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Would new elected districts look like municipalities or provinces?

Would elected districts have any power? Municipalities have the power to set their own plan and budget, can collect taxes, and can issue local regulations known as "posturas". Provinces have none of those powers. They simply administer plans and budgets set by central government in Maputo, with money provided by Maputo.

In Mozambican administrative jargon, municipalities have "decentralised" power, whereas provinces only have "deconcentrated" administrative authority. Decentralization involves a real transfer of power to local voters and officials. Deconcentration only involves transfer to local level of the administration of instructions from above. Provincial governors may be elected, but they are still carrying out instructions from Maputo, while elected municipal mayors have real power.


The constitution and the agreement between government and Renamo do not set the model for elected districts. Will they be decentralised, with budget and tax power, like municipalities? Or will they retain the current system, where they simply administer directives sent from Maputo?

Where municipalities are well run, presidents become popular, and become a challenge to those at the top. Within their parties, they become a potential challenge to their own party leaders. And a popular opposition president boosts the popularity of their party in elections. Both happened with Daviz Simango in Beira, the first with Renamo, and then the second as head of MDM.

In many countries there is debate over municipal decentralisation and a conflict between local and national leaders. In 1986 UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher abolished the elected opposition-run Greater London Council and the capital was run by central government until 2000.

However, although deconcentration does not offer any power, it does allow patronage. Some contracts and jobs are allocated locally, and often go to members of the local governing party. Also, in Mozambique, elections provide a lot of jobs to the winning party, with houses, car and other privileges to members of the elected party - including money and other privileges for members of the elected assembly. In the Mozambican system, elected districts of whichever form will be expensive, because so many additional people are being paid.

Thus the opposition will push for elected district assemblies and districts, because it will create jobs and contracts for party members, at least in some districts.

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