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# The politics of public goods provision in post-conflict Makeni, Sierra Leone

Coproductive relationships between the city council and interest-based associations

Anna Workman\*

*Policymakers in Sierra Leone have identified recently established local councils as the main vehicles for delivering on commitments to improve local public goods provision, but little is known about which strategies work for councils as public goods providers, and why. I compare two cases of public goods provision led by a single urban council, one relatively successful, another less so. I find that both are examples of coproduction of public goods by the council and interest-based associations and that the dynamics of the relationships between these actors strongly influence the quality of public goods outcomes. I argue that the presence of a pattern of reciprocal exchange is the most significant determinant of success in coproduction. I conclude by considering the conditions under which reciprocity is most likely to emerge in the context of coproductive relationships between local councils and interest-based associations.*

## 1 Introduction

In the aftermath of a decade of civil war in Sierra Leone (1991-2002), indicators of well-being linger close to the bottom of comparative league tables (United Nations Development Programme, 2009). Better local public goods provision is widely recognized as critical to improving the quality of life and maintaining political stability. The Sierra Leone government and international donors have pinned high expectations on recently established local councils to improve the quality and availability of local public goods (Government of Sierra Leone, 2008; World Bank, 2009b). However, there has been very little empirical research which investigates how local councils have provided public goods to date, the political challenges they have encountered, or the relative successes of the different approaches they have adopted. This paper speaks to that gap in knowledge.

The rapid decentralization of power in Sierra Leone in 2003-2004 was legitimized by an emerging narrative about the causes of the civil war which characterized the centralized state's exclusion of the majority of Sierra Leoneans from the political process and failure to provide local public goods as drivers of violent dissent (Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2004). The decision to decentralize was strongly influenced by donor agencies, but was believed by them to have substantial support at the highest levels of government. Following the passage of the Local Government Act in March 2004 and subsequent local elections in May 2004, nineteen local councils took office, of which five were urban councils.

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The Local Government Act outlined a programme of political and fiscal decentralization, according councils overall responsibility for development in their localities; devolving a range of ministerial functions related to basic service delivery; and empowering councils to tax and spend (within certain parameters).

In this paper, I investigate why some instances of public goods provision led by local councils in Sierra Leone succeed, while others fail. I do so through comparison of two cases of public goods provision led by a single urban council, Makeni City Council (MCC). The first, a clean marketplace, is relatively successful, and the second, a safe supply of meat, is less so. Both of these cases happen to be examples of coproduction of public goods by MCC and interest-based associations,<sup>1</sup> i.e. they are produced by the joint efforts of both parties. I use the concept of coproduction to frame the analysis because the dynamics of the coproductive relationships prove to be critical to the quality of public goods outcomes. I approach study of the coproductive arrangements inductively, describing the process through which the goods are produced, identifying the behaviours that have the most powerful influence on public goods outcomes, and exploring the deeper incentives that drive these behaviours.

My analysis suggests that successful coproduction by local councils and interest-based associations in Sierra Leone relies on a pattern of reciprocal exchange. Reciprocity is present in the 'successful' case, coproduction of a clean market by MCC and the traders, but has broken down in the 'failed' one, coproduction of a safe meat supply by MCC and the butchers. I develop three hypotheses about the conditions under which reciprocal exchange between local councils and interest-based associations in Sierra Leone is likely to occur, and coproduction succeed: 1) both parties recognize their mutual need or dependence; 2) the structure according to which coproductive inputs are made allows immediate sanction for failures of reciprocity, or a third party enforces parties' commitments; and 3) local councils can take advantage of existing regulatory mechanisms to reduce free-riding by members of interest-based associations. I emphasize linkages between these hypotheses and those developed by David Booth (Booth, 2010: 5) in collaboration with members of the Africa Power and Politics Local Governance and Leadership research stream. Notably, the use of locally-rooted regulatory mechanisms to reduce free-riding by traders is an example of the way in which 'institutional elements inherited from the past' can facilitate public goods provision, while the absence of 'effective top-down performance disciplines' contributes to problems establishing and sustaining commitment between MCC and the butchers.

The paper proceeds as follows. First, I introduce the concept of coproduction which frames the analysis (section 2) and elaborate on my research methods (section 3). The remainder of the paper focuses on analysis of the cases. I describe the process through which the goods are provided (section 4), and then address the incentives/deterrents which shape the choices made by the city council and members of interest-based associations (sections 5 and 6). I conclude by developing hypotheses about the conditions under which successful coproduction between local councils and interest-based associations is likely to occur in Sierra Leone and considering the policy implications of coproduction as a model of public goods provision available to local councils (section 7).

## 2 Coproduction of public goods

The classic economic definition of public goods holds that public goods are non-excludable (once produced, nobody can be excluded from their benefits) and non-rivalrous (one person's

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<sup>1</sup> I use the term 'interest-based association' to describe associations which bring together members who play similar occupational roles and enable collective action in their common interest.

enjoyment doesn't diminish another's). While few goods meet these criteria when strictly applied, many approximate them. Private providers tend to be reluctant to provide public goods because of the difficulties they face in charging for them and in excluding non-contributors, and therefore it often falls to governments to ensure that an adequate supply is maintained (Batina and Ihori, 2005).

While taxation is the principal strategy used by governments to fund public goods provision, in poor countries like Sierra Leone domestic taxes may be insufficient for this purpose, particularly at the local level where the revenue base is small and revenue collection weak. However, many Sierra Leoneans contribute in other material ways to make sure that much-needed public goods are available, coproducing these goods along with local councils. I adopt Anuradha Joshi and Mick Moore's definition of coproduction as 'the provision of public services ... through a regular long-term relationship between state agencies and organised groups of citizens, where both make substantial resource contributions' (31), substituting public goods for public services. As they point out, many hybrid arrangements captured by the concept of coproduction remain invisible to development policymakers because they do not fit within the standard repertoire of accepted models for public goods provision. While inter-organizational partnership is now widely recognized as one strategy for providing public goods, the focus is usually on contractual relationships between government agencies and either private businesses or NGOs.

Elinor Ostrom (1996), who was among the first to consider the relevance of coproduction to public goods provision in developing countries, advocates investment in coproduction as a means to a more participatory governance which can elicit synergy between the efforts of citizens and government officials and thereby improve public goods outcomes. Significantly, she recognizes that coproduction does not simply occur spontaneously, but can be encouraged or stifled by government actions. She compares two cases—a highly successful water and sanitation initiative in peri-urban Brazil and poorly performing primary schools in Nigeria. In the Brazilian case, the municipal government encourages extremely high levels of citizen participation in design and maintenance of a condominial sewerage system, while in the Nigerian case, central government's top-down control of education and wild fluctuations in education policy disempower teachers and parents, discouraging their contributions.

Ostrom suggests that coproduction is most likely to thrive when central government leaves scope for local autonomy, which resonates with the logic of the decentralization process underway in Sierra Leone. Wai Fung Lam's (1996) study of a coproductive irrigation system in Taiwan demonstrates that central government can still play a critical role in maintaining the quality of goods provision when supervising autonomous implementing agencies. The Taiwanese government acts as an 'epistemic leader', establishing a coherent vision for the irrigation programme; controls allocations of money to irrigation agencies; and rewards/punishes irrigation agencies for their performance. Performance-based rewards/punishments are particularly important because they correct for asymmetry in the relationship between farmers and officials. Without performance-based pressure, farmers are more affected by irrigation failures than officials; with them, irrigation agencies become dependent on farmers to achieve their targets.

Joshi and Moore are far more hesitant about the potential of coproductive arrangements to improve public goods provision. For them, coproduction does not imply citizen empowerment, nor do coproductive arrangements offer the ideal means of providing public goods; rather they may represent 'the best available alternatives' in weak states (Joshi and Moore, 2004: 33). The cases of coproduction they present, a committee of businessmen providing a crime database for an urban police force in Pakistan and a Ghanaian transport

workers' union collecting income tax from transport workers, are examples of governments interacting with powerful interest-based associations which command economic and political resources, rather than loosely organized groups of urban residents or parents. The relationships they describe between interest-based associations and government agencies have similar characteristics to those that I describe in this paper—they develop 'organically' (38), tend to be rather fluid and may rely on continuous negotiation rather than formal contract.

Joshi and Moore identify two sets of drivers of coproduction: 1) governance drivers, which are present when weak government capacity results in poor public goods provision, encouraging organized groups of citizens to step in to bolster government efforts; and 2) logistical drivers, which are present when it is difficult for government agencies to deliver public goods without citizen assistance owing to environmental factors such as complexity or variation in the physical environment or the high cost of reaching large numbers of poor households. One of the cases I describe, joint cleaning of the market by Makeni City Council (MCC) and the traders, is a relatively clear example of governance-driven coproduction. Cooperation between MCC and the butchers to ensure a safe supply of meat is driven by logistical conditions, but ones which are distinct from those identified by Joshi and Moore. It is the fact that butchers control one of the critical inputs to the coproduction of a safe meat supply—cattle—that necessitates coproduction in this case.<sup>2</sup>

In the following analysis, I focus on identifying the main categories of incentives and deterrents which influence the choices of participants in coproductive relationships.<sup>3</sup> My decision to study incentives was reached through an inductive process; on identifying the immediate behaviours which influenced public goods outcomes, I found that I needed to look more closely at the reasons for participants' choices. It was also influenced by my underlying conception of coproductive relationships for public goods provision as a form of 'action situation' (Ostrom, 2005: 33) in which participants occupying different positions make strategic decisions about their actions based on their perceptions of action-outcome linkages and the incentives and deterrents attached to different outcomes.<sup>4</sup> Given a lack of more precise cognitive data, I assume that actors are boundedly rational: they have access to incomplete information; value outcomes according to their preferences; and make choices by satisficing,<sup>5</sup> rather than maximizing (Wunsch, 1991).

### 3 Research methods

From January to October 2009, I studied the role of Makeni City Council (MCC) in public goods provision in Makeni, a provincial headquarters city in Northern Sierra Leone with a population of approximately 83,000 (Statistics Sierra Leone, 2004).<sup>6</sup> In order to investigate

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2 Others have argued that coproduction is essential in the case of services which require the transformation of clients e.g. education, health (Ostrom and Ostrom, 1977; Whitaker, 1980). In the case of Makeni's slaughterhouse, coproduction is essential because the service requires transformation of clients' property.

3 I treat MCC as a collective actor to reduce complexity. I treat members of interest-based associations as individual actors.

4 This conception is taken from Ostrom's (2005) Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) framework, but I do not apply the IAD terminology during my analysis.

5 Satisficing describes a decision-making strategy that attempts to meet minimum requirements i.e. finding a good enough move, rather than an optimal one.

6 Local politicians consider this population estimate to be low. This perception may be a result of conflicting definitions of the city's boundaries. Possible boundaries include: i) the colonial administrative boundary that many still view as the city's limits; ii) the new political boundary resulting from the redrawing of local council wards, which exceeds the colonial administrative boundary in order to create wards of roughly equal population size; iii) the indefinite boundary which marks the outskirts of urban expansion. Statistics

why some instances of public goods provision led by local councils succeed, while others fail, I began by identifying two cases of public goods provision led by MCC, one relatively successful and one less successful. I did this through a two-step process. First, I conducted preliminary interviews with local councillors to identify potential cases. Second, I confirmed that citizens' perceptions concurred with those of councillors by conducting a survey with senior representatives of households (n=279)<sup>7</sup> and administering a structured questionnaire to the coproducers of one of the goods (n=22). Following selection of the cases, I collected data about each case through a combination of participant observation, semi-structured interviews and document review.

The 'success' identified was a clean city achieved through waste management activities. This case was cited consistently as a success by those councillors I spoke to in considering my case selection. The survey data supported this view. In response to a set of open-ended questions about the positive contributions MCC was making to the city, 72.3% of respondents identified cleaning the city as an example of a positive contribution, and 41.4% said it was MCC's greatest achievement, the most popular response by a margin of 22 percentage points. Furthermore, 75.9% of respondents said they were either satisfied (64.0%) or very satisfied (11.9%) with MCC's efforts to clean the city, generating a mean satisfaction score of 2.81 out of a possible 4.

The 'failure' identified was a safe supply of meat produced through construction and management of a slaughterhouse facility. A small number of councillors flagged this as a problem area. Only 6.3% of survey respondents cited the construction of the slaughterhouse as a positive contribution by MCC and less than 1% of respondents considered it to be MCC's greatest achievement. These results may reflect respondents' limited awareness of the slaughterhouse rather than their poor opinion of the facility. A substantial proportion of respondents (22.2%) reported that they didn't know anything about the slaughterhouse, while a further 43.7% had heard about the facility, but had never been there. Public ignorance about the slaughterhouse need not reflect a lack of demand for a safe supply of meat *per se*<sup>8</sup>, but it does suggest that there is weak demand for a well-functioning slaughterhouse as a means to producing this good. The low level of public attention paid to the slaughterhouse may be explained by the difficulties Makeni's residents face in detecting fluctuations in the quality of the meat supply given the lack of public information available about the incidence of meat-related illnesses. As members of the public were not a good source of information about MCC's efforts to maintain a safe supply of meat through the slaughterhouse, I decided to interview butchers and their assistants in order to determine their satisfaction with the facility. Structured interviews were completed with representatives of 12 of 13 meat stalls in the city. Over 95% of the respondents reported being either very unsatisfied (13.6%) or unsatisfied (81.8%) with the slaughterhouse facilities provided by MCC, generating a mean satisfaction score of 1.91 out of a possible 4.

There are a number of characteristics specific to the field site that have a bearing on the analysis. First, in urban centres appointed management committees replaced local councils

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Sierra Leone probably used i), which would yield the smallest population estimate, although efforts to confirm this with them were unsuccessful.

7 I used MCC's recently revised property register as the sampling frame for the survey. I drew a simple random sample of properties from this frame. I then randomly allocated properties as sites for either male or female interviews. At each property, the interviewer completed a full listing of households resident there. S/he then identified a senior representative of every household resident at the property using a standard set of criteria and interviewed him/her.

8 When asked to rank four processes of public goods provision in order of importance, ensuring the safety of meat for consumption was ranked most important by 21.5% of respondents, while keeping the city clean was ranked most important by only 16.1% of respondents.

after their abolition by President Siaka Stevens in 1972. As a result, residents of the city perceive a continuity between the post-reform MCC and the diverse bodies which preceded it, referring to all of these incarnations as 'the town council'.<sup>9</sup> Second, in 2009, MCC was a single-party council with all councillors representing the ruling All People's Congress (APC) party which came into power in 2007. While all five urban councils were single-party councils due to ethno-regional voting patterns, MCC was one of three that was party-aligned with the national government at the time of study. I consider this a better situation for comparing successful/failed cases of public goods provision because in cases of non-alignment, toxic oppositional politics may obscure the role played by other relevant variables. Finally, Makeni is the current president's hometown. Given the patronage politics for which Sierra Leone is well known (Reno, 1995; Richards, 1996; Kandeh, 1999), I anticipated additional resources flowing into the city for public goods provision, and personal interventions by the president or those close to him. However, I saw little evidence of the president's personal influence in the context of the two cases I studied.

## 4 Two coproductive relationships

### 4.1 MCC and the traders: cleaning the market<sup>10</sup>

Cleaning the city is not a devolved function recently assigned to MCC;<sup>11</sup> it was formally declared a council responsibility by the 1959 Townships Act, which provided the legal basis for expanding the presence of urban councils in Sierra Leone. Makeni's council workers and residents describe significant fluctuations in cleaning efforts over the years, dependent on political will, access to resources, and public cooperation. Here I focus on MCC's efforts to clean one strategic site in the city, the main market, through cooperation with the traders, who are represented by the Makeni branch of the Sierra Leone Traders' Union, known locally as the Traders' Union (the TU).

At MCC, responsibility for cleaning the city lies with a small health department led by two health workers who have been with MCC for over a decade, an environmental health officer (EHO) on assignment from the Ministry of Health and Sanitation, and a senior health aide.<sup>12</sup> Although the EHO is the senior staff member, he plays only a limited role in waste management activities. The health aide is the direct supervisor in this area; it is his job to hand out assignments to waste collection workers each morning and to monitor their activities. MCC owns a modest fleet of vehicles, but a number of them are usually out of service at any time. In May 2009, MCC was operating with six motorized tricycles and one large rear-loading rubbish truck, which had recently returned from being repaired, while a further five motorized tricycles and a small tractor were out of service.<sup>13</sup> By August 2009, only three tricycles were working, but maintenance was under way. The vehicles are managed by

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9 This continuity is not only conceptual; the reformed council inherited the buildings and staff of the former management committee in 2004, and by 2009 was struggling to eliminate unnecessary workers from its bloated payroll because it could not afford to pay them benefits on dismissal.

10 The following description is based primarily on observational and interview data collected during a month-long intensive period of fieldwork focused exclusively on waste collection in May 2009, as well as follow-up observational and interview data collected between June and September 2009. I use the present tense to describe the status quo at that time.

11 Before Makeni was declared a city in 2006, Makeni City Council was called Makeni Town Council. For simplicity's sake, I use the abbreviated name MCC to refer to all incarnations of the council.

12 The EHO is paid through the Ministry of Health. The job title 'senior health aide' is taken from the MCC budget for 2009-2011. Health staff tend to use job titles flexibly, usually referring to themselves as public health officers or health inspectors.

13 This represents a big improvement on the situation in 2004 when the 'new' council took office. At this time, only the small tractor was available.



one truck driver, a team of five tricycle riders and five tricycle assistants who ride with them, known as their mates. Their efforts are supplemented by a team of eight labourers, four of whom are assigned to the market and other central areas of town.

The Local Government Act established a chief administrator (CA) at each local council to act as its administrative head and to implement decisions made by MCC's political representatives: the mayor and the fifteen councillors. The CA works with the finance team to make funds available for fuel, vehicle maintenance and salaries. Waste collection workers engage in a daily struggle to secure fuel and on occasion maintenance and salary payments are delayed for several weeks, even months. However, a minimum flow of resources is always maintained by MCC so that waste collection can continue. The mayor appears to be more active than the CA in supervising the activities of the health department, despite the fact that his role is intended to focus more on agenda-setting than implementation. On one occasion, he personally disciplined workers in response to complaints that they had been asking for payments for household waste collection, which carried weight because he had already fired one tricycle rider and his mate for transporting private goods in their tricycle. According to one of the waste collectors, the mayor also tries to counteract the negative effects of weak cash-flow by providing fuel money from his own pocket when needed, instructing the workers, 'Make the city shine like a mirror.'

The councillors sit on committees overseeing each service delivery area. The committees have a mandate to monitor performance and finances and report back to the council with recommendations. In general the committees are weak: they meet infrequently; lack access to appropriate information; fail to keep records of their meetings; and rarely make substantive recommendations. The chairlady for the health and sanitation committee was suffering from a long-term illness during the period of study and therefore that committee was particularly inactive. This appeared to cause little to no disruption to waste collection activities by MCC, which suggests that the committee's inputs are not critical to the waste collection effort. There have also been several attempts to establish citizen-led waste collection committees, but these have proved unsustainable. In 2006, the health and sanitation committee established a waste collection committee made up of six representatives of each of the city's three wards to carry out monitoring, but this was no longer active. In May 2009, MCC and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) held a meeting to establish a solid waste management committee made up of representatives of interest-based associations, local radio stations and the ward committees created by the Local Government Act. To the best of my knowledge, this committee had not met again by September 2009.

The market, which sells basic food items and household goods, lies concealed behind Makeni's main square. Heading north, a long, narrow street which peels off to the right leads into the most densely populated area of the market. Two dark, congested buildings where traders sell their goods at fixed tables lie on either side of the narrow street, while others sell directly on the street itself, from baskets, wooden stools, or their laps, hoping to capture shoppers before they enter the market buildings. From there, the market sprawl continues to the north and east, thinning in density.

The frequency with which waste is collected in the market fluctuates, depending on the availability of vehicles and fuel. In May 2009, MCC sent vehicles to the market every morning to collect waste, but by August 2009, this had dropped to three mornings per week. The large rubbish truck struggles to make its way down the narrow street which runs through the market, forcing the street traders (who are acting against MCC instructions by trading there) to snatch up their goods and edge backwards to the sides of the street. A small number of tricycles support the truck's efforts by collecting waste from the outskirts of the market, before

heading off to cover other areas of the city. This waste is then transported to a number of sites outside the city limits<sup>14</sup> and burned.

MCC's waste collection activities are heavily reliant on traders' efforts to gather waste for collection. On my first day observing waste collection in the market, I watched traders on the outskirts of the market setting up for the day. A middle-aged woman dressed in a white tank-top and a blue wrapper and a man in a football t-shirt swept the breadth of the street leading up to the market with palm-leaf brooms, eventually depositing neat piles of waste next to a tricycle parked on the road before returning to their stalls. This is a typical scene; for most traders in this part of the market, preparing waste for collection in the areas where they worked is part of their daily routine.

Inside the market buildings, gathering waste is more labour-intensive. The buildings are dark, the aisles between the tables are narrow, and the spaces under the tables fill up with bags and baskets of goods for sale. Waste, much of it organic, accumulates quickly during the day as sales are made. According to MCC waste collection workers, two of the riders' mates come to the market at five o'clock in the morning a few times a week to sweep out the market space. It was difficult to confirm the frequency at which this was happening, but it was not sufficient to keep the market buildings free of waste. The traders sweep the market buildings themselves as well as making voluntary contributions to young men to act as additional market sweepers.

MCC periodically organizes general cleaning days when all residents of the city are expected to join with MCC, the army and the police to tackle standing waste. Many people say this practice was first introduced during the military regime of the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) (1992-1996), while others argue that it dates back beyond that. While MCC claims that these cleanings occur every month, in practice they take place closer to once every two to three months, and often serve as preparation for an important event in the city, such as a presidential visit or party political event. On general cleaning days, traders' contribution to cleaning the market is particularly apparent. When I visited the market early in the morning on a cleaning day, I found that it was closed for trade, with the usual intense buzz of buying and selling replaced with vigorous cleaning. Near the entrance, a young man was standing inside one of the deep gutters that lined the streets for drainage purposes, digging out a pile of slime-covered, rotting rubbish and mud. Similarly green piles of waste had been deposited along the edge of the gutter behind him. The rubbish truck was parked in the middle of the street and a steady flow of women and children hurried towards it, emptying baskets, buckets and other containers. Three to four hours passed before the cleaning effort wound down and traders could return to business.

Aside from the significant labour inputs traders make to support the waste collection effort, they pay dues and license fees to the council. In May 2009, those trading at tables paid daily dues of 200 Le (£0.04)<sup>15</sup> per table, while owners of permanent stalls paid annual license fees which usually fell between 50,000 and 100,000 Le (£9.50 and £19.00). This revenue is not tied to waste collection; it goes into a discretionary account. However, MCC staff say that

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14 I refer to sites that fall beyond the colonial-era administrative boundary of the city. Most of them are in peri-urban areas.

15 All currency conversions are made using an average exchange rate for 2009 of 1 Le=£0.00019. I observe the following rules: amounts  $\geq 10,000,000$  Le are rounded to the nearest million Le and currency conversions to the nearest hundred pounds; amounts  $\geq 1,000,000$  Le but  $< 10,000,000$  Le are rounded to the nearest hundred thousand Le and currency conversions to the nearest ten pounds; amounts  $\geq 100,000$  but  $< 1,000,000$  Le are rounded to the nearest ten thousand Le and currency conversions to the nearest pound; and amounts  $< 100,000$  Le are not rounded and currency conversions are given to the nearest penny.

these funds are sometimes used to cover fuel and workers' salaries and therefore paying dues can be considered a further trader input into the cleaning effort. In August 2009, the CA told me that MCC was currently negotiating with the TU to increase market dues to 400 Le (£0.08) per table. In November 2009, traders began to pay an increased rate of 300 Le (£0.06) per table following the completion of negotiations.<sup>16</sup>

It seems inevitable that some traders are free-riding<sup>17</sup> by failing to contribute labour or money towards the cleaning of the market, but this was not a complaint made by respondents, either MCC representatives or traders, suggesting that levels of free-riding are generally low. However, MCC workers do complain about destructive behaviours demonstrated by a small number of traders, including bringing household waste into the market and dumping it there for collection and obstructing the council's rubbish truck in its efforts to travel down the narrow street through the market. Nobody could give a recent example of the former offence, but an incident occurred in August 2009 when a group of traders fought with the truck driver after he crushed one woman's goods on the market street, even throwing stones at the vehicle, according to some reports. This was dealt with swiftly through the imposition of substantial fines on the violating traders.<sup>18</sup> Dues are collected daily by a team of privately-contracted dues collectors. Disputes between the dues collectors and traders in the market are relatively common, but resolved quickly, often through the intervention of a market chief.<sup>19</sup> MCC's 2009-2011 budget estimates compliance with market dues payments at 95%.<sup>20</sup> Despite instances of conflict, for the most part traders seem to be contributing their labour and paying their dues.

#### 4.2 MCC and the butchers: slaughtering cattle<sup>21</sup>

The new slaughterhouse in Makeni was constructed in 2004, replacing an older, open-sided structure at the same site. It was funded by a Local Government Development Grant<sup>22</sup> in accordance with the Rapid Results Approach, which required that councils use the grant money for projects that could be completed within 100 days, in order to build immediate trust in their capacity to deliver public goods (Kanu, 2009). The new building was spacious, consisting of a slaughtering hall; a holding area for cattle; an inspection area with two tiled counters; a cool room; an office; two toilets and a bathroom. By 2009, the slaughterhouse had fallen into a state of disrepair, with cracks and crevices in the concrete floor of the slaughtering hall in which blood congealed; loose or missing hooks for securing cattle; damage to the metal roof from the vultures that gathered there each morning; and a broken door. On its opening, the slaughterhouse was equipped with a generator and two freezers, but the generator broke within a year and was never repaired, and the freezers were eventually relocated to MCC's staff canteen. Running water was originally supplied by Sierra Leone's water parastatal, but this ceased after pipe damage occurred during roadwork.

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16 I am grateful to my research assistant Edward Kanu for providing this information after my departure from Makeni.

17 Free-riding describes the action of benefiting from the contributions of others without making a similar contribution.

18 My attempts to pinpoint exactly who had imposed the fine were unsuccessful.

19 I describe the role of market chiefs in section 6.

20 I include budget estimates in my analysis, but I suggest that they be treated with some caution. I do not have sufficient information about the budgeting process used by MCC to be confident that the estimates included in the budget are realistic.

21 The following description is based primarily on observational and interview data collected during a month-long intensive period of fieldwork focused exclusively on cattle slaughtering in June 2009, as well as follow-up observational and interview data collected between July and September 2009. I use the present tense to describe the status quo at that time.

22 These grants are intended to support development projects designed by local councils in consultation with their constituents.

Construction of a well began with the support of an international NGO, but was never completed. By June 2009, the only water source available to the slaughterhouse was a small stream that ran behind the building.

Like waste collection, management of cattle slaughtering was declared a council responsibility by the 1959 Townships Act, and is the responsibility of the health department. The EHO, the senior staff member, takes care of day-to-day supervision. He comes to the slaughterhouse almost every morning at six o'clock to inspect the meat after slaughter. He is joined by a supernumerary policeman attached to MCC, who collects the slaughtering fee from the butchers, and sometimes by the chiefdom health officer (CHO) for a neighbouring chiefdom, who also fills in as the principal inspector from time to time when the EHO is absent. Two elderly labourers clean the facility every day, one of whom lives in a room at the slaughterhouse, doubling up as a night caretaker.

The CA and the finance team control the flow of resources to the slaughterhouse, which has slowed to a trickle. One of the labourers at the facility showed me a series of handwritten copies of letters that he had submitted to MCC asking them to carry out repairs and provide cleaning supplies, which were ignored. The only resource consistently provided by MCC is kerosene for homemade lamps which are used to light the slaughtering and inspection, a job they do poorly. The EHO claimed that two gallons of kerosene are provided each month, but one of the labourers stated that he usually receives only one gallon, which is inadequate. Only very minimal cleaning supplies are available; the two labourers clean blood and guts off the slaughtering floor with water, cleaning rags, small brooms and their bare hands. The CA appears to provide little oversight of staff performance. Although the health and sanitation committee is generally inactive, at a May 2009 council meeting one of its members who had taken the initiative to visit the facility said he suspected that there was a gap between the number of cows slaughtered and the slaughtering fees submitted to MCC and described the maintenance problems at the slaughterhouse, but no further action was taken. Notably, the mayor himself never personally intervened.

There are eleven registered butchers in Makeni, who operate thirteen meat stalls at different locations in the city.<sup>23</sup> They, or more commonly their assistants, bring their cattle to the slaughterhouse every morning, often travelling quite long distances on foot in the darkness, at risk from thieves.<sup>24</sup> During the period of observation, a mean of six cows were brought for slaughter each day. At the slaughterhouse, a small group of men and boys slaughters each animal by the weak light of MCC's homemade kerosene lamps and the electric torches they bring along with them, and one of them carries the meat upstairs to the inspection room. The inspector (either the EHO or the CHO) looks over the meat, palpating it and making incisions to identify cysts, abscesses and parasitic infections, amongst other problems, also working in very dim light. He sometimes cuts out infected pieces or holds back an entire organ before returning the remainder to the butcher or assistant, who usually submits to the inspector's decision without complaint. For each cow slaughtered, the butcher or assistant pays 4,000 Le (£0.76) to the supernumerary policeman. Each group then packs their meat up into a wheelbarrow and transports it to the relevant stall, beginning sales immediately.

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23 The number of registered butchers cited here is based on an interview with the chairman of the Butchers' Association and the number of stalls on my own observation. In its 2009-2011 budget, MCC works on the assumption of only ten license-paying butchers.

24 Following the war in Sierra Leone, there is no central cattle enclosure in Makeni where butchers can graze cattle. As a result, cattle are transported from different peripheral locations by their owners/owners' assistants.

At a council meeting shortly after the completion of the slaughterhouse in December 2004, councillors agreed on 10,000 Le (£1.90) as a reasonable fee for each cow slaughtered and a 10,000 Le (£1.90) monthly fee for each meat stall.<sup>25</sup> Following negotiations with the butchers in early 2005, this was reduced to 4,000 Le (£0.76) per cow and an annual license fee of 50,000 Le (£9.50) for their meat stalls. According to the EHO, the CA had subsequently tried to negotiate an increase with the chairman of the Butchers' Association (the BA), but he was angrily rebuffed because the butchers felt that they were paying for facilities such as electricity and water which were no longer being provided.

There are some reported instances of butchers slaughtering outside of the slaughterhouse. One butcher is rumoured to do so routinely, using an informal slaughtering site in the centre of town mainly used for the slaughter of goats, while others are said to do so from time to time. Approximately one-third of butchers and assistants interviewed said they had slaughtered a cow outside the slaughterhouse at least once since its construction. Non-attendance at the slaughterhouse can be considered a form of free-riding because those butchers who do not attend the slaughterhouse can benefit from information about outbreaks of cattle disease without contributing towards the costs of surveillance.<sup>26</sup> Those butchers attending the slaughterhouse, a stable proportion of the group, seem to pay the required fees each day. However, MCC estimates butchers' compliance with payment of the slaughtering fee at only 60% in their 2009-2011 budget. This may be intended to capture non-attendance at the facility or non-payment by those that attend. It could also reflect the retention of a portion of the slaughtering fee by MCC staff at the slaughterhouse, as reported by several respondents.

### 4.3 Drawing comparisons

These accounts of waste management in the market and supervised slaughtering in the slaughterhouse are consistent with popular perceptions that the former is relatively successful, and the latter less so. There are three important, inter-linked differences between these two cases of coproduced public goods which explain the relatively good performance of one, and the poor performance of the other: a) the degree to which resources to support MCC inputs are constrained; b) the level of priority accorded to the good by MCC; and c) the willingness of interest-based associations who coproduce the goods to cooperate with MCC.

a) Resources: In both cases, the consistency and quality of MCC's inputs are affected by constrained resource flows. Waste collection suffers from an uneven flow of resources, which means that the level of service fluctuates. The slaughterhouse is being steadily starved of resources, which means that the level of service continually declines. These different resource allocations are the result of an explicit decision by MCC to prioritize waste collection and an implicit decision to neglect the slaughterhouse.

b) Prioritization: Both the mayor and the CA informed me that MCC had decided to concentrate on waste collection as their highest priority. Given MCC's modest resource base, the council is not in a position to tackle larger-scale problems like electricity and water supply, except through partnership with central government. In their eyes, the choice comes down to

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<sup>25</sup> Minutes, council meeting, December 20, 2004.

<sup>26</sup> Secondly, they may benefit from any positive effect that the presence of the slaughterhouse has on customer demand for beef. This effect is likely to be slim because it requires that: a) customers assume that all butchers use the slaughterhouse; b) customers believe that beef coming out of the slaughterhouse is safer than beef resulting from unsupervised slaughtering; c) customers are concerned enough about the health implications to change their buying habits; and d) customers have substitutable options available to them. The survey data discussed in section 3 do not support a) or b).

waste collection and construction of culverts, which are both achievable on a relatively small budget. While the latter had been the previous mayor's top priority, the current mayor told me that MCC had ceased activity in this area because of Sierra Leone Roads Authority (SLRA) plans to work on a section of Makeni's road network. While the decision to prioritize waste collection is not a formal one, documented in MCC's annual development plan, it is explicit. The mayor's personal involvement in monitoring this activity and the presence of ongoing resources to fund it indicate that it is backed by real commitment.

The best evidence of the implicit decision to neglect the slaughterhouse is provided by MCC's persistent failure to act on warnings about the problems occurring there. As early as May 2006, the former chairman<sup>27</sup> complained at a council meeting about 'the inefficient and ineffective supervision of the slaughterhouse which is hazardous in that community',<sup>28</sup> yet no further action was taken. A series of letters by an MCC worker to the CA about the need for repairs to the facility were ignored. Information reported at council meetings was not acted upon. Finally, the mayor, who once told me that when he delegates 'nothing much happens', had not intervened personally to improve matters as he had with waste collection.

As a first-level explanation, I propose that coproduction of a clean market is more successful than coproduction of a safe supply of meat because MCC decided to prioritize the former, and backed their decision with resources. This leads to a further question: why did MCC decide to prioritize waste collection in the market and neglect supervision of slaughtering? I will answer this question in section five by considering the incentives and deterrents which shape MCC's choices.

c) Cooperation of interest-based associations: It is evident that the presence of inputs by members of coproducing interest-based associations is essential to the provision of a clean market and a safe supply of meat. Free-riding presents a threat to achieving an adequate level of coproducer inputs in both cases. However, free-riding by butchers appears to present a greater threat to meat safety than free-riding by traders does to market cleanliness. First, the small size of the coproducer group means that the impact of every free-rider is felt and the proportion of free-riders is probably higher. Second, free-riding through non-attendance at the slaughterhouse directly introduces uninspected meat into the supply, while free-riding through avoiding cleaning or paying dues merely shifts a larger burden of work or higher cost onto those that participate. The relationship between MCC and the BA has reached an impasse because of the BA's refusal to pay higher fees, while MCC and the TU continue to negotiate over dues. The stand-off between MCC and the BA has limited one resource stream supporting the slaughterhouse and seems likely to have increased mutual passivity in the face of slaughterhouse decline. It seems reasonable to expect that levels of free-riding will increase as the slaughterhouse deteriorates further.

As a first-level explanation, I propose that coproduction of a clean market is more successful than coproduction of a safe supply of meat because levels of free-riding are acceptably low, and negotiation about appropriate payments to MCC ongoing. This leads to a further question: why are the TU and its members more willing to cooperate with MCC than the BA and its members? I will answer this question in section six by considering the incentives and deterrents which influence the choices made by interest-based associations and their members.

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27 The position of 'chairman' was given the new title of 'mayor' after Makeni became a city at the end of 2006.

28 Minutes, council meeting, May 5, 2006.

## 5 Incentives/deterrents for MCC

### 5.1 External funding

Resource scarcity is one of the defining characteristics of the broader political environment in which MCC operates. The council survives predominantly on a range of modest grants from central government, which are backed by donor funding and 'tied' to specific categories of expenditure. According to MCC's 2008 financial statement,<sup>29</sup> these grants amounted to approximately 647 million Le (£122,900) in 2008, making up 65% of MCC's total recorded income of approximately 996 million Le (£189,200), while own source revenue accounted for only 34% (Table 1). In this context of overall deprivation, one of the most powerful incentives influencing MCC decision-making is access to external funding.<sup>30</sup> Senior MCC staff are understandably reticent to identify money as a motivation for their actions, but there is substantial circumstantial evidence to suggest that MCC prioritizes waste collection and neglects the slaughterhouse because of the relative financial gain to be had from each.

Table 1: Makeni City Council's recorded income in 2008<sup>31</sup>

Category	Amount (millions of Le)	Amount (£)
Inter-governmental grants		
<i>General fund (salary and administration)</i>	175	33,200
<i>Health</i>	132	25,100
<i>Education</i>	64	12,200
<i>Agriculture</i>	41	7,800
<i>Library</i>	57	10,800
<i>Solid waste management</i>	45	8,500
<i>Other</i>	19	3,700
<i>Local Government Development Grant</i>	91	17,300
<i>Special health initiatives</i>	23	4,400
Sub-total	647	122,900
Own source revenue	335	63,600
Other	14	2,700
Total	996	189,200

MCC receives regular injections of resources to support waste collection in the form of a quarterly 'tied' grant for solid waste management and ongoing donations of vehicles and equipment. The waste management grant was recorded as approximately 45 million Le (£8,500) for 2008 and was estimated at 105 million Le (£20,000) for 2009.<sup>32</sup> According to MCC staff, vehicles have been donated by the Bishop of Makeni (a tractor, 2004), the Libyan government (a rubbish truck, 2005), central government (six tricycles, 2006) and UNDP in partnership with One World Link (five tricycles, 2009). In August 2009, MCC was expecting a skip truck, 30 skips and a bulldozer, also paid for by UNDP and One World Link.<sup>33</sup>

29 I obtained a unofficial electronic copy of this document from MCC.

30 I use this term to refer to funds from central government or from donor agencies.

31 This table is based on an unofficial copy of MCC's 2008 financial statement.

32 I obtained this figure from MCC's 2009-11 budget.

33 Interview with UNDP representative in Makeni, May 28, 2009.

More temptingly, waste collection has the potential to attract large-scale donor investment in the form of cash grants, rather than equipment procured by the donor agency themselves. Since 2004, MCC had been waiting for a sizeable grant from the World Bank to develop a permanent landfill site. 'I want to believe the money came and went to wrong hands,' the former mayor told me, suggesting that the Ministry of Health and Sanitation had diverted the funds to the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) for electioneering. However, in 2009, the mayor was alerted that over £250,000 in World Bank funds was available for landfill sites in four cities and would be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. If MCC secured a quarter of this collective fund, the amount received would be equivalent to approximately 30% of its annual reported income in 2008. Furthermore, MCC might obtain latitude to manage the money itself, creating greater opportunity for diversion of a portion of the funds.

Since its completion, the slaughterhouse has offered very weak opportunities for financial reward. It is very likely that some portion of the original slaughterhouse budget of approximately 97 million Le (£18,400)<sup>34</sup> was returned to MCC staff and political representatives in the form of a kickback from the construction contractor, as this practice is considered routine.<sup>35</sup> The accountant at another local council in the region told me that kickbacks for construction projects are usually negotiated by the finance officers because they are 'a technical matter'. He estimated that an average kickback would be a cash payment equivalent to approximately 10% of the total contract, which would then be divided between senior staff, with the largest share going to the chairman or mayor of the council. The total reported income from the slaughterhouse in 2008 was approximately 4.3 million Le (£820),<sup>36</sup> which was not even sufficient to cover the costs of frontline workers and the supply of kerosene, which I estimate at approximately 5.5 million Le (£1,050).<sup>37</sup> From the time the slaughterhouse was completed, there has been next to no external interest in the facility, and neither money nor equipment has been forthcoming. MCC has not made any attempt to fundraise for the slaughterhouse, perhaps recognizing its relative lack of saleability to donors. When MCC receives external funding to support waste management, it comes under pressure to demonstrate a minimum level of results in order to keep the money flowing. This leads MCC to become more dependent on the traders, as the coproductive relationship between MCC and the traders provides a low-cost means to demonstrate results in one of the city's most visible locations—the market. At the same time, MCC has adequate resources to make sustained contributions to the cleaning effort. Without regular injections of external resources, MCC lacks the capacity and the motivation to invest in the upkeep of the slaughterhouse and allows the facility to deteriorate.

## 5.2 Political capital

MCC's decision to prioritize waste collection in the market can also be explained by its desire to acquire political capital with the traders, who make up one of the most powerful economic

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34 This figure was obtained from a dataset of Local Government Development Grants for 2004-7 compiled by the World Bank's Institutional Reform and Capacity Building Project.

35 It is possible that the anticipation of kickback money from a construction contractor influenced MCC's decision to use the Local Government Development Grant to build a slaughterhouse, as there was no popular pressure, either from the butchers or any other group, to undertake this initiative.

36 It should be noted that this figure seems low. During the period of observation, we saw a mean of six cows being slaughtered per day. Based on 355 working days per year, the slaughterhouse should generate 8.5 million Le (£1,620).

37 My estimate is based on salary data from MCC's 2009-11 budget, and includes 100% of the annual salary and benefits for two cleaners (3.9 million Le/£740), 25% of the annual salary and benefits for one supernumerary policeman (484,000 Le/£92), 25% of the annual salary and benefits for one senior health aide (796,000 Le/£151) and 24 gallons of kerosene at an estimated price of 16,500 Le per gallon (396,000 Le/£75).



blocs in the city. According to MCC records, market dues from those trading at tables totalled approximately 139 million Le (£26,400) in 2008, 14% of MCC's total recorded income and 42% of MCC's own source revenue. Not only do market dues provide a substantial proportion of MCC's annual income, they are also received on a daily basis and are therefore critical to tiding MCC over when central government grants are delayed. Aside from the valuable income they provide for the city, the traders have a proven capacity to disrupt MCC. This was demonstrated during a period of mounting tension between the TU and MCC which began shortly after the 2004 local elections and culminated in the forced resignation of the first MCC chairman in February 2006. At the heart of this conflict was control of market dues collection. I now briefly describe the main events of this conflict in order to illustrate the character of the relationship between MCC and the TU.

Following the May 2004 local elections, MCC privatized dues collection in the market, awarding the contract to the Dollar Guys, an association of money changers, rather than to the TU.<sup>38</sup> The TU's executive was angered by this decision, believing the TU to be the rightful collector of market dues, and the Dollar Guys merely one of the sub-groups falling under its umbrella. The TU allowed dues collection in the market to go ahead, but when a corruption scandal broke against the MCC chairman in late 2005, its executive was more than ready to organize against him.

The scandal centred on the use of MCC's 2005 Local Government Development Grants. Initial concerns about the quality of the projects<sup>39</sup> undertaken with these funds led to an investigation by a civil society grouping which included NGOs, local media and interest-based associations, revealing a significant discrepancy between reported and actual expenditure. In November 2005, *Awoko* newspaper reported that Makeni's traders were reluctant to pay their dues because of their suspicions about MCC's involvement in fraud (Anonymous, 2005). In January 2006, the APC party gave the MCC chairman 48 hours to resign from his position and revoked his membership of the party, seemingly anxious about the effects of the scandal on the anti-corruption platform it was promoting in the run-up to the 2007 elections (Anonymous, 2006b). The chairman did not resign, but instead turned towards the ruling Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) for support. On February 13, 2006 the city's frustrated residents, including the traders, engaged in a full-day strike. The same day, the SLPP resident minister for the northern region issued an ultimatum calling on the chairman to resign within 24 hours (Anonymous, 2006a). On February 15, 2006, the chairman finally submitted a letter of resignation and stood down (Anonymous, 2006c).

I do not argue that the traders were the main architects of the movement to remove the chairman from power. Catherine Bolten (2008) suggests that an older generation of politicians, including the paramount chief, may have been working behind the scenes to orchestrate more visible civil society action, acting in a well-recognized political tradition of concealment (Shaw, 2000; Ferme, 2001). A university teacher active in local politics made a similar case to me, arguing that the chairman had angered the paramount chief, the provincial secretary and others by ending a system where market dues were informally shared between a circle of the city's political 'big men', rather than retained for the council alone. 'His enemies waited for him to make a mistake and then took it to civil society,' he said. Whether or not the TU was one of the main strategists behind the effort to remove the chairman, the participation

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38 See Joshi and Ayee (2002; 2009) for a related discussion of the use of interest-based associations as tax collectors in Ghana.

39 MCC had undertaken to complete three projects: the construction of culverts (40 million Le/£7,600); the development of a rice farm (65 million Le/£12,400); and the installation of large dustbins at strategic collection points in the city (60 million Le/£11,400). This information was obtained from the same dataset referred to in footnote 34.

of the traders was critical to achieving his final resignation. In particular, the success of the strike hinged largely on their ability to shut down economic activity in the city and withdraw one of MCC's most critical sources of income.

The TU's struggles with MCC did not end with the introduction of a new chairman, but rather entered a new cycle. The TU was finally awarded the contract for dues collection in the market, but quickly fell behind in its payments, and came under suspicion of corruption itself. The chairman of the TU denied these accusations, arguing that the debt reflected diminished revenue resulting from public holidays, cleaning days and seasonal dips in trade. By May 2007, the TU had submitted a letter attempting to revoke their contract for dues collection with MCC,<sup>40</sup> but their request was not accepted, and by December 2007 their debt had reached almost 13 million Le (£2,400).<sup>41</sup> The July 2008 elections saw the introduction of a new mayor, the third post-reform change in the political leadership of MCC. The contract for dues collection in the market once again returned to the Dollar Guys. While initially MCC seemed set to pursue an aggressive strategy against the TU to recover its debt, proposing the possibility of court action,<sup>42</sup> later on the matter was quietly dropped. The CA told me, 'We need an improved personal relationship. For a traditional Temne man, once you take him to court, he is an enemy for life.' This was in many ways a shrewd move, which went some way to mend fences, but left MCC with leverage over the TU.

In the context of the *détente* under way between MCC and the TU, MCC's decision to prioritize cleaning of the market can be viewed as a way to build political capital with the traders and encourage improving relations. The traders constitute a significant source of MCC revenue and a substantial body of political support (or opposition). By performing well in waste collection, MCC can acquire political capital to spend in securing the important economic and political resources controlled by the traders. MCC has arguably already used political capital acquired through collecting waste in the market to negotiate an increase in market dues. MCC has an established channel of support with the TU via its executive, which facilitates the process of spending political capital. The desire to acquire political capital with the traders is a rather fragile incentive for MCC action, dependent on the variable quality of their conflict-prone relationship.

Relations between MCC and the Butchers' Association (BA) have a far more detached character. When I spoke to the chairman of the BA in June 2009, he told me that he had not met with the mayor at any point during his first year in office to discuss the slaughterhouse. The butchers make only a small contribution to MCC revenue: their slaughtering fees brought in less than one percent of total recorded income in 2008, and at maximum their meat stall fees could have brought in 650,000 Le (£124).<sup>43</sup> While one-half of the butchers and assistants interviewed were born in Bombali Seborra chiefdom, two-thirds of them identify as Fula, rather than Temne (the ethnic majority). The local reputation of this minority ethnic group is that they are careful to avoid political controversy. One Fula butcher described this cautious approach as the best way to protect one's property, saying, 'You have a vehicle, children, a wife, a business ... If you have conflict, you might lose one of those things.'

Historian Alusine Jalloh (1999) argues that throughout the post-independence period, Fulas favoured a pragmatic approach to involvement in politics which consisted of prioritizing their business interests and adapting to changing configurations of power, rather than seeking to

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40 Minutes, council meeting, May 23, 2007.

41 Minutes, council meeting, December 13, 2007.

42 Minutes, council meeting, February 11, 2009.

43 This is an estimate based on license payments of 50,000 Le for 13 butchers stalls. There is no disaggregated data for payments from meat stalls in the 2008 financial statement.

shape them. Jalloh finds that despite this business-oriented approach, Fulas suffered as a result of the transition from SLPP to APC rule in 1967-8.<sup>44</sup> During 16 years of SLPP rule (1951-1967), Fula merchants developed a close relationship to the SLPP leadership, making substantial financial contributions to the SLPP between 1961-1967 and supporting the party in the 1967 elections. Their refusal to provide similar support for Siaka Stevens' 1967 APC campaign led to the harassment of Fulas during the elections and their subsequent alienation from the APC government. Fula attempts to negotiate a better relationship with Stevens' APC government were set back after Stevens illegally deported Freetown's Fula chief Alhaji Bah in 1971 to face imprisonment in Guinea at the will of his ally President Touré. In 1975, after extensive Fula lobbying, he was eventually released and restored to his earlier position. Despite his poor treatment at the hands of the APC, in 1978 Alhaji Bah led a sustained Fula mobilization to secure protection for Fula business interests in exchange for financial contributions to the APC. This troubled political history provides further justification for a contemporary strategy of caution.

Further investigation into the political history of Fulas in Makeni is needed for a fuller understanding of the political dynamics of the relationship between the predominantly Fula butchers and MCC. However, it seems reasonable to draw a preliminary conclusion that the Fula butchers' cautious profile prevents MCC from fearing disruptive action organized by the butchers. Given this, the BA's related passivity,<sup>45</sup> and the limited revenue that the butchers bring in for MCC, it is not surprising that MCC sees little incentive to acquire political capital with the butchers through exerting itself at the slaughterhouse.

## 6 Incentives/deterrents for traders and butchers: reciprocity and regulation

One explanation for the difference between traders' and butchers' level of cooperation with MCC could be the variable benefits which accrue to the executive members of the TU and the chairman of the BA respectively. The mayor told me that MCC had offered to send a percentage of the market dues collected to the TU's account if they agreed to an increase in the daily rate, some of which would be likely to end up in executive members' pockets. As far as I am aware, no such offer had been made to the chairman of the BA. Personal profit could be sufficient to motivate the TU executive to renegotiate the rate of market dues on an ongoing basis and make efforts to minimize free-riding, while the lack of personal profit could motivate the chairman of the BA to resist renegotiation of the slaughtering fee and ignore free-riding. However, I argue that neither the TU executive nor the BA chairman has sufficient control over the members of their associations to secure their compliance to unpopular measures. The TU's executive is vulnerable to protest because a group of younger traders are lobbying to take over leadership of the organization, while the BA's chairman is one of a small group of businessmen who appear to relate on relatively equal terms. The TU executive's confidence in negotiating an increase in market dues is therefore likely to reflect an awareness that traders will be sufficiently receptive to this change, whereas the BA chairman's refusal to renegotiate the slaughtering fee is likely to reflect an awareness of the mood among the butchers. It is therefore important to look at the incentives/deterrents which motivate the members of interest-based associations.

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44 The SLPP lost the election in March 1967, but a series of coups and counter-coups took place before the APC finally took office in April 1968.

45 There are parallels here with Joseph Ayee and Richard Crook's study of public toilets in Ghana (2003). In contrast with the policy wisdom that local associations are suitable advocates for improved services, they find that frequently local associations are not well positioned to challenge local politicians and may suffer retaliation when they do so.

## 6.1 Reciprocity

One of the main challenges to cooperation between MCC and members of interest-based associations is the poor legacy of local government in Makeni, which is characterized by repeated cycles of corruption and betrayal. Bolten (2008) argues that the people of Makeni operate according to a 'conflicted narrative of governance', caught between 'hope and cynicism' (84). The very existence of coproductive relationships for public goods provision can be viewed as an expression of hope by members of interest-based associations. They reflect a desire for better conditions in their places of work and a willingness to cooperate with government in order to achieve them. However, cynicism prevents members of interest-based associations from contributing freely to public goods provision without direct evidence of government reciprocity.

Positive reciprocity can be defined as 'the giving of benefits to another in return for benefits received' (Molm et al., 2007: 199). Linda D. Molm and her colleagues argue that acts of positive reciprocity convey two distinct dimensions of value to the recipient. First, the instrumental value, which is the value to the recipient of the benefits received from the reciprocator in return for those given. Second, the symbolic value, which is the value conveyed by the act of reciprocity itself through the information it provides about the partner and the relationship. On a symbolic level, acts of positive reciprocity build trust in the reciprocator and communicate appreciation for benefits received. According to this theory, positive reciprocal behaviour by MCC has the potential to motivate members of interest-based associations to contribute to public goods provision, and to develop trust and positive regard between them. However, reciprocity can also be negative—individuals can punish those who deny them benefits or behave unfairly—communicating disregard and eroding trust.

In general, traders are more willing to contribute to the cleaning of the market than butchers are to the operations of the slaughterhouse because MCC reciprocates their efforts. There is no formal contract which lays out the inputs that MCC and the traders will make to the cleaning effort. The coproductive relationship works through daily reciprocal exchange—the traders gather waste and MCC collects it. If MCC fails in its obligations to collect waste, the traders can reduce or cease their efforts to gather it, acting individually or collectively. Traders do not consistently impose sanctions against MCC for poor performance, but they have done so in some instances. Bolten (2008) describes just such an episode of negative reciprocity in mid-1996, when residents heaped up rubbish at the market and on main roads to protest the lack of waste collection. This model of daily reciprocal exchange on which cleaning of the market is based works well because the traders do not feel vulnerable to being taken advantage of by MCC. They have accurate information about whether MCC is collecting waste and a range of graduated responses at their disposal, whether or not they choose to invoke them every time that MCC performs poorly.

The butchers agreed to pay a slaughtering fee of 4,000 Le (£0.76) per cow and an annual license fee of 50,000 Le (£9.50) per meat stall on the understanding that MCC would provide a fully-staffed slaughterhouse facility with running water, electricity and a refrigerator. While this agreement requires an element of daily exchange, with MCC providing fuel and staff and butchers attending and paying fees on a daily basis, it also requires MCC to make longer-term investments to maintain the buildings and equipment. It was difficult for the butchers to monitor whether MCC was investing sufficiently in maintenance at first, but MCC's persistent failure to fix the damaged water pipes or the broken generator sent a clear message that they would not fulfil their agreed commitments. The chairman of the BA describes this breakdown of reciprocity, 'they built the slaughterhouse, brought water, made all the facilities, gave them

to us, they even bought us a freezer, but that was all for one month, two months...After that, nothing. They gave us electric light there, in the mornings when we go to slaughter, but right now nothing ...That is finished. But any cow that we kill over there, we pay 4,000 Le (£0.76) per cow, we are paying for the council, the city.' Given the BA's negotiated agreement with MCC, it would be difficult for the butchers to refuse to pay the slaughtering fee without entering into a direct confrontation. However, the BA chairman's refusal to renegotiate the slaughtering fee upwards and the refusal of some butchers to consistently slaughter at the slaughterhouse can be interpreted as acts of negative reciprocity.

## 6.2 Regulation

Regulation through a system of rules and sanctions is a widely recognized strategy for reducing free-riding behaviour by making it more costly. Ostrom (2005) defines rules as 'shared understandings by participants about enforced prescriptions concerning what actions (or outcomes) are required, prohibited or permitted' (18). This definition includes working rules derived from any source, whether formal or informal. MCC faces two significant challenges in regulating the traders and the butchers to coerce them into behaving cooperatively. First, taken as a whole, MCC rules applying to cleaning the market and producing safe meat are rather fuzzy, derived from a mixture of older legislation, established practice and recent decisions within council meetings. The Local Government Act empowers MCC to create its own bye-laws, but this process has lagged. Suggested bye-laws were not submitted to the CA until February 2009,<sup>46</sup> following which they must be sent to Freetown for review by the attorney general's office. Second, MCC has only limited staff available to carry out monitoring and enforcement activities. MCC rules regarding cleaning of the market and slaughtering of meat are therefore weakly enforced, usually through intermittent imposition of sanctions. MCC is more likely to catch extreme violations, such as an attack on the driver and his rubbish truck, than routine ones, such as low daily effort in cleaning the market.

In the market, however, there are regulatory systems operating independently of MCC which help to encourage cooperative behaviour regarding cleaning. First, there are three market chiefs whose principal role is to resolve disputes between traders in the market. The position of market chief is integrated within the chiefly hierarchy; the market chiefs are approved by the paramount chief and act under his authority. However, market chiefs are also executive members of the TU. Aside from resolving disputes, market chiefs, two of whom trade in the market themselves,<sup>47</sup> act as monitors and trouble-shooters. One of the market chiefs described his purpose: 'to monitor the activities of the people, to listen and observe their movement'. Their very presence therefore helps maintain orderly behaviour. Market chiefs do not perceive themselves to have any specific responsibility for cleaning of the market, which is viewed as falling within MCC's purview. Nevertheless, on general cleaning day, the market chiefs can be seen walking up and down the narrow street through the market, overseeing traders' efforts, listening to their complaints and offering encouragement. Market chiefs are also likely to be among the first to know about problems like free-riding, conflict between traders and waste collectors, and the accumulation of standing waste, and are drawn into efforts to resolve such issues. Chiefs in the market therefore constitute an embedded layer of regulatory authority which contributes to trader cooperation in the cleaning effort.

Traders also regulate each other through normative pressure. Traders usually sell in the same spaces every day, which makes their behaviour highly visible to each other. In many cases, traders are operating alongside peers selling the same kind of goods. They are not

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<sup>46</sup> Notes from council meeting, February 11, 2009.

<sup>47</sup> The third is now elderly and acts more as an adviser.

only each other's neighbours, but each other's creditors, lending money or goods when needed. They also belong to sub-groups of the TU, for example, the Fish Sellers' Association, or the Cigarette Sellers' Association, each with its own chairperson. If traders do not follow rules such as sweeping their areas each day, or contributing for additional sweepers, they are likely to be sanctioned by social disapproval which could damage their reputation and interrupt their access to intra-group benefits. Conversations with traders suggest that expressions of social disapproval are usually quite mild, with persuasion emerging as the most common first response to a neighbour who doesn't join in the cleaning effort. 'Everybody advises him/her, that's how we do it,' said one trader. For those highly dependent on their peers, even a mild rebuke can have a powerful influence.

The TU executive's main responsibility is to advocate for traders' interests to government, particularly regarding levels of taxation and the quality of market facilities. Like the market chiefs, the TU executive plays a supplementary regulatory role. According to the market chiefs, members of the TU executive do not have the authority to impose fines on traders, but they can prevent a troublesome trader from accessing a table from which to sell his/her goods in the market. The chairman of the TU described his own efforts to encourage traders to clean before MCC mistreated the traders during the conflict over dues collection, 'I tell the traders that if anybody does not go to his or her table, I will seize the table...everybody goes to clean his/her table.' The TU executive therefore provides another layer of regulation, although one which is likely to be supportive of MCC's aims only when the two bodies are aligned.

Butchers, like other traders, are highly dependent on each other for periodic loans. Their business is capital intensive because of the high cost of purchasing a single cow. It is common for butchers to purchase a cow on a repayment basis from another butcher or a cattle trader, or to pair up and take turns slaughtering a cow and sharing out the meat to prevent having to freeze too much overnight. Butchers are therefore well positioned to apply normative pressure on one another to attend the slaughterhouse, but appear not to do so. Perhaps this can be explained by the fact that non-attendance of one butcher at the slaughterhouse doesn't immediately create extra work for another butcher. It does, however, leave the burden of payment on those attending the slaughterhouse, and may in the future lead to steeper rises in slaughtering fees due to a narrower base of fee-payers. Alternately, butchers' dissatisfaction with the slaughterhouse may make them sympathetic to free-riding as an act of negative reciprocity.

The BA chairman does advocate to local government on behalf of the butchers, but he is far less active than the TU executive in this regard. The BA's main function seems to be coordinating mutual support efforts to keep each butcher operating at a profit. According to the BA chairman, meetings of the butchers focus mainly on current threats to profitability and the BA collects contributions to support any butcher who sustains a shock to his business. The chairman of the BA has passed responsibility for most of the daily running of his butcher business onto his sons, and appears to serve more as a senior adviser for a group of businessmen than a regulator. Individual butchers' choices not to attend the slaughterhouse seem to go relatively unchallenged by him.

## 7 Conclusions

What can comparison of these two cases tell us about why some instances of public goods provision led by local councils in Sierra Leone succeed, while others fail? My analysis suggests that when local public goods are delivered through coproduction by local councils and interest-based associations, the dynamics of the coproductive relationship are a critical

determinant of the quality of public goods provision. Successful coproduction appears to rely on establishing and sustaining a pattern of reciprocal exchange between the parties. Given the political context in Sierra Leone, I propose three broader hypotheses about the conditions under which a pattern of reciprocal exchange between local councils and interest-based associations might be sustained, and coproduction succeed.

First, coproduction is more likely to succeed when both parties recognize their mutual need or dependence. In the cases I describe, recognition of mutual dependence is made more complicated by the fact that MCC appears not to value public goods for their own sake, but rather for the economic or political resources that can be secured through their provision. Although MCC cannot ensure the safety of the meat supply without the butchers' cooperation, MCC's relative indifference to achieving this outcome means that these are insufficient grounds for it to recognize its dependence on the butchers. The butchers offer little in the way of revenue or political clout to serve as an alternate basis for MCC dependence. MCC recognizes its dependence on the traders on three counts: working with the traders provides a low-cost means to demonstrate visible results of waste collection to donors and central government; market dues paid by traders constitute a significant source of revenue; and the traders' political support enables MCC to negotiate increases in dues and forestall disruptive action. It is the traders' control of important economic and political resources that facilitates the emergence of a pattern of positive reciprocity with MCC.

Many traders value having a clean market, which makes it relatively straightforward for them to recognize their dependence on MCC as a waste collector. In contrast, the butchers have more ambiguous feelings about the importance of supervised slaughtering as a means to ensuring the safety of the meat supply. When critical resources such as electricity, water and a freezer are taken away, some do not sufficiently value the facility to recognize a dependence on MCC, and choose to free-ride. If MCC were to make a concerted effort to improve the slaughterhouse, it would need to address these motivational challenges as well as increasing the flow of resources to the facility.

Second, given low levels of trust, coproduction is more likely to succeed when the structure according to which coproductive inputs are made allows immediate sanction for failures of reciprocity, or when a third party enforces coproducing parties' commitments. The ease with which MCC and the traders can sanction one another by ceasing to contribute to the cleaning effort gives rise to commitments on both sides which are, in a sense, self-enforcing. In contrast, MCC did not suffer any sanction when it failed to uphold its commitments to the butchers. This is indicative of weak bottom-up and top-down oversight of MCC as a public goods provider. Popular monitoring of MCC remains weak, despite the introduction of new transparency requirements and an influx of donor funding for 'demand side' accountability. Electoral accountability is limited by the domination of a single political party, which means that the party plays a more critical role in determining which councillors will lose their seats than the people. Top-down oversight of MCC is provided by a range of actors within the finance and local government ministries,<sup>48</sup> but to my knowledge none of these actors routinely reward or punish performance in public goods provision.<sup>49</sup> David Booth (2010) identifies the presence of 'effective top-down performance disciplines' as one of three key conditions associated with better public goods provision by African local governments, arguing that such

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48 Bodies with specific oversight responsibilities include the Decentralization Secretariat within the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Local Government and Rural Development and the Local Government Finance Department within the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development.

49 The current phase of World Bank support for local councils (2009-2011) includes performance bonuses for those councils who meet mutually agreed service delivery targets (World Bank, 2009b). This phase of support began after my fieldwork was completed, so I do not have any information about how this measure is being implemented, or its effects.

performance disciplines can be effective ‘*even when ... the socio-political context and professional norms retain important patrimonial or clientelistic features*’ (14). In the case of the slaughterhouse, top-down pressure could have been created by introducing a senior government official as a third party enforcer to witness the agreement and impose sanctions if commitments were not upheld, which might have helped sustain reciprocal behaviour. The involvement of a third party enforcer need not preclude regular renegotiation of parties’ commitments to one another to maintain flexibility.

Third, coproduction is more likely to succeed when local councils can take advantage of existing locally-based regulatory mechanisms to reduce free-riding by members of interest-based associations. It seems likely that other councils will face the same challenges as MCC in addressing free-riding or destructive behaviour by members of interest-based associations: the lack of a clear legal/regulatory framework and insufficient resources for monitoring and enforcement activities. Councils may wish to invest in improving their capacity in this regard, but they can also make use of other regulatory machinery where it is available. In doing so, they could be said to be incorporating ‘institutional elements inherited from the past’ which are ‘problem-solving in the relevant context’ (Booth, 2010: 25). Citing Avner Greif (2006), Booth suggests that institutional elements from the past are important to public goods provision because they serve as low-cost, default templates for action, enabling actors to avoid the high costs and collective action problems involved in creating new institutions.

Both chieftaincy and associational structures offer such potentially helpful, locally-rooted regulatory institutions. The network of local sub-chiefs in Sierra Leone is extensive and their main function is the maintenance of public order. However, in taking advantage of chiefs’ regulatory capacity, councils could run the risk of enabling chiefly abuses of power, which some argue were a significant driver of conflict (Hanlon, 2005; Richards, 2005). Tensions between councils and chiefs in some areas also undermine possibilities for cooperation. The potential of chiefs to serve as supplementary regulators needs to be assessed in the context of the locale and public good in question. Exploitative behaviour by chiefs is likely to be lower in urban areas such as Makeni, where competitive pressure from other government actors and exposure to public scrutiny impose certain limits.

Interest-based associations also have the potential to serve as regulators. This regulation can occur at two levels—peers can regulate one another, and executive members can regulate ordinary members. In Makeni, both forms of regulation appeared to be more active within the TU than the BA, perhaps because of higher levels of trader satisfaction with the local council’s inputs into coproduction and the more authoritarian stance of the TU executive. David Leonard<sup>50</sup> argues that it is difficult to achieve formal self-regulation within veterinary associations in Africa because of the challenge of finding a sub-group of members willing to take on the high costs of organizing regulation mechanisms which involve sanctions against peers. He believes that informal self-regulation among peers may work better. In particular, he notes that peers can incentivize adherence to a set of associational norms by choosing to collaborate with adherents over non-adherents (Leonard, 2000). As discussed below, it is common for members of interest-based associations to develop business partnerships with one another which involve loans of money and goods. In cases where distaste of free-riding is taken into account when making these decisions, levels of free-riding are likely to be lower.

Coproductive arrangements for the provision of public goods are likely to be prevalent in Sierra Leone due to weak local council capacity. They deserve greater recognition by local councils, the central government, and donors as a model of public goods provision with the potential to deliver reasonably good outcomes under constrained circumstances. As Joshi

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50 I thank David Booth for pointing me to David Leonard’s work on this topic.



and Moore (2004) point out, coproductive arrangements are ignored because the conceptual language to describe them has not yet been popularized within development policy discourse. In the context of the decentralization process in Sierra Leone, coproductive arrangements are further obscured by donor assumptions that the main challenges facing local councils are ones of technical capacity and access to funding, and that local associations can best contribute to improved public goods provision by monitoring local councils' efforts, rather than coproducing goods (World Bank, 2009b; 2009a). My analysis suggests that a more empirically-grounded approach to supporting local councils is needed, which recognizes that councils are fundamentally political actors whose motives are likely to be power-enhancing and whose success in public goods provision is highly context-dependent; and pays greater attention to existing institutions that could help local councils achieve the enormous challenge with which they are tasked.

A strategy to support coproductive arrangements between local councils and interest-based associations which demonstrate the potential to generate public goods might incorporate the following elements: 1) use of the capacity building programme for local councils to raise awareness of the significance of coproduction and provide training in relevant political skills such as relationship management and negotiation; 2) financial incentives for local councils linked to achievement of public goods outcomes; and 3) performance-based incentives for staff, where 2) and 3) are backed by strong top-down supervision. The central government and donors should be wary of two risks. First, surges of funding for the provision of particular goods could lead to the development of unsustainable models of public goods provision. Better-resourced councils might abandon functional coproductive relationships to pursue alternate means of public goods provision and then struggle to resurrect them when funding diminishes. Second, direct investment in coproducing interest-based associations would be likely to have perverse effects on these associations, as recently documented by Booth (Booth, 2010: 26-28), drawing on a wider literature (Gugerty and Kremer, 2008; Dill, 2009; Swidler and Watkins, 2009). A policy of non-intervention in the affairs of coproducing interest-based associations therefore seems the wiser approach.

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