio-economic point of view. On the tenure front, in particular, he argues that there are no master plans clearly demarcating pastoral lands, forests, water sites and stock routes, and that there are multiple authorities for the allocation of tenure rights, both government-related and in the Native Administration. Tenure problems are particularly acute in areas allocated by the state for mechanized farming, since these tend to grow horizontally as a result of lack of investment to improve productivity, and they eat into land that could be used for other purposes or that is needed by other resource users. To address some of the negative socio-economic and environmental consequences of such horizontal expansion, mechanisms for the allocation of scheme land have changed over time to accommodate to some extent the entitlements of local stakeholders and to reduce the size of individual plots. These mechanisms have sometimes entailed coordination with local institutions, such as local committees for land distribution with the power to issue recommendations to government authorities. However, the success of these initiatives has been limited, often due to the poor financial situation of local stakeholders and institutions. Moreover, what has not yet

been addressed is the need to rationalize land use by choosing use patterns and technologies appropriate to the characteristics of different areas (e.g. level of rainfall, type of soil, access to non-local food markets such as those of Northern Kordofan and Darfur, etc.). The government attempted to stabilize tenure and use rights with the 2002 Organization of Pastoral and Farmland Act, in which AAO was involved in his capacity as Director of the South Kordofan Mechanized Farming Corporation. This policy decision was appropriate, according to the respondent, but it was not accompanied by adequate funding for implementation nor was it designed in consultation with stakeholders. As a result, farmers and pastoralists were reluctant to comply with the Act, because its costs (including fees and penalties) did not appear to them to be balanced by services tailored to their needs. On the other hand, these groups were sanctioned only in minor ways for non compliance, since enforcement mechanisms for the Act have been very weak, and there have been no mechanisms for joint enforcement and monitoring by Commissioners, the Native Administration, the police, and the Pastoralists Union.

Respondent's views on decentralization

The main problems facing decentralization of natural resource management according to the respondent are that relevant authorities at the state and local levels may have decision-making power without having the necessary competence, and that the role of natural resource management authorities is popularly perceived as consisting merely of land distribution, rather than also of resource planning and development. In part, this is due to the government's failure to allocate appropriate human and financial resources to manage decentralization in the Ministry of Agriculture, resulting in weak capacity and natural resource management planning at the local level and in limited resources to fund development projects and infrastructural rehabilitation. It is not clear that this situation can be amended in the framework of the 2003 Local Government Act, which has created a dual authority system whereby some departments within localities are under the authority of the Commissioner while others depend on relevant Ministries. Furthermore, the Act has not granted a stable financial basis to localities, nor has it devised clear mechanisms for information gathering and for monitoring and evaluation of its own implementation.

Respondent's evaluation of policy outcomes

As an example of natural resource management policy, AAO focused on the decision to redistribute agricultural land under mechanized farming schemes, with a view to granting a significant percentage of this land to local stakeholders, demarcating commons and stock routes to resolve conflicts between pastoralists and farmers, and eventually improving food production. Some of these objectives have been achieved: the share of land plots allocated to local people has increased in comparison to land allocated to external investors in scheme areas, and some scheme land has been allocated to villages to be held as commons. Conversely, scant progress has been made in improving food production, in part because of security concerns among investors and also due to war-related market instability. The decision to bring

about a more equitable distribution of land and also to the directly involve some farmers in advisory committees that played a role in the implementation process enjoyed significant popularity among local farmers at least in its initial phase. According to the respondent, this does not mean that farmers participated in the policy process leading to this decision or that they shared the government's view of its objectives and implications, nor does it mean that policymakers were accountable to farmers either when the decision was taken or during the implementation phase.

IDN, Southern Kordofan

Identity and background of the respondent

IDN is Deputy Secretary General of the South Kordofan State Government and Director of Local Government Administration, as well as a former Director General of the Transitional Council for Peace in the Nuba Mountains. He holds an undergraduate degree in Economics and is pursuing post-graduate education (MA and MBA) in sociology and business administration.

Respondent's interest and involvement in the policy realm

IDN's interests and experience in the policy arena are mostly in the realm of decentralization. He regards the 1980 Regional Government Act, the 1981 Local Government Act, and the establishment of the current federal system in the early 1990s as the most significant initiatives undertaken by the government in the past few decades. Following these initiatives in order of importance are the Presidential Decree to redistribute mechanized farmlands and the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement that marked the end of peace negotiations between thee Government of Sudan and most Southern rebel forces in 2005. IDN's policy experience includes participation in these negotiations, as a member of the negotiating teams working on the Nuba Mountains peace arrangements in 1997. This experience, while probably not too representative of the policy-making process in Sudan, was nonetheless significant in terms of governance, as it involved sustained collaboration among GOS and various local institutions and civil society groups, notably the Farmers' Union, Women and Youth Federations, and the (Public) Workers' Union. The latter in particular was reportedly the strongest interest group in the negotiation process. This collaboration was not without limits, partly because of the resistance of some "community leaders" to working with the negotiating teams reported by the respondent, and partly because of the organizational and socio-economic weakness of certain groups, notably traditional farmers. Moreover, this sort of collaboration has not led to the formation of interest coalitions that may survive beyond the context of negotiations to influence "normal" policy processes. IDN believes that more effective forms of popular participation in the policy process may arise in the context of present promises of democratization, which are also partly linked to the outcome of the North-South peace negotiations.

Respondent's view of policy volatility

Like other respondents, IDN believes that there is volatility in all aspects of the policy process in the domains of natural resource management and decentralization in Sudan, due to the influence of personal interests and too many attempts to alter the status quo because of its connotations of social, political and economic inequality. Insecurity due to war and other emergencies, poor information and awareness of natural resource management, and weak planning and coordination processes among policymakers are also volatility-inducing factors, along with a suboptimal distribution of responsibilities in the policy process and a leadership vision driven by ideological commitments. This vision affects in particular the quality of civil service staff, who have often been chosen (at least until recently) because of party affiliation rather than for their competence. Lack of information and awareness, insufficient resources to plan and implement policy initiatives, and the presence of overlapping and non-coordinated policy arenas further complicate the picture on the policymakers' side, discouraging the search for innovative policy solutions.

Respondent's views on natural resource policy issues

The main problems that Sudan faces on the natural resource front are linked to growing competition between sedentary and nomadic groups and among resource users in general, leading to conflict and to growing pressure on resources, notably land located in secure areas. This is largely due to the state of conflict that has characterized much of rural Sudan over the past several years, which has limited resources accessible without security risks. However, the respondent believes that the recent peace agreement may also contribute to social instability in relation to natural resources, as it may mobilize people's awareness of the inequitable distribution of power that currently shapes access to these resources. In the past, competition over resources was contained through annual conferences in which users and ethno-tribal groups came together to plan for resource use and to solve conflicts. Stock routes were monitored to ensure their viability and the availability of adequate services (notably water points) along their path. The Native Administration played a leading role in these initiatives and was generally able to ensure their effectiveness in preventing conflict and in containing pressure over the environment. However, after the dissolution of the Native Administration the civil administration was not able to perform a similar role effectively, and even after the Native Administration was reinstated natural resource management mechanisms that had been functional until the 1970s never regained their past effectiveness, partly because government involvement led to the selection of Native Administration leaders lacking the needed experience and social standing to impose their decisions onto their communities. Under the terms of the current Peace Agreement, this situation may be redressed through the work of a Land Commission that is expected to regulate land tenure and resource use. In addition, the respondent argues that what is needed is a clearer and more systematic devolution of authority over forests from the Federal Government to the states, which must address problems of over-cutting and

reforestation with the necessary authority. The most significant recent government policy regarding land tenure according to the respondent is the Presidential Decree to redistribute mechanized farming schemes. IDN himself was involved in the making of this decision in his capacity as the Director of Local Government in Abbassiya, in the Eastern Mountains. His view on this decision is decidedly positive, both in terms of goals and of implementation. The goals were to make land distribution more equitable, to facilitate farmers' investment in land by granting them land titles, and to accommodate to some extent the interests of village communities by allocating plots for village commons. In IDN's view, implementation of the Decree was effective, thanks to the formation of integrated political/administrative committees managing the implementation process, and in spite of the inadequate funding set aside for this purpose by the government. Moreover, the decision enjoyed wide popular support particularly at the local level, while commercial producers, who had originally benefited the most from farming schemes, naturally opposed redistribution in favour of local farmers.

Respondent's views on decentralization

Contrary to the frequently expressed view that decentralization policies are hindered by the Federal Government's lingering attachment to centralized administration, IDN suggests that the main challenges to such policies are at the local level, notably due to the poor human and financial resources of local institutions. This lack of resources results in limited public awareness at the local level, in the tendency of local institutions to be driven by narrow local interests rather than taking into consideration national interests, and at times even in disregard of national laws in favour of local decisions and procedures. What is primarily required in the respondent's view is capacity building of local administration particularly in terms of human resources, e.g. through appropriate training programs, salary and incentive packages, flexible contractual arrangements, etc. Whether or not this will be done at the state level partly depends on developments following from the Peace Agreement, though the main policy framework on this front remains the 1994 Constitutional Decree No.5 on the Adoption of a Federal System of Government, a policy decision in which IDN was also indirectly involved as a member of various unions. His position in relation to the Decree was favourable even then, as he saw, and still sees, federalism as the only way to facilitate popular participation in government and to meet the aspirations of various groups in Sudan (e.g. the people of the Nuba Mountains). IDN claims that, along with other representatives of interest groups and institutions, he worked to influence the decision-making process in 1994 and later the implementation of the Decree. It is not clear what form this involvement took. In any case, today he evaluates this policy and its implementation in positive terms, though he notes the persistent weakness of administrative cadres at the regional and local level and the fragile resource base of regional and state governments, which depend on the Federal Government for their budgets.

Respondent's evaluation of policy outcomes

Considering again Constitutional Decree No.5 and the creation of a federal system from an outcome-focused perspective, IDN offers a more critical view of this decision than earlier on in the interview, noting first of all that its expected outcome was not only to facilitate popular participation in government but also to achieve socio-economic progress towards development, equality, and justice for all Sudanese. In light of these ambitious goals, the creation of a federal system created great expectations in the public, which it was difficult to meet. In particular, the high costs associated with the implementation of this policy weakened certain institutions and the quality of certain public services, and resources were insufficient to sustain a broad-based process of development. Some progress on this front was nonetheless achieved, notably in health, education, and agricultural development. The main achievement of the Decree, however, was the creation of at least a formal framework for participation in policy-making at the state level. It is not clear how systematically the government has monitored this or other achievements enabled by the Decree, and how early and in what manner it has become aware of gaps in its implementation. According to IDN, the federal government has made some attempts to earmark more resources for regional development and to deepen political participation in states. On an ongoing basis, states send their own delegations to Khartoum to present to the government their needs and make their requests, but there appear to be no mechanisms to systematically feed this sort of feedback coming from the states into the policy framework that governs the federal system (notably the respective power of federal and state authorities), nor is it clear that delegations represent and voice the concerns of a broad section of society in their states. As a result, the respondent's account suggests that these delegations can hardly be seen as tools to increase downward accountability between federal government and the population of individual states.

HMNA, Federal Government

Identity and background of the respondent

HMNA is Director General of the Administration of Planning and Animal Resource Economics of the Federal Ministry of Animal Resources and Fisheries (MARF), as well as a member of the Veterinarian Trade Union and of the Sudan Veterinary Society. He holds a PhD in Animal Production and a Master of Social Sciences' Degree in Development Administration.

Respondent's interest and involvement in the policy realm

HMNA's experience in policy spans the realms of natural resource management of and decentralization. In the latter, he regards all the various decrees and acts undertaken for the devolution of powers to states, regions, and localities as the most important policy decisions taken over the past few decades. Regarding instead natural resource management and agricultural development, the most important policy decisions in his view have been market liberalization, the recent reinstatement of the Ministry of Animal Resources,

and the consolidation of research units from various ministries to establish a new Ministry of Science and Technology. In some of these decisions, as well as in the policy process concerning natural resource management more generally, HMNA has been directly involved in various capacities in the Ministry of Animal Resources and Fisheries. His account of this experience points to a collaborative effort on the part of the MARF vis-à-vis other Ministries (Irrigation, Agriculture and Forestry, Science and Technology, Finance and National Economy), various producers' associations (Unions of Pastoralists, Livestock and Meat Exporters, Dairy Producers, Poultry Producers, and Fishermen), the National Assembly's Committee of Agriculture, Animal Resources, and Irrigation, and finally a number of individual professionals. However, the respondent also points to the existence of conflicts of interest and divisions among some of these groups and institutions (e.g. representatives of livestock and meat exporters vs. ministry representatives, when the latter push for policies favouring the domestic market). His account conveys a keen awareness of different interests motivating individual groups and agencies, as shown by the recurrent formation of coalitions to push for the approval of certain agricultural and natural resource management policies. In particular, he suggests that agricultural engineers have been very effective in mobilizing support for their interests while HMNA was at the Ministry, partly thanks to their significant presence in government circles and in the bureaucracy. Conversely, veterinary professionals as a group have traditionally had weaker ties with the political and bureaucratic elites. This fact, combined with the organizational weakness and minimal participation of pastoral groups in policy-making (despite the non-negligible weight of a narrowly-representative Pastoralist Union), has resulted in insufficient attention to the pastoral sector in agricultural development and natural resource management policies.

Respondent's view of policy volatility

Similarly to other interviewees, HMNA regards the policy process in Sudan as generally marked by volatility in all its aspects. In particular, he argues that volatility is manifested in frequent changes in policy decisions, typically coinciding with changes in staff occupying decision-making positions in authoritative agencies and institutions. Rather than trying to build on existing policies, each newcomer to a decision-making post seems to carry with him a series of individual interests and beliefs that he seeks to serve or to translate into policy. As a result, individual policy decisions rarely remain in place for a sufficient time to enable proper implementation, let alone to achieve significant impact. Poor leadership vision, incompetence, and this type of personal approach to policy making, combined with limited attention to factual evidence and a tendency of policymakers to be driven by ideological considerations are thus key problems in relation to policy volatility according to HMNA. This situation also makes policymakers reluctant to explore innovative policy solutions, due to risk aversion as well as to resistance to innovation by entrenched interest groups. To this must be added the impact of structural factors, such

as the fact that different policy arenas are not sufficiently well-demarcated or coordinated with each other and that resources are inadequate to implement innovating initiatives.

Respondent's views on natural resource policy issues

The respondent argues that Sudan's situation concerning natural resources is quite difficult at present, notably because of deterioration of resources, including land degradation, deforestation, and desertification. This is due to a combination of human and natural factors, including misuse of resources, droughts, poverty, population pressure, and lack of political vision and will to implement sound natural resource policies. Many attempts have been made by the Government of Sudan to address the situation, including a series of development projects (e.g. the Jebel Marra Rural Development Project), the allocation of mandatory minimum percentages of federal and mechanized scheme land to forests, the issuing of acts to regulate relations between farmers and pastoralists and their respective resource use in certain states, and the setting of demarcation lines (e.g. latitude 13 degrees North in North Kordofan) for traditional crop farming vs. rangeland. Among these various initiatives, the respondent notes that development projects were rather successful but short lived, as was the creation of a livestock route to transport cattle from areas in Western Sudan to markets in Central Sudan. Other initiatives, notably issuing acts to regulate relations between farmers and pastoralists, have been hindered by lack of will for enforcement. Mobilizing such will is key for good natural resource management policy in the future, along with greater attention to scientific research and the willingness of policymakers to consult with resource users and community-level institutions when making policy decisions that directly affect them. Ironically, HMNA's example of a good policy decision directly affecting a great number of resource users (notably meat producers) is not one marked by broad-based consultations. The example is the 2003 agreement between the Sudan Ministry of Foreign Trade and the Saudi-owned "Arabian Livestock and Meat Company," by which the latter acquired a monopoly in marketing Sudanese livestock and meat (except for sheep) in Arab markets. Though not involved in this policy decision, HMNA and his Ministry regarded it favourably, as did the Ministry of Foreign Trade, the Council of Ministers, and some Sudanese exporters, because the agreement appeared to them as the only way to find a powerful ally in Saudi Arabia that may help Sudan break a ban imposed by Saudi Arabia itself in 2000 on the import of Sudanese meat. Some leaders of the Livestock and Meat Exporters' Union and the Business and Trade Union opposed the agreement because it ran against the principles of a liberal market by sanctioning a monopoly in the Sudanese export market and relying on the intermediation of a Sudanese private company, and by requiring subsidization by the Ministry of Finance to compensate meat exporters for losses incurred due to the ban. Nevertheless, HMNA argues that the fact that a sufficiently powerful coalition of interests could be mobilized behind the agreement in relevant Ministries and parts of the private sector allowed the government to move forward with this decision.

Respondent's views on decentralization

HMNA regards the main problem faced by decentralization in Sudan as consisting in the mismatch between delegation of formal responsibilities and devolution of authority and resources to meet such responsibilities. This problem is not recent; it has marked all previous attempts to decentralize responsibilities on the part of the Federal Government, which has never been ready to actually yield control over Sudanese resources to regions and states. What is needed, therefore, is a more robust form of devolution of authority, featuring semi-independent states and democratic participation at all levels of government. Whether and how this will take place in the near future depends in part on the Peace Agreement. For the time being, there are some positive policy initiatives to build upon, such as the 2003 Local Government Act, which granted at least in theory some substantive powers to localities, though it stopped short of devising fully democratic mechanisms for the selection of representatives at the locality level. However, this initiative, like other decentralization policy decisions, is seriously limited by lack of adequate funds for implementation, dependence of localities on the federal budget, and the heavy cost of local administrations staffed with political appointees. Moreover, the Act did not empower localities to develop adequate institutions to enforce their decisions, gather information, and monitor the performance of various local agencies involved in its implementation.

Respondent's evaluation of policy outcomes

Looking at decentralization policies in general, HMNA judges their outcomes as poor in spite of their positive goals, namely democratization, popular participation, good and transparent governance, and good quality of services and infrastructure. In his view, hardly any of these goals have been achieved to date. In fact, the situation in some cases has worsened as a result of decentralization policies. For instance, social services have collapsed in many areas, migration from peripheral areas to Khartoum has increased, and conflict among resource users seems to have intensified. Moreover, the Federal Government has remained the main or even sole player in setting policy. Its main response to the poor outcomes of the decentralization process has been to continue with the top-down appointment of leaders at the state level, without accountability to local constituencies or proper attention to the competence of these appointees.

MOS, Federal Government

Identity and background of the respondent

MOS is former Director General of the Mechanized Farming Corporation (MFC) and current Advisor/Consultant to the Ministries of Finance and Agriculture and to various organizations. His career includes over 30 years of experience in the civil service within the agricultural sector.

Respondent's interest and involvement in the policy realm

MOS's involvement in the policy arena is mostly linked to his work within the MFC. He was tasked with implementing the decentralization of the Corporation in his former capacity as regional manager of the MFC for the states of Gadarif and the Blue Nile, and when he was Director General he also participated in the making of decisions about decentralization to set up state-level MFCs with powers delegated from headquarters. His perception of the most significant points in the recent history of natural resource management policy in Sudan is filtered through his former affiliation with the Corporation, as he gives pre-eminent importance to the establishment of the MFC in 1975 as a driving engine for mechanized rain-fed agriculture. At the same time, he sees its dissolution in 1992 as part of a general turn towards market liberalization in Sudan. After that, the most important policy decisions taken by the government in the rain-fed agricultural sector have been various initiatives to encourage large-scale private investment and the establishment of a unit under the Ministries of Agriculture and Finance to coordinate its development. Additional important initiatives according to MOS have been the promotion of improved extension services to farmers to raise productivity, the improvement of agricultural infrastructure, the reduction of the size of mechanized rain-fed plots, and the re-demarcation of un-demarcated farming plots. The question of land demarcation has been one aspect of the policy process in which MOS has been directly involved. As Regional Director of MFC between 1981 and 1987, he was involved, in collaboration with local communities and authorities and with representatives of the Farmers' Union and of MFC employees, in the implementation of policy decisions concerning the demarcation of un-demarcated areas under mechanized farming at state level. His account of such collaboration is positive, though he acknowledges that the process of policy implementation, which essentially involved allocation of demarcated plots to aspiring scheme owners, largely excluded poor farmers, who did not meet the criteria set for land allocation on an individual basis. These farmers were nonetheless able to exert some influence on the implementation process by protesting and putting pressure on politicians, which apparently contributed to a subsequent decision to adjust land allocation criteria to accommodate at least to some extent the needs and asset-limitations of traditional farmers.

Respondent's view of policy volatility

MOS does not regard the policy process as generally speaking volatile. In his view, policy volatility is limited to the outcomes and process of policy decisions. Implementation, enforcement, and the policy environment are instead not volatile. Sources of volatility are the high level of autonomy and discretion of individual policymakers, followed by insufficient public involvement in decision-making and by the great weight of balances of power and coalitions in the political arena. Overlapping and poorly coordinated policy arenas and the risk aversion of policymakers tend to impair the pursuit of innovative policy solutions.

Respondent's views on natural resource policy issues

According to MOS, the main issues requiring policy intervention in regard to natural resources are only in part socio-economic (e.g. poverty, poor infrastructure) and mostly governance-related. They include lack of awareness of natural resource management issues, conflicting interests of resource users, absence of solid planning and regulations concerning land use, and mismanagement of resources. Government responses to these issues have been various, and they have primarily included integrated development projects, initiatives for resource conservation, and the establishment of a Supreme Council for the Environment and Natural Resources and of Soil Conservation and Natural Resource Management Departments. According to the respondent, some of these initiatives have been development- or poverty alleviation-oriented, while others have been more geared towards environmental conservation. In his view, most of them have been sound in their approach, and they have also led to some positive results despite recurrent problems of insufficient funding. However, what remains in his view beyond the reach of present policies is the integration of concerns for development and environment into a strategic vision for natural resource management, including the elaboration of comprehensive land use maps and the creation of appropriate implementing agencies and mechanisms for coordination with all resource users. Lacking such a vision, existing policies tend to be partial and in some cases even misguided in their focus. An outstanding example of this problem is represented by the 1992 dissolution of MFC, in which MOS was directly involved. At the time, MOS was against this decision, as he argues that the continued existence of an entity like MFC was needed to regulate a special sector such as mechanized farming and to collect and share resources to develop this sector. In addition, the continued existence of the MFC was needed in consideration of the vital role that the Corporation played in providing technical assistance and backstopping to individual states. In his view, the decision to dissolve MFC was thus mistaken, and he claims that this was also the opinion of all those who had technical expertise about the mechanized farming sector. Nonetheless, he and other opponents of this decision joined efforts to ensure its effective implementation, though it is not clear how successfully, given the inadequacy of funds made available by the government for this purpose and the weak capacity of regional MFCs, not to mention their frequent failure to implement regulations concerning their sector. Also related to the 1992 decision was that of establishing shelterbelts with trees over 10% of all mechanized rain-fed farming areas, a decision that the respondent supported and in which he was involved as then MFC Director General. Like other natural resource management decisions, this was also well-meant in his view, but suffered from poor implementation, even though there were no interest groups opposing it. In particular, implementation was hindered by insufficient government funding and the licensees of mechanized schemes were not willing to pay for establishing the shelterbelts, even though these would ultimately have enriched the quality of soil on their plots. This situation was made more difficult by the fact that exemptions from licence fees have become the norm rather than the exception among licensees as a result of government desire to promote investment, as well as by the inability of government agencies to monitor compliance.

Respondent's views on decentralization

According to MOS, lack of resources is a key problem also in regard to decentralization policies in general, along with the poor state of infrastructure in most states and low public awareness of the goals of the decentralization process. In particular, the respondent believes that a policy that entails the creation of as many as 26 states is bound to fail due to the excessive cost of maintaining all these structures in operation. His vision is that of a Sudan where regional and federal systems are better integrated with each other and managed more democratically, with balanced attention to all sectors in a national perspective. As an example of the problems faced by existing decentralization policies, MOS brings up again the 1992 Dissolution of MFC, which envisioned a proliferation of state-level MFCs deprived of the strong coordinating and capacity-building role that the federal-level MFC played, along with a sort of "nation-building" role. In MOS's view, a reform of MFC and of the mechanized farming sector in general was necessary by the early 1990s, but this should have been based on a careful study of the experience of the Corporation and of sectoral and institutional needs in mechanized rain-fed agriculture. Instead, the 1992 decision reflected political, rather than technical or even economic considerations. Since then, the government has made a positive attempt to reintroduce some central coordination among the work of different agencies dealing with mechanized rain-fed farming. This it has done in particular through the creation of an entity under the Ministries of Agriculture and Finance to plan, monitor, and coordinate technical support to mechanized farming institutions at the state level, jointly funded by the Ministry of Finance and by the states. At least in theory, this funding should be sufficient to enable this coordinating body to operate efficiently, so long as the structure remains small and professional, rather than political. However, the non-politicization of this body is rather unlikely, according to the respondent.

Respondent's evaluation of policy outcomes

The 1992 Dissolution of MFC was a decision taken by the Council of Ministers, while its implementation was in the hands of a Committee for the Disposition of Public Sector Entities, supported by technical committees providing assistance in implementing different aspects of the dissolution. The main outcomes of the decision were the dismantling of the Corporation, the closing down of its headquarters, and the transfer of its responsibilities to states, all of which had costs that were not proportionate to benefits in the respondent's view. Compared to the goals of the decision, which were to give states a chance to build their own agricultural and natural resource management capacity and to encourage agricultural production, achievements were rather poor. This was reportedly due to lack of funds, trained personnel, and sensitivity to national interests in most states, combined with the disappearance of a central technical and coordinating unit to which states could turn for assistance. Given this achievement gap, and following attempts by some concerned parties (e.g. the Farmers' Unions) to draw attention to the problems of the mechanized rain-fed sector after the 1992 dissolution, the government has since taken action by

establishing the already mentioned unit under the Ministries of Finance and Agriculture. However, this is not necessarily a sign of government accountability according to MOS.

Respondent's perception of rules in use in the policy process

Direct participants in the 1992 decision were only members of the Council of Ministers who acted on the basis of recommendations from the Committee for the Disposition of Public Sector Entities. Their authority derived from their role in government, but their relative power may also reflect their belonging to a certain group (i.e., to a particular ideological current within the ruling party). Though the respondent was not part of the setting in which the decision was made, his perception of the way in which roles and responsibilities were distributed in this setting is that personal interests and sources of power played a major role, along with individual skills in playing the "power game." Nonetheless, his view of a "typical" policy decision-making process includes a task-oriented list of responsibilities, which gives the impression of a reasoned, information-based process focused not on "power games" but rather on the elaboration and assessment of alternative scenarios prior to the selection of a policy solution. At the same time, MOS suggests that participants in the decision-making process may selectively withhold or emphasize information relevant to these scenarios with other participants. As for the possibility that non-participants in the policy decision-making process may gain influence on such process, the respondent argues that this is essentially confined to the possibility of lobbying directly with individual participants.

FAS, Federal Government

Identity and background of the respondent

FAS is Undersecretary at the Ministry of International Cooperation, as well as a former employee of the Ministry of Finance and an economist by training. His main area of expertise is macroeconomic policy.

Respondent's interest and involvement in the policy realm

FAS has been involved in policy-making and implementation processes both in natural resource management and in decentralization. In the realm of natural resource management, he was responsible for negotiations on land and subterranean natural resources as part of the government team negotiating with the SPLM. In addition, he was previously involved in questions regarding natural resource investments while serving in the Ministry of Finance within the Economic Policy Directorate and in the Foreign Loans and Grants Directorate. In the realm of decentralization, he was involved in intergovernmental transfers between the Federal Government and individual states (through the States Support Fund) while serving in the Ministry of Finance. Furthermore, he was in charge of discussions over state jurisdictions and wealth sharing among different levels of government in the peace negotiations. He regards the creation of the States Support Fund as the most significant policy decision undertaken in the realm of decentralization in recent years. In terms of absolute importance, however, this decision is preceded by the 2003 Local

Government Act, the 2000 abolition of agricultural taxes, and the abolition of excise and sales taxes at the state level to be replaced by a VAT system, 47% of whose revenue goes to the states and 53% to the Federal Government. FAS's account of his involvement in some of these policies suggests that coordination among concerned parties in the policy process is mostly confined to government departments at the federal level and to international donors, if these are directly affected by a certain policy decision. Even among federal agencies, however, the process is not without conflicts of interest, notably between the Ministry of Federal Relations (which oversees the process of distribution of resources between federal agencies and the states), the Ministers of Defence and of Interior, and the Director of Security. In addition, conflicts of interest and competition are frequent between federal officials and their counterparts at the state level, and among officials from different areas in case of policy decisions that affect some areas positively and others negatively. Since development policies are still largely set by the Federal Government, states that have different economic activities and endowments may find themselves lobbying for different or even mutually conflicting policies. In general, however, the respondent argues that the policy-making process is consistently skewed in favour of federal agencies over those of states, in favour of states whose economies are based on irrigated agriculture over those that depend on rain-fed farming, and in favour of urban centres over rural areas. The most influential interest groups are in his view urban-based, and they include security forces (army and police) and civilian elites. In terms of general ability to influence the policy process, these are followed in importance by the population of states with large irrigated farming areas, where political awareness and organization are generally stronger than in states depending on rain-fed agriculture and pastoralism. The population of the latter is the least represented in the policy-making process at the federal level, despite the fact that they are a majority of the Sudanese population.

Respondent's view of policy volatility

As most other respondents, FAS regards the policy process in Sudan as volatile in all its main dimensions, notably due to a "patrimonial" approach to government on the part of policymakers, which results in policy changes with each change in personnel in decision-making posts. Insufficient public participation in policy making and incompetence of decision-makers are also sources of volatility, as is the fact that the search for policy solutions is driven more by ideological belief and a desire to preserve vested interests than by factual evidence, information, and a willingness to take risks to experiment with innovative policies.

Respondent's views on natural resource policy issues

FAS's account of the most important issues in the natural resource policy domain foregrounds the lack of a regulatory framework on resource access that enjoys legitimacy among all stakeholders, along with the weakness of planning and management institutions and negative environmental phenomena such as

droughts. This situation is in his account partly the result of the fact that policy decisions in the realm of natural resources have traditionally favoured certain interest groups over others, notably groups linked to Khartoum-based elites over rural stakeholders. However, also important is the poor vision behind traditional interventions undertaken by the government with support from international donors, which have often discounted the importance of governance factors in development and natural resource management, and have also focused on relief aid rather than on long-term planning for development. So far, Sudan does not have much to show in terms of successful natural resource policies, whether in regard to investing on natural resources or in regard to regulatory interventions. In particular, the need to empower stakeholders to participate in more equitable and effective forms of natural resource management has not yet received due consideration according to FAS. As a result, some policies have turned out to be misguided or unsustainable, because stakeholders are neither consulted nor involved in the implementation process and in bearing its cost. A clear example of this is given by government initiatives for reforestation. Another example is the abolishment of agricultural taxes, which increased the financial dependence of states on the Federal Government. Such a decision was not necessary in the respondent's view, and in any case there were more economically viable alternatives. Moreover, contrary to appearances it did not serve the interests of farmers, only those of traders. Nevertheless, neither the respondent nor other individuals or groups mobilized to try to reverse or modify this decision at the time when it was taken.

Respondent's views on decentralization

The main problems faced by the decentralization process according to FAS are the lack of political will to have real devolution of power and financial resources, which has resulted in non-representative, non-accountable local authorities and in the financial weakness of local agencies and institutions. Such problems have not been addressed by the Local Government Acts (LGA) passed so far, which are limited to some "superficial" aspects of decentralization and do not deal with its key problems, reportedly due to political resistance to this on the part of the regime. This is despite the fact that there are policy options that would address such problems and that are socially and economically acceptable, according to FAS. Hence the process of decentralization remains in his view fragile both politically and financially. States depend on intergovernmental transfers even for their operational budgets, and even though they are theoretically entitled to levying taxes on livestock and to collect land rents, they either face collection problems or the amounts gathered are so low that they do not add significantly to their budgets.

Respondent's evaluation of policy outcomes

FAS's evaluation of policy outcomes focuses on the 1970 abrogation of the Native Court Ordinance, which formerly enabled tribal leaders to settle disputes among groups and individuals in forums recognized by the state. The ostensible goal of this decision was to encourage a transition to a system of

dispute resolution based on statutory law. To this end, a system of local courts was introduced as an alternative to Native Administration courts in the same form across the country, irrespective of different local traditions and institutions for resource and conflict management. However, in reality people did not swiftly turn to this alternative system or to statutory laws for various reasons, ranging from traditional attachment to certain norms and institutions to the relative inaccessibility of the new system to many people, both in financial and in physical terms (since courts were located in centres of a certain size). As a result, disputes were often unsolved and natural resource use went virtually unregulated, with consequent social and environmental damage. In addition, this policy decision set in motion a process of inequitable redistribution of resources, altering the previous balance between government, local resource users, and non-local private interests. According to FAS, the government continued this policy for a significant period of time, apparently pushed by certain interest groups, and it only realized its negative impact very slowly, as demonstrated by its belated efforts to reinstate the Native Administration in a modified form. Most local stakeholders negatively affected by the 1970 decision refrained from openly manifesting their dissent and simply continued to follow their traditional systems, even though these did not have the same authority they previously had.

EOS, Southern Kordofan

Identity and background of the respondent

EOS is Director of the NGO SCOPE (Sudanese Community Organization for Empowerment) and an agricultural extension officer on leave from the Ministry of Agriculture of former Western Kordofan. He holds a post-graduate degree in development planning.

Respondent's interest and involvement in the policy realm

The respondent's involvement in policy is limited to the implementation of agricultural policies, notably as regards extension services. His account of the most important policy decisions taken by federal and state governments over the past several years therefore focuses on agricultural policy. His narrative includes the Farmers Organization Act (Western Kordofan), the 1970 modernization of the rain-fed sector, the organization of mechanized farming and distribution of mechanized farmland, the 2004 Organization of Pastoral and Farmlands Act, and the various laws and policy initiatives associated with the decentralization process from 1980 to 2003. The respondent was directly involved in the implementation of some of these decisions between 1990-2002, in coordination with other parties such as cooperative unions, localities, local communities (including the Native Administration), the Agricultural Bank, various government agencies and technical departments, the Joint Monitoring Committee, and several international organizations, such as the International Rescue Committee, UNDP, and FAO. His assessment of this coordination in the implementation of agricultural policies is a positive one, as he

argues that all parties, with the exception of the state security apparatus, engaged in a rather smooth partnership at the time, notwithstanding visibly different interests and unequal power. According to the respondent, the Farmers' Union, which represented mechanized farmers, was the most influential interest group among those with whom he coordinated for policy implementation, both because of its economic power and hold over land and because of its links with the ruling party. Conversely, traditional rain-fed farmers were the least organized, most scattered, and weakest group, despite the fact that they represent a large majority of the population of Kordofan. The influence of this social group has grown somewhat since some farmers began organizing into cooperatives. Attempts have also been made in recent years to integrate traditional farmers into land tenancy organizations and to strengthen their land rights by registering village lands and granting clear tenancy rights to individuals. Nevertheless, this group remains by and large without stable channels to access the policy-making process, which is a constant potential cause of instability and revolt according to the respondent.

Respondent's view of policy volatility

The respondent sees the policy process as volatile in all its aspects. In his view, this is a result of constant changes in leadership and in institutions, as well as of the autocratic nature of the current government, which discourages circulation of information and resists decentralization of decision-making. Insufficient public involvement in policy-making, followed by inappropriate distribution of responsibilities in the policy process and by the level of autonomy of individual policymakers, is also important factors of volatility in his view. To these must be added a tendency of policymakers to make policy a reflection of their ideological preferences, rather than of factual/scientific considerations. The respondent further argues that policy decisions are rarely innovative due to the stifling effects of uncoordinated and overlapping policy arenas, the risk aversion of decisionmakers, and lack of information about alternative possibilities.

Respondent's views on natural resource policy issues

EOS regards conflicts among different bearers of entitlements to natural resources as the key problem in the realm of natural resource management, compounded by scarcity of resources and lack of development. These problems are largely a result of insufficient definition and legal recognition of property and use rights over land, water, and pasture. Among various solutions to these problems that were attempted in the past, only the transfer of management of water points from the state to resource users' groups in Western Kordofan achieved significant success according to the respondent. However, even this initiative suffered from volatility, as it was vulnerable to the alternation of different officials in decision-making posts, who may be more or less favourable to certain forms of water point management. The respondent argues that an appropriate solution to these problems would require not only the devolution of management over natural resources to primary stakeholders, but also a stable legalization

and demarcation of resource rights with the involvement of primary users. He reaffirms this point in his discussion of the 2004 Organization of Pastoral and Farmlands Act. In this regard, he claims to have a "neutral" position, because despite the positive goals and the necessity of such a policy initiative, the Act did not reflect a profound, up-to-date, and dynamic understanding of the situation of stock routes, patterns of resource use, and changing relations among users. Only a participatory approach to mapping out the situation on the ground and to building appropriate policy scenarios would have provided the necessary knowledge to policymakers in his view, as this would have revealed to them the growing importance of access to water, rather than to land or pasture, in relations among resource users. EOS argues that this approach was socially, economically, and politically feasible, through policymakers did not opt for it.

Respondent's views on decentralization

In EOS's view, decentralization of natural resources is still far from being a reality in Sudan, partly because decisions are mostly taken in a centralized fashion, and partly because local institutions have responsibilities but not the financial resources needed to carry them out. Inadequate implementation of existing decentralization laws is also a problem, along with lack of popular participation in the political realm, resulting in lack of accountability and weak capacity of states and local institutions. It should be noted that the respondent is not aware of the existence of the 2003 Local Government Act at the time of the interview, which suggests that poor public awareness of decentralization policies may be a very widespread problem.

Respondent's evaluation of policy outcomes

EOS's evaluation of a sample of policies focuses on an undated decision to redistribute agricultural land (presumably in the context of the reform of MFC), ostensibly aiming to increase the number of people with access to farmland, to encourage agricultural investments, and to improve food security. These goals were to be achieved through the redistribution of farmland to ensure that at least 60% of mechanized farming plots would be assigned to local farmers. In reality, redistribution did not take place to the extent planned. In addition, EOS argues that decisions on land allocation were not made on sound economic grounds, for instance by making ownership of sufficient financial resources for investment in the land a precondition for obtaining it. Despite its limitations and incomplete implementation, the respondent believes that this policy has been characterized by a degree of cost-effectiveness, equitableness, and good performance. Limitations have emerged mostly in connection to the fact that many farmers who received land lacked financial resources to invest on it, and also to the failure of the government to respond to their concerns. As a result, these tenants have had to cope with the situation by selling or renting land, seeking financial support from relatives or banks, or otherwise losing their newly acquired land. According to the respondent, this may be not only the result of poor policy planning or implementation, but also of accountability problems, since the emergence of such a problem may have triggered a more effective and

supportive response by local or central governments under conditions of accountability and of greater capacity to organize on the part of grassroots rural organizations representing small farmers.

ARBM, Federal Government

Identity and background of the respondent

ARBM is currently Advisor to the Minister of Agriculture and Forests and to the Director of the National Forest Corporation. He has a PhD in agricultural economics and 38 years of experience in various realms of the agricultural sector, from policy planning to implementation. He is a former Undersecretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, in which capacity he was involved in decentralization policies in the context of the 1998 constitutional rearrangement of responsibilities between federal Ministry of Agriculture and their analogues at the state level. This included the collaborative formulation of sectoral policies and plans, training for agricultural officers at the state level, and control of national pests.

Respondent's interest and involvement in the policy realm

ARBM's involvement in the policy realm is rather in the field of decentralization broadly speaking than in that of natural resource management. However, his assessment of the most significant policy decisions undertaken by the Government of Sudan over the past few decades focuses on agricultural policy rather than on decentralization. In particular, he stresses the importance of various development plans, strategies, and programs (e.g. the 5-year plan 1970-1975, the 1978-79 Economic Stabilization and Financial Restructuring Program, the 1988-1992 Four Year Program for Salvation and Economic Reform, the 1992-2002 Comprehensive National Strategy, and the 2004-2025 Twenty Five Year Strategy). Regarding macroeconomic policies, he ascribes primary importance to the unification of the exchange rate, the liberalization of agricultural prices, the abolition of export licensing and taxes, and the privatization of state-owned enterprises such as the Oil Seeds Company and the Gum Arabic Company. All of these initiatives were part of a liberalization policy package approved in 1992 by the Council of Ministers with little forewarning. This apparently took many by surprise, with the exception of those directly linked with the initiators of the package (notably the Minister of Finance and the Governor of the Bank of Sudan), but raised only ineffectual opposition from a less well-connected Minister of Agriculture. Only after the declaration of this policy package, the government made an effort to garner the support of at least some key stakeholders in those aspects of the package that directly affected agriculture, notably the Farmers' Union (which was granted ownership of the Cotton Marketing Company and of the Sudan Commercial Bank). However, this effort did not reach farmers as a broad socio-economic category, but only the Union as such. Farmers and other key stakeholders remained marginal to the policy-making process even after the adoption of the package by the government, and they were mostly negatively

affected by it, according to the respondent. This was particularly true of the liberalization of agricultural prices, which benefited only intermediaries and traders.

Respondent's view of policy volatility

ARBM's view is that all aspects of the policy process in Sudan are volatile. This, he argues, is essentially a result of political instability, lack of consensus on priorities among policymakers, the negative effects of conflict and droughts, and strained relations with donors, neighbouring countries, and the international community in general. The predominance of ideologically-driven elite is also responsible for policy volatility in his view. Special interest groups also have large influence over policy, and information that may support sound policy-making is unavailable or does not circulate efficiently, which also results in little openness to innovative policymaking.

Respondent's views on natural resource policy issues

In the respondent's account, the erosion of the natural resource base (notably deforestation, desertification, soil compaction, overgrazing, water pollution, and erosion of river banks) is the main problem faced by Sudan as concerns natural resources. In his view, responsibility for this situation is born both by resource users, who lack coordination and awareness or sensitivity to environmental sustainability, and by policymakers, who have failed to develop comprehensive land use plans and to enforce existing natural resource regulations. Partial solutions were attempted by the government in the past, including the allocation of minimum percentages of land in rain-fed and irrigated agricultural schemes for forests, or the de-stocking of the Gum Arabic belt. Some of these initiatives (notably the latter) have been successful, but in general they have not been the result of careful diagnoses of problems and of participatory searches for appropriate solutions. Partly under pressure from donors and NGOs, local stakeholders have become more aware in recent times of their rights and obligations in regard to natural resource use and management. However, devolution of clear management and planning responsibilities to lower levels of government, as well as capacity building to enable broad-based participation in the policy realm (e.g. via elected planning committees at locality level) is still lacking.

Respondent's views on decentralization

According to ARBM, the main obstacles to effective decentralization are the limited capacity (human, technical, financial, etc.) of local administrative units, persisting centralization of decision-making power at the federal and state levels, and the tendency of decisionmakers to be political appointees with little or no accountability to the public. Dividing the territory of Sudan into 26 states and 137 localities has not been an appropriate response to this situation in the respondent's view. Rather, it has contributed to the rise of tribalism and offered opportunities for a proliferation of patron-client politics down to local levels of government. The establishment of a federal system, therefore, has not been a sufficient or even

altogether positive initiative for Sudan, either in terms of governance or for poverty alleviation and development. According to ARBM, the very decision to establish such a system was symptomatic of governance problems. In his account, the decision was taken in haste without careful planning or consultations with the public, and despite the fact that many "experts" pointed to more viable and effective alternatives. The fact that a substantial political opposition existed to this decision, on grounds that it may weaken Sudanese national unity, apparently did not influence policymakers. Furthermore, ARBM argues that only insufficient provisions were made for the Federal Government to fund this policy. This left most states in a situation in which they hardly have funds to cover staff salaries and wages, let alone to provide necessary services to the population.

Respondent's evaluation of policy outcomes

In evaluating the outcomes of the above-mentioned decision to establish a federal system with 26 states and 137 localities, ARBM notes various gaps between the stated objectives of this decision, namely to "bring government closer to the people" and to enable the latter to be involved in decision-making, on the one hand, and the manner and outcomes of its implementation on the other. In his view, implementation of the policy has been marked by single-handed decision-making, limited flexibility, and top-down definition of priorities in the budgets of state governments. The outcome of the policy has been marked by minimal participation of the public in decision-making, nepotism, tribalism, deterioration of public services, and inequitable sharing of resources, which does not reflect the relative needs of different regions or their relative contributions to the national economy. The gap between the promises and the outcomes of the federal system has led some groups to rise up in organized, sometimes violent protest, but the government has not been able to appreciate the negative consequences of this policy decision in a timely fashion, nor to take appropriate measures to redress them. ARBM believes that the recently signed North-South Peace Agreement may be an opportunity to reconsider the situation and to devise a more effective system of decentralization. However, this can only occur if the basis of governance shifts from an autocratic approach to politics to a participatory and democratic one.

EZ

Identity and background of the respondent

EZ has been a consultant with various international agencies since 1990, and he has expertise in a number of sectors including rural and agricultural development and planning. He has a PhD in agricultural economics and a long history of on-and-off affiliation or collaboration with the Ministry of Finance. He is also a former Minister of Finance and Economic Planning.

Respondent's interest and involvement in the policy realm

EZ is involved in the policy arena of decentralization, and especially in those aspects of this policy arena that concern budgeting and planning. In his view, the most important policy initiative undertaken by the government in the decentralization process was the 1980 Regional Government Act, by which Sudan was first divided into six states. EZ was not directly involved in the formulation of this policy decision. However, he was involved in its implementation, as well as in that of the 1981 People's Local Government Act that followed and complemented the 1980 Act, which in turn provided for devolution of authorities from states to localities. His involvement was due to the fact that at the time he was the head of an advisory subcommittee in charge of the legal aspects of the relationship between states or regions, localities, and federal state. The committee included members of different government agencies, such as the Ministries of Agriculture, Justice, Finance, Local Government, and others, along with representatives of the only legally recognized party (the Sudanese Socialist Union), but no representatives of localities. Some international organizations were also involved in some form in the implementation process, mostly by offering their assistance in planning and capacity building in regions in which they already had a significant presence. The rationale of the 1980 and 1981 Acts is not altogether clear from the respondent's account. His view is that the ruling party desired to make some progress at least in cosmetic terms in relation to power-sharing, without thereby legitimizing other parties. This desire played a major role in pushing the party to establish regional governments, while also reducing the political significance of granting a degree of autonomy to the Southern region in particular, which was at the time in a sort of lull period between different phases of conflict. The main difficulty in implementing the Acts was the insufficiency of resources that could/would be made available to set up regional institutions and, even more so, to fund development projects and services at the regional level. Most of these resources came from budget transfers from the federal government, though the committees headed by EZ strongly recommended regional resource mobilization rather than resource transfer. Particularly problematic was the question of human resources, which were also often transferred from the center rather than mobilized locally. In this respect, EZ argues that an important obstacle to effective decentralization was the resistance of civil servants based in Khartoum to relocate to regional capitals and localities. Even when appointed to other regions, many civil servants continued to live in Khartoum with their staff (including state ministers), only paying visits to the regions they were in charge of administering. Finally, not all social groups were represented in the consultative process that led to planning for the implementation of the Act. In particular, traditional farmers were very marginal to the process, despite their formal representation by NA authorities. Things were different for organized categories of farmers, mostly from mechanized rain-fed or irrigated schemes. The latter could make their voices heard through the Farmers' Union, which was able to cater to the political establishment thanks to the presence of various party currents in its ranks, which could be mobilized in turn to take the Union's lead when a change in regime brought a new party to power.

Respondent's view of policy volatility

EZ argues that the policy process concerning decentralization in Sudan has been volatile in all its aspects, with a constant oscillation between centralization and decentralization. For instance, the regime change in 1985 completely reversed the decentralization process of the early 1980s, and this was followed by a redefinition of relations between centre and regions under the Al-Mahdi regime. In recent years, decentralization policies have succeeded one another rapidly, without sufficient time for each policy to be properly implemented. In addition, political conditions have made it possible for certain aspects of decentralization policies (e.g. regulations concerning the election of governors) to be bypassed or ignored. According to the respondent, people have clearly perceived this volatility and its effects even in remote rural areas. For instance, successive changes in mechanisms for resource generation in regional governments (e.g. agricultural taxes for states) have resulted in the deterioration of public services, since the central government no longer takes primary responsibility for their provision. EZ attributes the causes of this volatility to poor leadership vision, inadequate skills of policymakers, and insufficient public involvement in decision-making. In addition, he argues that policy implementation may be volatile because it is often skewed along ethnic or professional lines, depending on the group identity or affiliations of decision-makers and of civil servants implementing the policy.

Respondent's views on decentralization

According to EZ, Sudan's main problem concerning decentralization is the prevalence of de-concentration of power and control, rather than actual devolution of authority, which would entail increasing the accountability of government institutions to the public. Related to this is the fact that people in positions of power in local or central government have a self-serving attitude towards public resources, including government budgets. Also, decentralization has not been planned in such a way as to build on the strengths of non-state authority systems at the local and regional level, notably the Native Administration. On the contrary, the latter was first dissolved, then restored in a much-weakened form, and finally politicized by the government and by the various parties. As a result, EZ argues, the NA now operates without real legitimacy either as a representative body for local populations vis-à-vis the state or as a source of regulatory and conflict-management authority at the local level (particularly in relation to natural resources). To give at least a participatory veneer to decentralization initiatives, different solutions have been attempted in the past, including the re-establishment of the Native Administration, the formation of party-affiliated Popular Committees (later "Salvation Committees"), and the formation of development committees in the context of donor-funded development projects. According to the respondent, none of these solutions has yielded actual progress in terms of effective decentralization for a variety of reasons. First and foremost is the fact that the power structure in Sudan has not changed its basic features, namely a predatory or patrimonial approach to public resources and a centralization of

authority within the Federal Government and the ruling party. Secondly, local communities have not demanded accountability from local and state-level institutions, partly because they have often been overwhelmingly preoccupied with poverty, and partly because in many areas the adult male population is away much of the time, working in central areas and in Khartoum. This situation requires massive investment in the provision of infrastructural and social services in these areas, as well as in the fight against unemployment (especially among youth and soon-to-be demobilized Popular Forces). These are the two primary steps to be taken according to EZ towards a more equitable redistribution of resources (including oil-based resources) and to support rural Sudan in fighting poverty. Only if such investments are made can an institutional set-up operate effectively that would support political participation and representation, yielding good policy decisions and good popular choices of representatives. Furthermore, EZ argues that policies and institutions should be devised in such a way as to prevent the appropriation of special privileges and rents on the part of any interest group.

Respondent's view on perceived rules in use in the policy process

Given the history of independent Sudan, which has been marked by a series of (often violent) discontinuities in terms of ruling regimes, the entry rules that are effectively in place in the policy process result not so much from some sort of legitimate codification but rather from this historical pattern of abrupt regime alternation. In this framework, the respondent argues that entering into the policy arena requires direct association with the particular group that at a given point in time takes control over it through a popular uprising, a military coup, or another similarly "unregulated" process. As for exit rules, EZ notes that many, perhaps most of the actors that have been involved in the policy process at some point or other in Sudan's post-independence history have never really exited the process, though they may be marginal or prominent at present depending on their ties with the ruling regime and on other circumstances. Entering the process so as to have a concrete chance to influence policy-making requires direct affiliation with the top echelons of the power structure, namely with the ruling party and/or with the clientele of its top figures, all of which results in a highly unstable system for entering and for remaining actively present in the policy process. Exiting is usually the result of a decision by some powerful individuals or groups within the party or at the top of the power structure. In other words, people may be "pushed out" or excluded from the policy process in a more or less permanent, more or less overt manner, whereas spontaneous exit from this process is a rare occurrence. Even more than "entering," "exit" is usually marked by instability and unpredictability, according to the respondent, as it often reflects personal dislikes or clashes of individual interests rather than respect or violation of formal rules. The key roles in the policy process in regard to decentralization belong first and foremost to the President, followed by his formal or informal "assistants" and, at the state and locality levels, the governors and the commissioners. All of these officials are appointed by the President at the recommendations of states and

of the ruling party. His experience in the advisory committee on decentralization leads EZ to suggest that, among committee members, responsibilities for information-gathering and for developing recommendations may be based on people's expertise and competence. Moreover, recommendations by committee members may influence committee decisions depending on their consistency, factual accuracy, and feasibility. However, even in gathering information and in developing reports within advisory committees individuals rely not only on competence, but also on the mobilization of personal networks, including their subordinates in their ministries and their personal, party-based, or tribal networks. Moreover, EZ argues that political affiliation, or rather personal affiliations to powerful figures in the ruling party, play an important role in conferring different weight to the recommendations or reports produced by this or that member of an advisory committee. This is not a novel feature of the policy process under the current ruling party, but rather a feature of the Sudanese political scene at least since Nimeiri's times. According to the respondent, this tendency has intensified with the current regime, interplaying negatively with the decline of the quality and preparation of civil service, partly due to "brain drain" of professionals to Gulf Countries or to the Unites States particularly since the 1980s. The decline of quality of civil service may be in turn one reason for the fact that implementation of policy decisions is often faulty, incomplete, or virtually impossible, according to the respondent. However, he also argues that policymakers often give scant attention to building implementation scenarios when they design new policies.

FHS, Northern Kordofan

Identity and background of the respondent

FHS is Chairman of the State Legislative Council in North Kordofan and a member of the National Congress Party. A lawyer by training, he has professional experience in practicing law and as a former administrator of the African Muslims' Agency, besides serving in government since 1989 in various capacities (e.g. as Deputy Chairman of the Kordofan State Popular Committees, Minister of Education, Minister of Social and Cultural Affairs, and Deputy Wali in the White Nile State).

Respondent's interest and involvement in the policy realm

FHS's involvement in the policy arena spans the realms of decentralization and natural resource management. The nature of this involvement varied at different times in his public career, depending on his specific assignments and on the particular political climate of each period. In his view, the most important agricultural development policy decisions taken by the central government and by the states in the past couple of decades are the setting up of mechanized farming schemes in South Kordofan during the 1980s and the related reallocation of agricultural lands for investment, followed by the distribution of agricultural projects in Jebel ed-Dair and the revival of the Khor Abu Habil project. The most recent key

decisions have been the setting of latitude 13 degrees North as a dividing line between lands to be used for pastoralism and those to be used for rain-fed farming, some public initiatives to support livestock production and pastoralism North of the line, and the various Local Government Acts issued between 1998 and 2003. FHS was involved in some of these decisions as a member of the State Popular Committee and subsequently as Chairman of the State Legislative Council. In these capacities, he coordinated with other members of the state executive and legislature, as well as with members of the National Congress Party and, to some extent, with civil society organizations such as the Farmers' and Pastoralists' Unions and the Businessmen's Federation. In general, his account of this coordination is positive especially as concerns the relationship between Federal Government, Legislative Council, and NCP. He reports only occasional opposition from various interest groups, such as producers' unions, which were allowed to participate in policy-related discussions in the context of a committee for agricultural affairs attached to the previous Legislative Council (1999-2003). He argues that the Farmers' and Pastoralists' Unions, the Businessmen's Federation, and trade unions held a certain degree of power in such context. Conversely, he argues that traditional farmers and rural women (i.e., the majority of the population) were minimally represented both in the Farmers' Union and in the Legislative Council. In his view, this may change with the implementation of the Peace Agreement, which may bring back some kind of framework for popular participation similar to the Popular Committees that existed at the beginning of the National Salvation Regime (NSR).

Respondent's view of policy volatility

FHS sees the policy process in Sudan as characterized by volatility in all its aspects, partly due to insecurity, political uncertainties, and a degree of "irrationality" and haste in decision-making by the current regime, particularly at the beginning of its rule. However, in his view political crises and conflict are the main sources of volatility, followed by poor planning and coordination in the policy-making arena and by the influence of relatively unstable political coalitions. Contrary to other respondents, he argues that lack of attention to factual information vs. ideological motivations is not an issue in Sudanese policy-making. In addition, he disagrees that the search for innovative, more effective policy solutions to solve outstanding problems may be due to lack of interest or to resistance by narrow interest groups. In his view, the search for innovative policy is rather hindered by inadequate availability of resources for implementation, lack of information about alternative possibilities, and often lack of better alternatives to the chosen course of action.

Respondent's views on natural resource policy issues

According to FHS, Sudan's main problem in relation to natural resources is the poor, not always rational utilization of its resources, which he attributes to lack of strategic, scientifically-based planning and to a tendency of policymakers to react to events after they occur, rather than planning ahead to prevent

problems. Also significant in his view is the lack of direct stakeholder's input into the decision-making process. So far, he claims that no truly effective initiatives have been undertaken at the policy level to address these problems, and the decentralization process itself has not been an effective response due to the financial weakness and limited staff capacity of states and localities. However, some awareness of the situation and of possible solutions is emerging not only in the leadership but also among educated farmers, whose capacity for thinking innovatively about how to respond to their needs must be encouraged and receive political support, he argues. To this he adds that effective policies regarding natural resources should be based on clear demarcation of resources and use patterns, as well as on an effort to rationalize such patterns. A positive example in this respect is the state legislation on land utilization and conservation, in which the respondent was involved and which he supported in his capacity as Chairman of the State Legislative Council. In his view, this legislation was needed because of the deterioration of natural resources in the state, but it was not implemented effectively because of inadequate resources to implement and monitor compliance. A more effective initiative would have required intervention on a variety of levels, namely not just legislation and enforcement of regulations, but also extension services and awareness-raising. However, he claims that the resources to undertake this sort of comprehensive initiative were lacking. At any rate, in his account no open opposition to this initiative, nor to other, more openly debated policies such as that concerning latitude 13 degrees N, was voiced in the Legislative Council, so that there was no solid reason for the Council not to issue the decision or to modify it.

Respondent's views on decentralization

In FHS's view, the main problems that confront Sudan concerning decentralization are the mismatch between devolution of responsibilities and devolution of independent financial powers to states. Under the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, this situation may change as states may benefit more from their particular contribution to the national economy. For instance, oil-producing states may benefit from the presence of oil refineries and pipelines and/or be compensated for the environmental and social impact of oil plants on their territory. So far, the Federal Government has managed the policy-making process rather single-handedly, including decisions on the budgets and resource base of states. The respondent argues that coherent progress is needed in the direction indicated by the 2003 Local Government Act, by strengthening local government institutions in general, paying attention to how to better enable the provision of community-level services, and improving the accountability of authorities at the locality level. He claims that he was only indirectly involved in the issuing of this Act, as he participated with the State Legislature in a national conference to evaluate the experience of the federal system. However, his assessment of the Act is generally positive. In particular, he argues that the Act was a positive step towards a well-functioning local authority system, with due separation between legislative and executive

powers (notably a Legislative Council and a Commissioner). This is true in spite of the weakness that has continued to characterize these authorities in terms of financial, human, and infrastructural resources since the 2003 Act.

Respondent's evaluation of policy outcomes

The respondent's evaluation of policy outcomes focused on the series of Local Government Acts issued from the 1990s to 2003. In his view, the expected outcomes of the Acts, especially of the 2003 Act, were to establish a strong system for local government that would be responsible for delivery services formerly provided by the state and to set up a functional legislative and executive authority structure that could operate in autonomy from federal and state governments. It is probably too early to judge the performance of this policy (of the 2003 Act at least). However, in the respondent's view it is clear that legislative and executive cadres at the locality level are too weak to operate independently of states, nor do they have efficient mechanisms for budgeting and accounting. In his account, the main achievement of the 2003 Act is perhaps that the constitution of localities has provided a framework for a degree of popular participation in the public sphere. This includes for instance the possibility of publicly voicing people's dissatisfaction with certain initiatives undertaken by localities, such as the imposition of new taxes and service charges. Moreover, the respondent claims that policymakers have demonstrated certain accountability to the public in relation to the 2003 Act, and they have sought to redress some of the problems encountered in its implementation. In turn, the public has contributed to demanding such accountability due to their high degree of awareness of their needs and to their political savvy, which pushes their representatives in the Legislative Council to be responsive to public concerns. This is despite the fact that existing election rules do not give constituencies the right to discharge Legislative Council representatives.

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Note: Instructions for the further development of the guide and/or for the surveyor are in italics and between [brackets]

Identification of Interviewee

Name

Title or function

Gender and age

Organization, coalition or network to which the person belongs

Other characteristics

Contact address; phone; mobile; email

Curriculum Information

1. Educational Background

PhD

MS/MA

BS/BA

Highschool

Other

2. Languages skills

Arabic

French

English

German

Other (specify)

3. Professional experience

Subject (specify)

Number of years (specify)

4. Past and current involvement in policy making and implementation

In decentralization

In management of natural resources

Instruction to surveyor: Check appropriate cell corresponding to the interviewee identity and experience, for example involvement in a particular policy decision or knowledge of it. For a state-level agent use the second grid (State and local level) in the methodology paper.

Category of Agent *Federal Level*	**Type of Devolution Policy Instrument** Laws *Decentralization* *Land Appropriation* *Land Use*	Executive Ordinances *Decrees*	Strategies *Action Plans* *Guidelines*	Programs & Projects
National Assembly				
National Congress Party				
Umma Party				
Council of Ministers				
High Council of Environment				
Minister of Federal Govt.				
Minister of Finance				
Minister of Agriculture				
Minister of Irrigation				
Minister of Animal Resources				
Min. of Environment & Transportation				
Sudan Oil Cy				
National Water Corporation				
Gum Arabic Cy				
Cotton Company				
Stock Route Cy				
National Forest Corp.				
Mechanized Farming Corp.				
Agricultural Bank of Sudan				
Farmers' unions				
Pastoralists' unions				
Large private investors				
International financing Institutions				
Media				
Academic circles				
Research circles				
National NGOs				
International NGOs				
Important lobbies/coalitions				
Other stakeholders				
State's legislative council				

Involvement in Policy

1. What are, according to you, the most important policy decisions taken in the field of [*indicate policy domain, for example land tenure policy]?*

    1. In the last 30 years?
    2. In the last 10 years?

2. Here is a list of policy decisions taken in the [state policy domain]. Could you rank them by decreasing order of importance?

    1. Decision [explicit]
    2. Decision
    3. Decision
    4. Decision
    5. Decision
    6. Decision

3. In what capacity and when were you involved in [*state decisions and/or policy domain]?*

    Capacity When

4. Did you coordinate your action with other players in the process?

    1 Yes
    0 No
    Explain

5. Who else (individuals, organizations or groups) was involved or had a major role in this process?

    Individual *(List)*
    Organization *(List)*
    Group *(List)*
    Other *(List)*

6. Who worked with whom in general (in a positive way)?

7. Who opposed whom in this process?

8. How did coalitions, if any, manifest themselves concretely?

9. Which interest group or party in the process was the most powerful?

    9a. What was the basis of its influence?

10. Which group was the weakest? Explain

10a. Did they grow in influence over time? How?

11. Which group or interest was never represented in the process but in your opinion should have been involved?

    11a. Explain why they should have been involved, why they were not involved, and what were the consequences of their exclusion?

12. Were there any attempts from the excluded group(s) to join the process?

    1 Yes
    0 No

    12a. Were there any attempts from participants to include new participants?

    1 Yes
    0 No

    12b. When

    12c. How

    12d. For what reason

    12e. Outcome of these efforts?

Policy Volatility

The interviewer will first introduce the notion of policy volatility before asking the following questions.

"Policy volatility refers to frequent changes and changes of direction affecting part or all of the component of a policy domain, including the rules applicable to policy process, the players involved in policy making, the outcome of the policy process (that is, the decisions), as well as the degree and quality of enforcement of such decisions."

1. Would you agree or disagree with the opinion that [selected policy] has been volatile*:*

	Agree	***Disagree***
• *In the outcomes/decisions taken*		
• *In the process*		
• *In the implementation and enforcement*		
• *In its external environment*		
• *Not volatile at all*		

2. In your opinion what explains this volatility, what are its sources?

3. How would you rank, by decreasing order of importance, the following sources of volatility:

Code	***Priority***
1. Leadership vision	
2. Information and awareness of NRM issues	
3. Balance of power and coalitions	
4. Crises, emergencies and disasters	
5. Planning and coordination capabilities	
6. Insufficient public involvement in decisionmaking	
7. Distribution of roles and responsibilities in policy process	
8. Level of autonomy and discretion allowed to participants in the decision process	
9. Incompetence (inadequate skills of policymakers and leadership)	
10. Other	
: specify	

4. Role of factual and scientific evidence *[rationality versus ideology]* in the policy process?

1	High
2	Marginal

4a. Is it:

1	Increasing
2	Decreasing
3	Stable
Explain	

5. In your opinion, the search for new policy solutions is limited by (rank by decreasing order of importance):

	Code	***Priority***
1	Lack of interest, force of habit and/or inertia	
2	Lack of information about available solutions	
3	Lack of proven solutions	
4	Risk aversion of decisionmakers	
5	Inadequate resources to implement it	
6	Resistance by special interests	
7	Overlapping and un-coordinated policy arenas	

Beliefs, Perceptions and Attitudes about Natural Resources Policy Issues

In this section we first ask a series of questions regarding attitudes and awareness of natural resources issues before introducing a specific question regarding the attitude toward a key decision taken by the authorities pertaining to land tenure issues.

1. What are the main problems, according to you, with regard to Natural Resources? (National Coordinator (NC) to add typology of such problems or to leave it as an open question)
2. What are the general causes of the problems? How did the country get there?
3. What solutions have been tested in the past? (List)
4. Did these various solutions have the same goal (specify which ones?)

   0 No

   1 Yes

   Explain

5. Were there significant differences (specify)?
6. Which solutions worked? List
7. Which solutions did not work? Explain
8. Did the perception of policymakers of the nature of these problems change over time?

   0 No

   1 Yes

   Explain

   8a. Explain how and which factors or actors made this change possible?

9. Is this change of perception of the nature of the policy issues (if any) a positive or negative change in your opinion?

   1 Negative

   0 Positive

   Explain

10. What is your vision of the future solution?
11. What should be the goal of a good policy in this field?
12. Do you see a viable solution?

    0 No

    1 Yes

    Explain

13. How to ensure it can be implemented?
14. In (date of decision) the government decided (insert description of the selected key decision).

14a. Are you aware of this decision?

0 No

1 Yes

14b. Were you at that time involved in the decisionmaking process?

0 No

1 Yes

If Yes, in what capacity?

14c. Where you generally:

favorable to the decision taken

against the decision

or neutral?

14d. Provide arguments in support of your position?

0 No

1 Yes

Explain

14e. Was it necessary to take action?

0 No

1 Yes

Explain

14f. Did this decision offer a better solution than previous solutions?

0 No

1 Yes

14g. Was it implemented effectively?

0 No

1 Yes

14h. Were there other alternative options which were in your opinion sustainable?

0 No

1 Yes

14i. Were these options politically feasible?

0 No

1 Yes

14j. Were these options economically affordable?

0 No

1 Yes

14k. Were they socially acceptable?

0 No

1 Yes

15. Who else shared your position regarding this issue?

- Did they have the same reasons or other reasons as well?

0 No

1 Yes

Explain if they had other reasons as well

15a. Who else actively opposed your position or had different positions/preferences? *(Same set of questions as question immediately above).*

16. Did your opinion about the decision change with time?

0 No

1 Yes

If Yes How?

If Yes Why?

17. Funding of the implementation of the decision [indicate decision referred to]

- Sources of funding?
- How adequate?
- How to minimize the costs of implementation?
- Through which institutions?
- Role of land rent and herd taxation?
- Use of their proceeds?

18. Enforcement mechanisms

Develop questions regarding information gathering, monitoring of compliance, and incentives (positive and negative) to compliance and non-compliance, regarding one or more decisions referred to above.

Perceptions of and Attitudes Towards Decentralization

In this section we first ask a series of questions regarding attitudes and awareness of decentralization issues before introducing a specific question regarding the attitude towards a key decision taken by the authorities pertaining to land tenure issues.

1. What are the main problems according to you with regard to Decentralization? *(National Coordinator (NC) to Add typology of such problems or to leave it as an open question)*
2. What causes the problem?
3. What solutions have been tested in the past? Attempts to solve some problems like:
   What were the results?
4. What is your vision of the future solution?
5. What are your aspirations and preferences or priorities?
6. How would you implement the above?
7. In *(date of decision)* the government decided *(insert description of the selected key decision)*.

   7a. Are you aware of this decision?

   0 No

   1 Yes

   7b. Were you at that time involved in the decisionmaking process?

   0 No

   1 Yes

   7c. In what capacity?

   7d. Were you generally:

   1 Favorable to the decision taken

   2 against the decision

   3 or neutral?

   7e. Provide arguments in support to your position.

   7f. Was it necessary to take action?

   0 No

   1 Yes

   7g. Did this decision offer a better solution than previous solutions?

   0 No

   1 Yes

   7h. Were there other alternative options which were in your opinion sustainable?

0 No

1 Yes

7i. Were these options politically feasible?

0 No

1 Yes

7j. Were these options economically affordable?

0 No

1 Yes

7k. Were they socially acceptable?

0 No

1 Yes

8. Who else shared your position regarding this issue?
   - Did they have the same reasons or other reasons as well?

     0 No

     1 Yes

     Explain if they had other reasons as well

   - Did you coordinate with these allies to influence the outcome of the policy process?

     0 No

     1 Yes

     Explain

   - To enforce or mitigate implementation of the decision?

     0 No

     1 Yes

9. Who else actively opposed your position or had different positions/preferences? *(Same set of questions as question immediately above).*

10. Did your opinion about the decision change with time?

    0 No

    1 Yes

    If Yes How?

    If Yes Why?

11. Funding of the implementation of the decision *[indicate decision referred to]*
    - Sources of funding?
    - How adequate?
    - How to minimize the costs of implementation?

      Through which institutions?
    - Role of land rent and herd taxation?

      Use of their proceeds?

12. Enforcement mechanisms

    Develop questions regarding information gathering, monitoring of compliance, incentives (positive and negative) to compliance and non-compliance regarding one or more decisions referred to above.

Evaluating Policy Outcomes

Building on previous sections, the interviewer will select with the interviewee a specific decision or course of action in the field or either NRM or Decentralization

- State here the decision selected and briefly characterize it:

  [Subsequently the following questions will be asked with regard to the above decision]

- What was the expected outcome from the above decision?
- How it was generally implemented (flexibility, adaptability, etc.)?
- What was its actual outcome(s)?
- Was it cost effective?

  0 No

  1 Yes

  Explain

- Was it equitable?

  0 No

  1 Yes

  Explain

Explain *[two criteria of equity: social equity and proportionate equity that is that returns are proportionate to contributions]*

- How would you characterize the achievement on a scale of 1(ineffective) to 5 (successful)?
  1 Ineffective
  2 Poor
  3 Average
  4 Good
  5 Successful
- In your opinion, what are the causes (origins) of the achievement gap, if any?
  a.
  b.
  c.
  d.
- Leadership awareness of policy outcomes? How delayed?
- What was the response to the observed gap by government?
- What was the response to the observed gap by stakeholders?
- How would you characterize the accountability of decisionmakers to the general public and/or to people's representatives on a scale of 1 (low) to 5(high)?
  1 Low
  2 Below average
  3 Average
  4 Above average
  5 High
- What factors made accountability low or high (depending on answer to previous question)?
- When was the next round of active policymaking set to tackle the pending issue?

[At this stage of the questionnaire, you may make a second loop of all or part of the above 8 questions regarding the next active phase of policy making, if deemed useful].

Perceived Rules in Use in the Policy Process

In this section, we try to make explicit the rules in use in the policy process. By rules in use we mean those that the participants to the process know will apply (the real rules of the game) as opposed to the formal rules of the game. Some of the formal rules may apply of course and they are therefore accounted for. Each type of rules is explicated below with a number of questions that help reveal what are the rules in use. It is suggested to ask the questions with reference to the same policy decision retained in one of the previous sections:

State here the policy decision or domain of reference:

Entry and exit rules (in the policy process/round):
Note: These rules affect the number of participants, their attributes and resources, whether they can enter freely, and the conditions they face for leaving:

- Who are the participants in the decisionmaking with reference to *[specify decision domain]?*
- Are the appropriators limited to a specific group (geographic, ethnic, family, position, etc.); to those who have obtained an authority or permit; to those who own required assets (land, animals, …); or in some other way limited to a political class who is bounded.
- How are new participants allowed to join the core decisionmaking group ("entry fee," initiation, etc.)?
- Does a participant with responsibilities in the policy process give up rights to decisionmaking upon migrating to another location or responsibility or does he retain power/authority or influence beyond his mandate?

Position rules:
Note: These rules establish positions (roles, responsibilities) in a particular situation.

- What are the key roles and responsibilities in the policy process?
- How are they distributed among the participants?
- Does any participant have the power to veto at any time a decision that he would disagree with?
- Who controls the agenda?
- Who liaise with higher political levels (conveys leadership expectations and instructions, and informs leadership about progress in decisionmaking process)?
- How does someone move from being just a participant in the policy process to someone who has a specialized task, or a main responsibility?

Scope rules:
Scope rules determine the potential outcomes that can be affected and, working backward, the actions linked to specific outcomes.

- What understanding do the participants to the policy process and others have about the authorized or forbidden policy domains?
- Do job descriptions exist showing who can decide what about the policy under consideration?

Authority rules:
These rules assign sets of actions that participants in positions at particular nodes of the process must, may or may not take.

- What understandings do participants in the process have about mandatory, authorized and forbidden action?
- What understanding do participants in the process have about participation modalities and procedures?
- What choices do various enforcement agents have related to the actions they can take?
- Etc.

Information rules*:*

These rules affect the knowledge or information sets of participants.

- What information must be held secret?
- What information must be made public?
- Etc.

Preliminary Findings and Conclusions

[The following list of questions (and others that can be derived) can be used at the end of an interview as a check list to complete/clarify understanding of interviewee's responses and provide him/her with an opportunity to take corrective action.]

- How difficult or costly is it to exclude willing participants or lobbies in a policy process?
- How difficult is it to target policies and resources to poorer sections of the rural population?
- Boundary and size of the policymaking community (communities)?
- Norms of behavior generally accepted within the community of decisionmakers?
- Level of common understanding that participants in the policy process share about the structure of each policy arena (issue, stakeholders, options, rules of the game, etc.)
- Homogeneity and heterogeneity (inequalities of agency) within the decisionmaking community? Impact of inequalities of agencies?
- Prevalence of empowered/disempowered beliefs and attitudes *[these attitudes can be summarized by the following opinions: we can do something about an issue versus we cannot do much]* in tackling policy decision issues
- What are the main sources of resistance to improved policy processes? How could they be neutralized or controlled?
- Are there reform-minded agents both within and out of central government, international financing institutions, civil society, or the private sector? Who are they *(brief characterization)*? How could they be better mobilized in future?
- To what extent do civil society and political organizations seize opportunities that may arise to participate in shaping policies that affect them?
- To what extent are civil society and its organizations keen to hold the leadership accountable for its decisions or lack of decisions?
- To what extent are political leaders, policymakers and senior executives capable to respond positively and accept to be accountable to the people?
- How should the rules in use in the policy process be changed to contain special interests and to enhance the general level of cooperation for policy problem-solving?
- All things considered, are you generally rather optimistic or pessimistic regarding the possibility of improved local governance in the near future? In five years from now? Explain.

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