Urban local government in the South Pacific

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Throughout the South Pacific, the long-followed policy of direct administration by central government authorities without involvement of local inhabitants in decision-making and implementation of government policy is being questioned by the inhabitants as anachronistic paternalism. This applies not only at the territorial level but even more so to government at the local level in the urban areas. Towns in which the more sophisticated and better educated Pacific Islanders live are becoming more and more the focal points of social and economic growth in the region, and concomitantly centres of political change.

The Pacific Island region encompasses a great diversity of forms of town government and administration, the gamut ranging from urban centres directly run by District Commissioners or District Officers representing the central government, as is the case with most South Pacific towns, to the "commune de plein exercice", municipalities with an elected mayor and fully elected town council (all the towns in New Caledonia and Dependencies, as well as Papeete and Uturoa in French Polynesia). Between these polar extremes will be found urban centres in which the central government administrator is assisted by a Town Advisory Council (for example, in Papua and New Guinea); towns administered by a central government administrator and a central government-nominated board of official and unofficial members (such as the six Fijian proclaimed townships and Honiara in the British Solomon Islands Protectorate); the "commune de moyen exercice" in French territories, municipalities which have not yet been granted full powers, headed by an officer appointed by the central government and assisted by an elected council; and towns administered by an elected mayor and a council consisting of a majority of councillors, elected on

*) The author was Officer-in-Charge of the Urbanization Research Information Centre established by the South Pacific Commission in 1962 at its headquarters in Noumea, New Caledonia. In this article the term "South Pacific" refers not to the South Pacific in the strictly geographical sense of the word, but to the region within the South Pacific Commission's competence, an area roughly extending from the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands southward to Norfolk Island and from the Territory of Papua and New Guinea eastward to French Polynesia and Pitcairn Island.
separate rolls for the major ethnic groups, and a small number of nominated members, to represent minority interests (such as the Suva City Council in Fiji). 1)

Furthermore, in this Pacific Islands' world there is a striking distinction between the Anglo-Saxon and the French approach to local government. The Anglo-Saxon concept sees local government as a convenient device of relieving the central government of its task of providing local services and the central executive from involvement in many purely local issues. Urban local government is considered as a means of deconcentration of services. The emphasis falls upon placing the responsibility for local services in the hands of the local people. Here the financial factor weighs heavily in the sense that local authorities must be able to raise their own revenue to cover at least a substantial part of the cost of existing services or, at least, of their expansion.

In the French concept, as observed in New Caledonia, French Polynesia, and the Condominium of the New Hebrides, the political factor looms more important than the financial. A major part of the revenue of French municipalities derives from predetermined shares of revenues raised by the territorial government and is intended to finance the municipalities' obligatory functions. Here the creation of a municipality is above all a political act. The oldest municipalities in the region are therefore to be found in the French territories: French sovereignty in New Caledonia was declared on September 24, 1853, and the municipality of Noumea (then called "Port-de-France") was established as early as June 1, 1859.

It should also be added that for the French the creation of a municipality is not only a political act, but it is at the same time of psychological significance. The French commune is not considered as just a legal organ but above all a moral personality with which the citizen identifies himself, and which administers the municipal area in his interest and protects his rights. The central government exerts greater financial and administrative control over French communes than is found in municipalities which follow the British practice. However, although the latter seem to be more independent, French municipalities appear to be more consulted by the central government.

1) No comprehensive study has yet been made of the various forms of urban government in the Pacific area. Appropriately, the South Pacific Commission, as an international regional organ, assumed the initiative by convening a Technical Meeting on Urban Local Government with specific reference to "Areas of Responsibility in Central and Local Government in Pacific Urban Areas". The meeting, which was held at Port Moresby, Papua-New Guinea, from July 27 - August 7, 1964 was attended by delegates from American Samoa, the British Solomon Island Protectorate, Fiji, French Polynesia, New Caledonia, New Hebrides, Papua and New Guinea, the U.S. Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, and Western Samoa. Both Europeans and indigenous delegates from the various territories in the South Pacific participated, which offered an unique opportunity for an exchange of ideas concerning forms, powers, and functions of urban local government. This article is based mainly on the meeting's discussions, working papers, and final report.
government. 2) The need for local government, in the French concept, does not have to be evinced; one merely acknowledges it. 3)

Both systems have their advantages. Due to different backgrounds, no one pattern will suit all South Pacific territories. Similarly, while government in any one region is carried on within the framework of that area's metropolitan colonial policy, territorial administrations cannot merely copy the structure of municipal government in the respective metropolitan countries. In this vast area of comparatively small towns — Suva with 50,000 inhabitants is the largest — diversity tends to be the common denominator.

**Characteristics of South Pacific towns**

Numerous factors — historical, political, cultural, social and economic — have contributed to the evolution of the pattern of South Pacific towns. With the exception of Nuku'alofa, capital of the independent Kingdom of Tonga, which represents the product of Tongan enterprise, they were founded by European colonizers. The towns developed primarily under foreign initiative and control and today perform a multiplicity of functions typical of the modern Western city. They display many of the features of towns in metropolitan countries, yet they are distinguished by their own special characteristics. Many, if not most, South Pacific towns are primarily nuclei of Government administration around which European, Chinese, Indian or Pacific Islanders' commerce has developed.

Another general feature of all the towns in the region is their multi-racial population and their heterogenous culture: Pacific Islanders, Caucasians, Chinese, Indians, Indonesians, and Vietnamese. Especially in the Melanesian region there is often an enormous diversity of ethnic groups, each with its own tongue or dialect. Port Moresby's estimated 27,000 indigenous urban dwellers consist of people coming from more than fifty different ethnic sub-districts in the Territory. With a few exceptions (such as Noumea, Vila, Santo, Agana, Guam; Suva, Lautoka and a number of Fijian townships), by far the greater number of the urban dwellers in the region are Pacific Islanders who for various reasons have come from rural areas to town.

A large part of the urban-indigenous population in the Pacific is only semi-permanent or transient. In the absence of reliable statistics available to show the extent of mobility, recourse to the high labour turnover statistics indicates the constant movement of the indigenous town population. A study made of one of Papeete's neighbour-

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2) Likewise in the metropolitan countries, the French system of government is characterized by considerably more centralization than either the British or American models. For the system of metropolitan government of New York City, Metropolitan Toronto, London and Paris, see Lyle C. Fitch: "Organization for Planning and Development of Metropolitan Areas", pp. 54-64 in Social Problems of Development and Urbanization, Vol. VII, United States papers prepared for the United Nations Conference on the Application of Science and Technology for the benefit of the less developed areas. For control in the United Kingdom and in France, compare W. Hoven and A. van den Elshout "Central Services to Local Authorities" (The Hague, 1962 p. 142) prepared for the United Nations on behalf of the International Union of Local Authorities.

3) "La nécité d'un gouvernement local ne se démontre donc pas, elle se constate." Working Paper SPC/ULG/T.16 "Nécessité d'avoir un gouvernement local urbain", prepared by the Government of New Caledonia and Dependencies.
hoods confirms this: during a period of 12 months, 44.8% of the adults (55.6% of the males and 36.7% of the females) took up permanent residence or left the neighbourhood permanently. 4)

Typical of most South Pacific towns is the lack of a sense of belonging to an urban community. In the first place, their various ethnic groups have commitments and interests elsewhere. The expatriate European tends to look to his metropolitan country, and except in the French territories, there are few real settlers in the South Pacific territories. Pacific Islanders, as a rule, do not assimilate to urban culture but maintain close ties with relatives in the rural villages. The usually strong communal sense among the members of each indigenous ethnic group limits their becoming active carriers of organized urban life, civic mindedness, or town pride. In the second place, a universal feature of South Pacific towns is the lack of common institutions of traditional authority such as are to be found in the rural areas. There is virtually no common traditional basis on which to build modern town government; it has to be created and based upon the consensus of the town's inhabitants on a number of important social, economic and political issues. In the third place, there is in these towns a sharp distinction between high and low standard development areas, the majority of the inhabitants in the latter being indigenous. Thus, in most South Pacific towns there is no real community of interest between the different racial and ethnic groups because their needs and standards of living diverge so widely.

Many South Pacific towns are characterized by a semi-rural character similar to Northwest European towns before the Industrial Revolution. Institutions typical of rural culture are functioning in urban environments, either unmodified or partially attuned to the new environment. The extended family, typical of rural cultures, is found beside the nuclear family as the socio-economic unit. From one urban area it has been reported that the normatively nuclear family in the rural areas was tending toward an extended family organization in town as a reaction to a delicate economic position and a means of cutting per capita rent. 5) Urban centres such as Port Moresby in Papua-New Guinea and Apia in Western Samoa include important aboriginal villages within their boundaries.

With the exception of a few growing industrial towns in the South Pacific, the "pull" to the cities tends to be more social than economic. Urbanization in the region to a great extent has proceeded independent of industrialization or development of commerce, and many towns cannot provide their inhabitants with full-time employment. A number of South Pacific towns are virtually still government centres partially ringed with a fringe of commerce and primary industry. There is an artificially stimulated economy with the government wage packet and expenditures of public money providing the economic base.

As is normally the case in developing countries, it is the central government — and not the local government (urban or rural) — which dominates development in the South Pacific. Faced with the strong centrifugal pulls of ethnic, tribal and regional


5) Kay, op. cit., p. 71.
loyalties, and a lack of national consciousness, the primary concern of the territorial administration has been the creation and expansion of a central authority. In the first stages of colonial development, centralization and later decentralization (or deconcentration) is a much more frequently occurring feature than local government. In European countries, as for instance in England, government matured gradually from the local scene to the national level. In the South Pacific territories, central government has been from the start the dominating force and urban local government, where it exists, came later as a creation of the central government.

Powers and functions of urban local government

Although some functions are clearly responsibilities of a central government (such as postal services, customs, services requiring highly specialized skills or large capital investment), a wide range of functions may be undertaken either by central government or by local authorities. Illustrative of the latter in the Pacific are the provision of water and electricity. Furthermore, at any particular time, the extent of the powers of urban local authorities, as well as the supervision and control exercised by the central government, depends upon the stage of development of the local authority from aboriginal authority to Western-type municipal government. New Caledonia provides a typical example of this dependence in the French territories.

In New Caledonia and Dependencies, the traditional authority represented an autonomous political power embodied in the Council of Elders. The first development was the entrustment of this Council by the Central Government with a few simple tasks such as population enumerations, registration of births and deaths, and implementation of community sanitation measures. It was thus developed gradually into an agency of the central government, without any denial of its original political status. The growing responsibilities entrusted to the traditional Council warranted the appointment of an agent from the Central Government to act as guide and supervisor. The Council of Elders ultimately became a sort of "municipal committee", whose members were appointed or at least "agreed" to by the central government. For various reasons, Elders sometimes preferred to adopt a waiting attitude and pushed forward other individuals, in their eyes of lower social status, but who had a reputation with both their own people and Europeans for tact and adaptability. In such cases, the process was the same but more rapid, and except for a few traditional events, the Council of Elders disappeared quickly from active public life. New elites, anxious to play a political role, emerged. Thus a form of government was reached, called "commune de moyen exercice", headed by an officer appointed by the central government and assisted by an elected council. The role of this officer was to direct local affairs but also and above all to act as guide and advisor to his assistants and the members of the council. In areas with both detribalized people and traditional village communities, an intermediate form of a commune emerged, with a council consisting of elected members and appointed important local members such as the leaders of aboriginal communities. Quite often the first councillors to be elected by the people were traditional elders, but they were usually replaced at the next elections by newcomers and, if a few elders still remained, it was only because they had been able to play an active role and had thus retained a certain number of followers.
The final stage has been the "commune de plein exercice" under a mayor elected within the town council by its members. The council has become a fully elected body, its members having been elected by universal suffrage based on a common electoral roll.

In the preparatory stage of the "Commission Municipale", the initiative for community activities came mainly from the central government exercising a close control over local action from the triple point of view of desirability, legality and proper implementation of measures. After this period, in which the local authority gradually became more confident in the exercise of its powers, its functions were expanded while the role of the central government was correspondingly reduced to the providing of advice. In the final phase, that of the "commune de plein exercice", the powers and functions of the municipality have attained full status, subject only to financial control and supervision with regard to the legality of its administrative acts.

Noumea's functions today encompass an array of municipal services, such as a registry office which is also responsible for population censuses and the electoral roll, a small municipal police force, the conservation and maintenance of the public and private municipal domain, public sanitation, the issuing of building permits, urban traffic control (traffic regulations, traffic signals), public works, and maintenance of a fire brigade. The water works is under municipal control and operates as a private enterprise with an independent budget, the initial capital having been provided by a loan. A private company supplies electric power. The functions of the remaining 30 urban and rural communes into which New Caledonia and Dependencies is now divided vary somewhat, depending on their financial resources.

A diversity of local powers and functions is encountered elsewhere in the Pacific. In Suva, electricity is generated by the municipal power plant, and other services of the Suva City Council include public health provisions, market facilities, and maintenance of municipal parks and roads. In Honiara, capital of the British Solomon Islands Protectorate, water, electricity, roads, public health and sanitation are still mainly central government services, none of which can be devolved at the town's present stage of development. Water and electric services are major undertaking beyond the likely financial resources of the Honiara Town Council which was only established in 1958. However, considerable devolution is currently taking place in the public health and sanitation fields. In the U.S. Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, chartered municipalities are the basic unit of local government in the Territory, and may comprise an island, a group of islands or a division of a larger island. At the present stage of political development, most services of government are being provided by the central authorities, and the municipalities are mainly confined to preparation of the local budget, collection of taxes and vital statistics, paying salaries of local functionaries, directing local public works, and occasionally altering the course of their inhabitants's activities through local ordinances.

Control of the peri-urban areas constitutes an acute problem in many South Pacific territories. To permit town planning to be carried out within the framework of regional development, municipal boundaries would have to be extended to include not only the areas which are becoming urbanized but also the areas which are likely to be similarly affected in the future. A number of factors, however, limit the possi-
bility of bringing the zone immediately outside the town boundaries under the jurisdiction of the municipal government. Taxpayers frequently are unwilling to meet the expenses of providing services for the additional areas, while on the other hand rural authorities do not look kindly on losing part of their jurisdiction and taxpayers to an urban authority.

**Financial aspects of urban local government**

The backbone of urban local government is financial autonomy. Without adequate financial powers, independent of central government, urban local government risks becoming merely an agent of the central government and elected local representation loses much of its raison d'être. Without adequate financial powers a sense of futility arises, as has been the case with many town advisory councils in the Pacific region which carry no real responsibility.

Urban local government ought therefore not be established without adequate resources and without prior estimates of probable expenditure and revenue in respect to the urban area concerned. Except in the French territories, the U.S. Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, and in Fiji, such information is not readily available in the South Pacific. In other territories the expenditure for the administration of towns is an integral part of the annual estimates of different departments in the territorial budget, so that it is impossible to make a precise assessment of the needs and the actual costs of administering each municipal unit.

South Pacific towns are on the whole poor towns, lacking the economic base and the financial resources to be financially autonomous. They are in large measure dependent on grants or allocation of revenues from the central government. Such an assessment of income and expenditure is therefore necessary if a planned and adequate allocation of finance to urban local government units is to be made.

A wide variety of types of revenue and expenditure are encountered in the different municipalities in the South Pacific. British territories follow the basic policy that the central government does not vest urban local authorities with fiscal and economic powers of taxation which could undermine comparable powers of the central government. This limits the types of revenue-raising powers exercisable by a municipal authority, and forecloses the imposing of income taxes, customs, and excise duties. In Fiji, for example, the basis of local revenue is limited to taxes on the unimproved value of land within the urban boundaries, charges for urban services rendered, and license fees in respect to undertakings over which the local authority has regulatory functions. The principal source of income is the land tax. In addition, in Suva, fines imposed by the courts for offenses under public health and business license laws are paid over to the Suva City Council. The Honiara Town Council also enjoys taxing powers but no ability to levy taxes on land. At present, it derives its revenue, other than grants-in-aid, from a service tax (an annual per capita tax of £A 3 on all persons resident in the Town Council area and earning more than £A 108 per

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6) The introductory paper to this item of the Meeting's agenda, "Financial aspects of Urban Local Government", was prepared by N. D. Oram (Working Paper SPC/ULG/T.4).

annum), licenses, fees, and revenues from Council property. Central government grants continue to constitute an important part of the local revenue in Fiji, while the Honiara Town Council is largely dependent on aid from the central government. Of the Honiara Town Council’s Revenue Estimates for 1964, 83% is a Government grant-in-aid!

In French territories, functions imposed upon the commune by its charter become mandatory, for which the municipality receives financial assistance from the central government should its own resources be inadequate. Such assistance consists of a proportion of territorial taxes, and, in special cases, an extraordinary grant where municipal resources are insufficient to cover compulsory expenditures. The predetermined shares of territorial taxes and license fees are intended to finance obligatory functions laid down by the municipal charter. The cost of non-obligatory services is met from revenues raised by the municipality itself. The composition of the budget of Noumea provides an interesting illustration of municipal income in a French area: (a) municipal licenses and fees such as dog licenses, parking licenses, rates on gasoline pumps, on street stalls, on taxis and buses, fees from the registration of births, marriages, deaths, receipts from municipal services and from the municipal domain.

(b) “centimes additionnels ordinaires et extraordinaires”, i.e. additional charges, ordinary and extraordinary, levied on certain territorial taxes such as license fees, land tax, road tax for cars, dues on the transfer of ownership of buildings, and businesses in the municipality.

(c) grants, i.e. certain territorial taxes or a proportion of these, viz. dock dues, entertainment tax, fines imposed in the municipality, harbour dues, and

(d) loans of the income received.

Of the income received in the fiscal year 1962, 82% consisted of income from taxes, 12% from municipal services, 1% from the municipal domain, and 5% from miscellaneous sources; 56% of the municipality’s income was derived directly from territorial taxes and fees.

Directly or indirectly, land taxes provide an important source of income to local government. Taxes on land values are the main form of British local taxation. In French territories, land taxes are a territorial imposition, municipalities receiving “centimes additionnels extraordinaires” on the tax levied by the central government on land within the commune’s boundaries. In contrast, neither in American Samoa nor the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands does real property bear a tax burden. Taxes on indigenous communal land in the municipalities is difficult to apply, because of the shared ownership of the land. It is possible to declare the traditionally recognized leader of the right-holders responsible for the payment of taxes assessed on the land, but enforcement of penalties for non-compliance tends to be somewhat ineffective. Winders8) in recommending urban local government councils for Port Moresby, Rabaul and Lae in New Guinea, and in assuming the need for Town Council revenue to be drawn solely from land taxes saw no solution with regard to

taxing of native owned land within the town boundaries other than that the indigenous groups should sell their land when unable to pay the taxes, thus depriving them of their village land. As the Fairfax and Bootless Bay Local Government Councils' village land covers a substantial part of Port Moresby's urban area, this would be a clear illustration of using taxation for fiscal and social, as distinct from purely revenue, purposes.

It has been suggested at the Technical Meeting on Urban Local Government that a rate based on annual rental value of buildings, instead of on the land itself, as levied in some Nigerian towns, would avoid the administrative difficulties of taxing group-owned land. Also proposed for South Pacific towns is a local income tax, the level set so that people on lower income levels could contribute to the cost of urban services and amenities enjoyed by the community. A combination of a tax on land valued above a designated minimum amount and a graduated capitation tax on those without property so valued, or even a flat-rate capitation tax would ensure that every member of the community contributed something to the revenue.

A special problem of many South Pacific towns is the financing of their low-standard development areas which make little contribution to the urban authority's revenues because of the relative poverty of their inhabitants. Though the development of these areas is the responsibility of urban local government, the central government ought to be prepared to assist through grants-in-aid where the resources of the urban authority are inadequate. In this way grants-in-aid would be devoted to those who need assistance rather than to the providing of additional services for those who already constitute a privileged minority.

The representative aspect of urban local government

In South Pacific towns with their highly heterogeneous populations having widely divergent interests and lacking traditional institutionalized authority to voice their wishes or demands, it is difficult to sound citizen opinion with regard to the need for urban local government or the form it should take. Local newspapers and private organizations such as trade unions and social clubs may provide some indication whether urban local government is desired or considered necessary. Such opinions, if expressed, raise the question whether they are indeed based on any consensus of the urban inhabitants. In any event, the expression by local citizens of a need for urban government is rarely a prerequisite for its establishment. The introduction of local government has been, in general, rather a matter of policy based on the principle that it stimulates popular interest, provides better opportunities for popular participation in and popular control of local affairs. Even though resources may be very limited, the introduction of urban local government has been considered a necessary step to enable their inhabitants to learn the art of self-government and thus lay the foundations for a form of government thought desirable, that is, democratic, with the people directly participating. It is no rebuttal to point out there exists a feeling of apathy and the mentality of "waiting for instructions from above", among many of

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9) The introductory paper to this item of the Meeting's agenda was prepared by Dr. Ruth Atkins: "The representative aspect of urban local government." (Working Paper SPC/ULG/T.13)
the town dwellers. Urban local government can develop local initiative and prepare those town dwellers with the training conducive to playing an effective role in national affairs.

In establishing urban government, not all the administering authorities have relied upon elections as the mechanism by which to secure representative and responsible local government. Indeed, elections, per se, are not necessarily the sole means for the assuring of representativeness. As expressed in a United Nations publication, a "representative" body may contain nominated or co-opted members just so long as the elected element is not unduly diluted\(^{10}\). However, in some cases the administering authorities have ignored the elective principle entirely.

There is a great variety in the composition of municipal councils in the South Pacific. The Suva City Council has since 1961 comprised twenty members of whom there are an equal number of elected Fijian, European and Indian councillors (six each), with an additional two members nominated by the Governor from the minority groups, namely the Chinese and the Rotuman group. There is no common roll for these elections; separate rolls are prepared for the three major groups. One-third of the elected councillors go out of office each year, while the mayor is elected annually by the council. The Municipal Council of Noumea is composed of the mayor, two deputy mayors and 12 councillors — a total of 15 members elected for a period of six years on a common roll by all urban citizens over 21 years of age. The mayor and the two deputies are selected by the Council from its membership. In contrast, the Honiara Town Council consists of twenty members wholly nominated by the High Commissioner. It has a majority of sixteen unofficial members consisting of representatives of business, churches and missions, while the four official members are government officers with particular responsibility for the provision of services in the town. An administrative officer on the District Commissioner's staff is appointed Executive Officer and Treasurer of the Town Council. The chartered municipalities of the U.S. Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands have councils whose members are elected by universal suffrage and an elected magistrate or mayor. These municipalities, however, are rather more of a rural than urban nature.

Wide differences of view exist with regard to the crucial problem of what the principle of election should be in the special circumstances of South Pacific towns — a common electoral roll embracing all races and groups which could result in an unbalanced urban council; separate communal rolls which have many disadvantages though this could result, in a more balanced town council; or separate common rolls for each ward, each electing two or more councillors.

Whatever the principle of municipal elections might be, it is evident that, for political reasons, municipal elections cannot vary fundamentally in method from elections at the territorial level. If, for instance, elections at the national level are based on universal suffrage, voting on a common roll and minority representation, it is thought politically unwise to deny urban citizens these prerogatives.

In most South Pacific towns, representative urban local government constitutes an

innovation and so many of their citizens a rather vague concept. Establishment of such a form of government responsible for the management of town affairs therefore needs be prefaced by intensive explanation by central government agencies of its implications for the local community. Government of towns, however, is always in a process of development and change. Education of the local citizens on the aims and goals of urban local government should therefore be continued after its establishment by the local authority itself.

Conclusion
In developing countries the central government is a dominating force playing an important role in providing the necessary basis and essential requirements for local government. In the South Pacific territories central government plays at least three roles in relation to urban local government. It is the founder of the urban local government authority, defining the legislative framework for local government and giving it sufficient autonomy to be viable. Especially in developing countries, the development of local communities is in this respect greatly dependent on the initiative of the central government.

Besides being the creator and initiator of local government, central government has the responsibility of educating the local citizens concerning the aims and goals of urban local government, of guiding and advising them and of actively stimulating participation of the local people in the administration of their community. This both lays the foundations of a democratic system as well as strengthens and supports the new urban local government authority by the provision of staff and funds.

Finally, central government, carrying as it does the ultimate responsibility for all forms of government in the whole territory, has the task of supervision and control over such matters as policy, legislation, staff and finance to ensure a degree of uniformity and efficiency and to safeguard minimum standards of services of common national interest. Control should be exercised as much as possible through informal consultation rather than through formal directives or vetoes. There is a wide range of possibilities in this respect between formal regulations enforcing control and informal control in the form of advice and guidance on a more personal basis. Even the extent to which urban authorities are consulted on matters of national importance serves to exert indirect controls on local action. This seems to be greater in French than in other territories, and the mayor as a representative of the commune often sits on a number of social, cultural and governmental committees at the territorial level.

A key factor in the development of urban local government in the South Pacific is staffing. Success depends a great deal upon the availability of qualified staff, and central government should undertake the continuing function of training for local government. Modern municipal government is becoming increasingly complex and demands skills which can be acquired only through training. In the formative stage especially, staff may be seconded by the central government to the urban authorities on a part- or full-time basis and will be expected to play an educative and advisory role as part of their normal duties. In a later stage the municipality
will appoint and control its own staff. Central government may upon request provide part-time or full-time personnel at the expense of the municipality. Central-local government relations should in general be worked out locally and not by appealing to traditional models in the metropolitan countries or elsewhere. There is often a conflict of interest between the argument that central authorities can more efficiently provide certain services and the "educative mission" of the central government requiring that the municipal authority perform those functions. It has been said that local government is therefore always a compromise between democracy and efficiency. In the South Pacific, whose peoples in some areas are just beginning to abandon their traditional forms of authority, local government in part embodies a hope that efficiency will become the hallmark of what are today admittedly rather inefficient units of government. It also symbolized a promise, that out of local representative forms will develop more democratic systems of internal government. The urban communities thus occupy a crucial role, for they furnish the most fertile soil for cultivating local government.