CHAPTER 13

Starting Polycentric Governance from Scratch in Highly Similar Yoruba Social Environments: Unexpected Outcomes

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Introduction

Polycentric governance spontaneously emerges from the relationships among multiple decision centers that are functionally interdependent and overlapping at multiple levels and that operate within an overarching set of sociocultural rules and pressures. The sociocultural rules and pressures that constitute the social environment of polycentric governance may be the result of deliberate design (Hayek 1973, pp. 45–46). Nevertheless, polycentric governance systems that adopt social rules and pressures that support interactions among diverse individuals and groups tend to be more successful in fitting interactions among decision centers to service provision at multiple levels than political systems that do not adopt such mechanisms (Hayek 1967; Ostrom E 2010a, 2010b; Ostrom V. 1994;

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Ostrom, Tiebout, & Warren 1961). Consequently, it has been argued that polycentric governance represents an important panacea to the ills of repressive political systems and serves as an important means to grow liberal polities that can culminate in a world state (Christensen 2021).

While the potential of polycentric governance as the wave of the future is fundamentally not in doubt, little is known about how polycentric governance differs in matching interactions among decision centers with service provision at multiple levels in highly similar non-western environments. This obscurity in the literature is puzzling in Africa because of the famous assertion that "Africa's salvation does not lie in blindly copying foreign systems but in returning to its own roots and heritage and building upon them" (Ayittey 2005, p. 366). The strong call for a blanket return to the whole of African institutional heritages is grossly misleading in that not all sociocultural rules and pressures in Africa are amenable to growing liberal polities that can finally climax in a world state. In fact, the Yoruba of Nigeria, whose communities have been presumed to have similar "cultures that are attuned to non-centralization" or polycentric governance (Elazar 1991, p. 79), differ considerably in achieving congruence between interactions among decision centers and service provision at multiple levels.

This chapter challenges the mainstream view and undertakes an in-depth analysis of how polycentric governance in two highly similar Yoruba communities of Nigeria—Abeokuta and Ile-Ife—differs in fitting interactions among neighborhood associations to service provision at multiple levels. In doing this, this chapter uses Friedrich Hayek's theories of spontaneous order and sociocultural evolution, Adam Smith's spontaneous order theory, and Vincent and Elinor Ostrom's design principles, which are displayed below in Table 13.1, and their polycentric governance perspectives.

Abeokuta and Ile-Ife are Yoruba communities in Nigeria. Nigeria is a former British colony with over 300 different ethnic groups. Hausa-Fulani, Igbo, and Yoruba represent the three major ethnic groups, each of which politically dominates in each of the three main Nigerian regions: Hausa-Fulani in northern Nigeria and the Igbo in southeastern Nigeria, as well as the Yoruba in southwestern Nigeria—a rainforest vegetation zone—in which Abeokuta and Ile-Ife are located (Ayo 2002; Oyerinde 2022). As a rainforest vegetation zone, where British colonization began in 1893, southwestern Nigeria provides favorable conditions for similar subsistent agricultural activities (Oyerinde 2019; Pallinder-Law 1974).

Table 13.1 Design principles for successful collective action. *Sources* Elinor Ostrom (2010a, 2010b, p. 652)

DP1	**Clearly Defined Boundaries**: The boundaries of membership in society are clearly defined. Diverse individuals are more likely to follow rules when membership rights—such as the right to develop participatory decision-making units, monitoring and sanctioning rules, and low-cost conflict resolution mechanisms—are clearly specified and fairly distributed such that some individuals are not treated as lesser members or citizens than others
DP2	**Congruence of Rules with Cultural and Ecological Conditions**: Congruence occurs when diverse individuals and their circumstances dictate rules. That fitness is more likely among diverse groups where members develop mutual trust through repeated interactions, a reputation for reliability and honest dealings, and the absence of marked divisions or suspicions about their relationships
DP3	**Collective-Choice Arrangements or Participatory Decision-Making:** Diverse individuals are allowed to participate in making and modifying rules. Members of diverse groups are more likely to follow rules if they participate in selecting as well as developing and changing the rules of the game in their society
DP4	**Monitoring**: Diverse individuals are more likely to follow rules when societies have a way of checking that members or citizens are following the rules of engagement
DP5	**Sanctions:** Diverse individuals are more likely to follow rules when rule violators receive modest sanctions based on the seriousness and context of the violation
DP6	**Conflict Resolution Mechanisms:** Diverse individuals are more likely to follow rules when they have rapid access to low-cost arenas to resolve their conflicts or disputes. That means anyone can take problems for mediation to those arenas with minimal effort such that nobody can be shut out or no concerns are ignored or repressed
DP7	**Minimal Recognition of Rights to Organize**: Diverse individuals are more likely to follow rules when their rights to devise their own rules are not challenged by higher-level units or authorities
DP8	**Nested Enterprises:** Monitoring, enforcement, conflict resolution, and governing units are spontaneously organized in multiple layers such that decision-making units are participatory and are sized to public policy problems

DP Design Principle

The Yoruba people of Nigeria have exhibited significant differences in how newcomers or immigrants—nonmembers of the founding lineage—are treated. Before the collapse of the Old Oyo Empire, which was the largest Yoruba kingdom up to the late eighteenth century, Yoruba political systems were largely conterminous with kingdoms, each founded by

a Yoruba group. The founding Yoruba group or lineage, which further consisted of families, owned the kingdom's land. Yoruba kingdoms traced their ancestry to Oduduwa, the Yoruba progenitor who founded Ile-Ife from which the founders of Yoruba kingdoms fanned to different parts of Yorubaland.

Such kingdoms included the Old Oyo Empire kingdom with Oyo-Ile as the capital city and the Ife kingdom with Ile-Ife as the capital city. It was a common practice for landowning families—the constituent units of the founding lineage—to grant land for agricultural purposes to nonmembers or immigrants. The tenancy did not confer on the immigrants the right to be members of the landowning lineage because the immigrants enjoyed landowning rights in Yoruba kingdoms where they were members of the founding lineage. At the same time, intermarriages occurred between natives and immigrants. Land inheritance was, however, paternal, which further preserved the landowning rights of the founding lineage. Even though the different Yoruba kingdoms traced their ancestry to Oduduwa—the Yoruba progenitor—landownership, as the non-transferable right of the founding lineage, derived from the sacred command of family ancestors of the founding lineage "whose spirits lay buried in the soil" (Nwabueze 1972, p. 319) and who had "placed an embargo at the pains of death" on sharing landownership with non-natives (Oyewo & Olaoba 1999, p. 126).

The native-immigrant dichotomy inherent in landholding was an acceptable tradition among the Yoruba before the fall of the Oyo Empire (Bascom 1969; Cameron 1933). However, the collapse of the Old Oyo Empire in the late nineteenth century introduced different native-immigrant dynamics. The Old Oyo Empire was doomed by the invading Hausa-Fulani cavalry from today's northern Nigeria. The resultant state of insecurity in Yorubaland forced disparate Yoruba groups to take refuge in southern parts of Yorubaland, such as Abeokuta, Ibadan, and Ile-Ife. Modakeke migrated to Ile-Ife around 1827, making Ife and Modakeke the two main Yoruba groups in the Yoruba community. In encouraging Modakeke to settle in Ile-Ife, "Ife leaders went as far as to exploit the ancient traditions which represent Ile-Ife as the ancestral home of all Yoruba peoples, in order to persuade many of the refugees [Modakeke] to come back home now that things were bad abroad" (Akintoye 1970, p. 35). Shortly after the arrival of Modakeke, Ife, however, began to treat Modakeke as strangers to the extent that Modakeke were denied landowning rights. The resultant tensions peaked

when members of the two Yoruba groups distanced themselves from the geographical area controlled by the hostile group. In showing resentment against Modakeke, Ife whipped up anti- Modakeke sentiments and made accommodation of Modakeke difficult (Johnson 1921; Akinjogbin 1992).

During the same period, Egba—which consisted of three subgroups including Ake, Oke-Ona, and Gbagura—fled further southward as a Yoruba group and established Abeokuta in 1833, which was hitherto uninhabited. The environment of divisive relationships between Ife and Modakeke was a contrast to what prevailed in Abeokuta, which, according to Akintoye (1970, p. 36), "was an open society which welcomed all Yoruba men irrespective of their place of origin and in which birth counted for very little, and personal abilities counted for everything." The flexible governing institutions of Egba attracted Owu, who were fleeing their collapsed state following the pandemonium triggered by the doom of the Old Oyo Empire (Johnson 1921).

Overall, Abeokuta and Ile-Ife are homes to diverse Yoruba groups and are under similar subnational governments constitutionally subordinated by the Nigerian national government. The constituent subnational governments in Nigeria consist of 30 states and 774 local governments. Egba—or the founding lineage—and Owu—or immigrants—are the two different Yoruba groups in Abeokuta; Ife—or the founding lineage—and Modakeke—or the immigrants—are the two diverse Yoruba groups in Ile-Ife (Johnson 1921). Even though Yoruba was the common language, the Yoruba groups in each community differ distinctively in linguistic dialect (Eades 1980, 11).

Unlike Ile-Ife, neighborhood associations in Abeokuta have grown multilevel interactions with each other across group lines and beyond Abeokuta and provided services that benefit diverse residents. Abeokuta's traditional institutional heritage, which enables natives and immigrants to be citizens, provides a conducive social environment for these polycentric governance outcomes. In Abeokuta, natives and immigrants relate with each other as citizens (DP1) without marked divisions or suspicions about their relationships (DP2), conduct their affairs within their respective jurisdictions (DP3) with the right to make and modify (DP7) monitoring (DP4) and sanctioning (DP5) rules, and are free to take disputes for conflict resolution to arenas across group lines (DP6). These social rules are nested within multiple layers of participatory governing jurisdictions in Abeokuta, such as compounds, townships, sections, and the central governing unit. At the same time, the differences in linguistic dialect

and ancestry between the Yoruba groups in Abeokuta have been greatly obscured by Abeokuta's institutional heritage that motivates residents to associate with each other across group lines (Ajisafe 1998; Biobaku 1952; Eades 1980; Falola & Oguntomisin 2001).

In Ile-Ife, however, multilevel interactions between neighborhood associations are limited to the geographical area controlled by each Yoruba group, hindering these associations from working together across group lines and from providing services that can benefit diverse individuals throughout Ile-Ife. The lack of cooperation across group lines is rooted in Ile-Ife's institutional heritage of citizen-stranger dichotomy, by which Ife are landlords and citizens while Modakeke are tenants and strangers (DP1). As a result, Modakeke are not permitted to organize landowning families (DP3) where they can freely conduct their affairs as citizens with the right to make and modify (DP7) monitoring (DP4) and sanctioning (DP5) rules. Since these overarching rules do not serve the interests of Modakeke, Modakeke have protested these social rules as unfair since the 1830s. The persistent demands by Modakeke to be treated as citizens in Ile-Ife has infuriated Ife who have asked Modakeke to choose between two options (DP5): either (i) to pay *isakole*—or land rent—and remain in Ile-Ife or (ii) to sell the products on their farms and houses to Ife and move out of Ile-Ife (DP6). The position of Ife was reiterated in 1997 by an Ife chief, who angrily declared that "Ifes would fight with the last drop of their blood because nobody would allow Modakeke to take any of Ifeland" (DP5 and DP6) (Ellsworth 2003, p. 164). Over the years, the tensions have escalated into a series of catastrophic violence, such as the violence of 1849–1850, 1882–1886, 1948–1949, 1981, 1983, and 1997–2000. In the process, separatist sentiments have gained momentum between the two groups (DP2) and crushed any dimmest hope of partnership between them (Akinjogbin 1992, p. 164). Consequently, members of the two Yoruba groups are not free to associate with individuals in the geographical area controlled by the hostile group. It is in this divisive social environment of mutual suspicions and separatism (DP2) that neighborhood associations spontaneously started from scratch in Ile-Ife. The hostile social environment has discouraged neighborhood associations from interacting across group lines and providing services that can benefit diverse individuals in Ile-Ife.

These differences corroborate an obscured classical liberal and libertarian position that spontaneous orders that adopt sociocultural rules and pressures that support interactions among diverse individuals and groups

tend to be more successful than political orders that do not adopt such rules (Hayek 1967; Ostrom E 2010a, 2010b; Ostrom V 1994; Smith 1977). On the other hand, the different outcomes in Abeokuta and Ile-Ife sharply contrast with the similar outcomes that should be expected from starting social orders from scratch (i) by returning to the whole of African institutional heritages (Ayittey 2005) and (ii) by presuming that the Yoruba people of Nigeria have the same sociocultural heritage (Elazar 1991). In explaining these differences further, this chapter uses data from in-depth interviews and participant observations that the author conducted in Abeokuta and Ile-Ife between February 2004 and July 2004.[1] Exploring the less-studied differences not only contributes to empirical knowledge about polycentric governance but also enriches theoretical tools. In this regard, the study provides rich evidence on the poorly understood polycentric governance systems and their respective social environments through a review of perspectives on spontaneous orders and polycentric governance as well as sociocultural rules, before explaining the differences between the two polycentric governance systems.

Polycentric Governance, Individual Action, and Social Relations

Polycentric governance is a system of self-rule and shared-rule relationships among multiple decision centers that are functionally interdependent and overlapping at multiple levels and that operate within an overarching set of rules (Ostrom E 2010a, 2010b; Ostrom V 1994). These social orders, which Hayek (1967) and Polanyi (1951) also describe as polycentric, spontaneously emerge and function as diverse individuals and groups act voluntarily in the pursuit of their separate interests as decision centers spontaneously nested within decision centers. As individuals and groups adjust their relationships toward each other, overlapping and interdependent relationships spontaneously or unintentionally emerge that serve the mutual interests of diverse individuals and groups in society.

Once emerged, the resultant self-rule and shared-rule relationships, as well as their overarching rules, survive that serve the interests of societies. Conceived this way, polycentric governance is then a gradual and

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unplanned outcome of the natural tendencies of individuals to voluntarily adjust their behavior toward one another in the pursuit of their interests based on their creativity and values that are not "ever being concentrated in a single mind or being subject to those processes of deliberate coordination and adaptation which a mind performs" (Hayek 1973, pp. 41–42). It is those random, unintended processes beyond the control of human designers that Adam Smith (1977) describes as the invisible hand or the hidden order. Consequently, the invisible and complex interconnectivity of the actions of nested decision centers is fundamental to the emergence, maintenance, and evolution of polycentric governance.

This formulation about polycentric governance largely bears resemblance to the thoughts of classical liberal scholars, especially Adam Smith and Friedrich Hayek. Both Smith (1977) and Hayek (1967) agree that spontaneous orders or polycentric governance emerge unintentionally from human interdependent processes beyond the control of human designers or planners when individuals are left alone as the basic unit of analysis—methodological individualism. Unlike Smith, however, Hayek (1967:66) advances a theory of sociocultural evolution, which combines methodological and functional individualism in explaining the emergence and functioning of spontaneous orders on the one hand and of the overarching rules supporting those orders on the other hand. Hayek argues that spontaneous orders and their overarching rules are the unintended consequences of individual actions, but those rules may be the result of deliberate design in some settings (Hayek 1973, pp. 45–46). Spontaneous orders emerge and function as individuals voluntarily act in the pursuit of private benefits. However, the emergence and functioning of the overarching rules for supporting spontaneous orders for social coordination and prosperity are the unintended consequences of group-level mechanisms—functional individualism: social structures or relations as the unit of analysis. The selection of successful overarching rules takes place at the group level, rather than the individual level. The prevailing rules in a setting may be the cultural values of some groups. The groups that can support diverse individuals with their sociocultural rules would achieve successful social coordination and generate wealth (Hayek 1967: 67).

Since Hayek does not allegedly remain consistent within methodological individualism (Vanberg 1994, p. 83), it has been argued that the theory of sociocultural evolution, which takes the analysis of polycentric governance beyond individuals as the only unit of analysis, is less useful for some reasons. First, it is argued that Hayek's theory does not

resolve the collective action problem of freeriding, by which individuals may violate the overarching rules beneficial to the group if such rules do not serve the self-interests of the individual members. Because of the collective action problem, cooperation for group-level selection of overarching rules for social coordination and prosperity cannot possibly occur (Vanberg 1994, pp. 84–87). Second, it is argued that the group-level selection of overarching rules cannot emerge from individual action because sociocultural evolution—or group-level changes or institutional changes—goes beyond the incentives of individuals in solving the challenge of freeriding through group-level pressure. Consequently, critics conclude that Hayek's theory of sociocultural evolution is incompatible with methodological individualism (Hodgson 1993, pp. 157–158). What critics do not deny, however, is that the group selection of overarching rules is a spontaneous, gradual process taking place at the group level. Contrary to the position of critics, Hayek's theory of sociocultural evolution does not need to solve the challenge of freeriding at all (Gedeon 2015, p. 26) because the theory circumvents the collective action problem through the existence of group-level pressures—fears of ostracism and retaliation—by which individuals are made to obey overarching rules that "would be in the interest of each to disregard" (Hayek 1973, p. 44). However, individuals may not follow group-level rules if they are excluded from the processes of group-level selection (Ostrom E 2010a, 2010b). As a result, those individuals "who are subject to dominance will find capabilities for resistance" (Ostrom V 1997, p. 286) when the dominant group has "interests that are fundamentally opposed to the autonomy" of the marginalized (Borras and Ross 2007, p. 1). Nevertheless, it is obvious from Hayek's theory that there cannot be one single unit of analysis in the study of spontaneous orders, but multiple units. By and large, Hayek's multilevel analysis demonstrates how methodological individualism and methodological functionalism complement each other (Gedeon 2015).

Meanwhile, the approach of Elinor and Vincent Ostrom to polycentric governance reinforces and complements Hayek's perspective of spontaneous order and sociocultural evolution. After many decades of commitment to methodological individualism, Elinor and Vincent Ostrom acknowledge the need to go beyond individuals as the basic unit of analysis and engage in multilevel analysis involving the role of individuals and social relations at multiple levels of nested interactions. One major reason for the Ostroms' methodological shift is that the behavior of individuals, when left alone, differs from their behavior when individuals

as decision centers are spontaneously nested within higher social structures (Ostrom E 2004, p. 41). This complex nestedness is consistent with Hayek's theory of sociocultural evolution that polycentric governance emerges and evolves as lower-level units or decision centers, such as individuals, cooperate with each other and are spontaneously nested within higher-level decision centers, such as groups of individuals. Group-level or structural pressures, as claimed by Hayek, make diverse individuals obey rules that are advantageous to society but could be in the private interest of individuals to violate. As depicted in Table 13.1, Elinor Ostrom describes Hayek's sociocultural pressures as design principles or sociocultural conditions that have been found to lead to successful collective action in polycentric governance systems.

Consistent with Hayek's sociocultural pressures, the opportunities for freeriding become greatly limited when societies possess Ostromian design principles (Ostrom E 1990). Consequently, it has been argued that the prospect of "societies achieving self-governance…depends…upon the emergence of patterns of polycentricity" or polycentric governance "that might apply to the whole system of human affairs" (Ostrom 1994, p. 3), as opposed to social orders, like in Ile-Ife, that may climax within groups. To be sure, polycentric governance as a spontaneous order neither has a place for unqualified decentralization nor necessarily implies the absence of a central authority (Ostrom, Tiebout, & Warren 1961; Pahl-Wostl and Knieper 2014). Instead, polycentric governance is characterized by multiple decision centers, the autonomy of decision-making authority for each decision center, overlapping jurisdictions among decision centers, multiple levels of interactions among decision centers, an overarching system of rules, and coordination mechanisms. Decision centers are not necessarily uniform but can vary in size and type and interact horizontally and/or vertically through processes of cooperation, competition, and conflict and conflict resolution (Ostrom 1994, p. 225). Diverse decision centers can work together horizontally and/or vertically to plan and provide mutually beneficial services (McGinnis and Ostrom 2011) by communicating with each other as well as by mobilizing and sharing resources (Koontz and Garrick 2019). Interdependence and overlap among decision centers arise from services and functions that affect more than one decision center in "endless shifting configurations of competition and collaboration" that prevent long-term control of decision centers by central and local despots (McGinnis et al. 2020, p. 3). Therefore, functional interdependence and overlap at multiple levels would make

it necessary for decision centers to interact with each other at multiple levels while making their own decisions (Stephan, Marshall, & McGinnis, 2019).

As evidence has shown, polycentric governance provides people with multiple means of mediation and moderation to address and improve policy outcomes. However, studies have acknowledged that "we cannot have the best of all possible worlds (Ostrom 1994, p. 3)" because "no governance system is perfect" (Ostrom E 2010a, 2010b, p. 552). As a result, there may be despotism in some decision centers within a system of polycentric governance when local tyrannies size control of those decision centers for their private benefits. Local tyrannies may be dominant groups and/or local leaders "who only change rules that they think will advantage them" (Ostrom E 2005, p. 282). However, these tyrannical threats, unlike in other types of political systems, tend not to be systemwide because polycentric governance systems exhibit duplication and redundancy that in turn generate backup mechanisms to reduce the vulnerability of the whole system of polycentric governance to despotism (Ostrom, Tiebout, & Warren 1961).

Overall, "polycentric systems have considerable advantages given their mechanisms for mutual monitoring, learning, and adaptation of better strategies over time (Ostrom E 2010a, 2010b, p. 552).

The above insights make five things clear.

- First, polycentric governance is a system of self-governance that depends spontaneously on individuals and their social relations without a single center as the final authority.
- Second, polycentric governance spontaneously emerges when self-rule and shared-rule interactions between individuals and groups are structured by a set of sociocultural rules and pressures that are spontaneously selected within higher-level decision centers. In other circumstances, supportive social rules may be deliberately selected.
- Third, lower-level decision centers are nested within higher-level decision centers in ways that decision centers at different levels are functionally interdependent and overlapping.
- Fourth, individuals, as lower-level decision centers, freely exercise the right to participate in selecting and changing higher-level rules, while the rights of individuals to devise their own rules are not challenged by higher-level decision centers.

- Fifth, polycentric governance systems that adopt rules that support interactions among diverse individuals and groups tend to be more successful in fitting interaction levels to service provision at multiple levels than social orders that do not adopt such rules.

These five insights insights show how two Yoruba polycentric governance systems—which are in Abeokuta and Ife—began from scratch as well as differ in fitting interaction levels to service provision in an environment where the calamitous failure of Nigeria's centralized federalism has persisted since 1954 when the command-and-control federal system was consciously designed and imposed (Oyerinde 2022).

Emergence of Polycentric Neighborhood Governance in Nigeria

Formal governmental arrangements in Nigeria are disconnected from the creativity, interests, and values of Nigerians. It is undeniable that national and subnational governments dominate the conduct of public affairs and provide public services in declining quality and quantity. Members of neighborhood associations, for example, are so frustrated that they "can no longer trust the police. Several times we caught thieves in the neighborhood and handed them over to the police, before midday we saw these thieves walking around the streets again…" (Albert, Awe, Herault, & Omitoogun, 1995, p. 54). The crisis turns upon "systemic corruption, waste, inefficiency, irrelevance," which is "a clear demonstration of the lack of fit between a people and the institutions that are expected to serve them" (Olowu 1996, p. 24). In fact, basic water services are very scarce, let alone erratic electricity supplies and deplorable road conditions. It is troubling that police officers and military personnel are sometimes indistinguishable from armed robbers and bandits as well as terrorists (Anaba 2022). At the same time, neighborhood associations have unintentionally or spontaneously emerged and evolved in Abeokuta and Ife from the individual actions of diverse residents who deliberately and voluntarily seek business and job opportunities in these Yoruba communities. With varying levels of success, these associations and their members have grown multiple levels of self-rule and shared-rule relationships by which they provide crime prevention, streetlights maintenance, maintenance of electricity transformers, water supplies through boreholes and open wells,

street maintenance, trash collection, conflict resolution, and financial and emotional support to distressed members (Albert, Awe, Herault, & Omitoogun, 1995; Ayo 2002; Ojebode et al. 2016). The discussion that follows focuses on the emergence of these associations.

Debate persists about the origins of neighborhood associations in Nigeria. Scholars who subscribe to the Nigerian state as the designer of social order claim that state governments legislated neighborhood associations into existence in the late 1980s. Precisely in Oyo State, a Nigerian state dominated by the Yoruba ethnic group, these scholars assert that a state government law of 1987 forced the creation of neighborhood associations "for the development of their areas and to provide security for their neighborhoods" (Albert et al. 1995, p. 51). Ife, one of the two Yoruba cases in this chapter, was part of Oyo State before the military government carved Ife into a new state—Osun State—on August 27, 1991. Abeokuta has been in Ogun State since February 3, 1976.

The designer assertion is greatly problematic. It erroneously appears that residents in Nigerian communities did not have neighborhood associations before 1987. On the contrary, "before government legislated that such associations be formed, neighbors had already taken the initiative to form them" (Ojebode et al. 2016, p. 19) In addition, the design thesis completely ignores the emergence and evolution of neighborhood associations as the unintentional consequences of the deliberate and voluntary pursuit of business and job opportunities by Nigerians. It is natural for Nigerians to move out of their native or ancestral communities in pursuit of business and job opportunities in other communities. Some immigrants build houses and become homeowners in their host communities, while other immigrants accept job offers in their new communities and live there as tenants. The natives, who remain in their ancestral communities, follow the career paths of their choice. To be sure, the creation of neighborhood associations was not part of the deliberate plan of these diverse individuals while seeking business and job opportunities within and outside their ancestral communities. As records have shown, however, neighborhood associations spontaneously "emerged when early settler-neighbors realized that 'no one can survive in this [jungle] alone'" (Ojebode et al. 2016, p. 19). Over the years in Abeokuta and Ife, these associations and their members have spontaneously developed polycentric governance for service provision in the context of sociocultural rules and pressures that natives developed prior to the British imperial conquest of present-day Nigeria when townships—in Abeokuta—and wards—in

Ife—prevailed as clusters of compounds. Before the arrival of the colonial power, a compound consisted of a set of nuclear families. A man, his wife or wives, and their children constituted a nuclear family (Ayo 2002; Ojebode et al. 2016; Oyerinde 2006).

Consistent with Adam Smith (1905, 1977) and Friedrich Hayek (1967), the spontaneous emergence of these associations in Abeokuta and Ife demonstrates how human interdependent processes beyond the control of human designers, when individuals are left alone to act, unintentionally yield mutual benefits for society. Unfortunately, the literature's poor understanding of polycentric governance as spontaneous order obscures understanding of the emergence and evolution of Nigerian neighborhood associations (Ayo 2002, p. 200) and their differing abilities to fit interaction levels to service provision at multiple levels. This chapter considers, for example, how neighborhood associations have gradually developed polycentric governance in Abeokuta and Ibadan, starting with their similarities before discussing their differences.

Polycentric Neighborhood Governance in Yoruba Communities

Neighborhood associations emerged in Abeokuta and Ife as the unintentional consequence of the action of residents who, by pursuing business and job opportunities, settled in these communities by owning or renting houses. As diverse residents lived together in each part of the Yoruba communities, their interactions metamorphosized into a neighborhood association by which they socialized with each other and provided essential services that the Nigerian centralized government has failed to supply (Ayo 2002; Ojebode et al. 2016). Consequently, neighborhood associations in the two Yoruba communities became a means by which members improved their well-being through crime prevention, streetlights maintenance, maintenance of electricity transformers, water supplies through boreholes and open wells, street maintenance, trash collection, conflict resolution, healthcare awareness, and financial and emotional support to distressed members.[2]

[2] Neighborhood association secretary in Modakeke (interviewed April 21, 2004). Ife neighborhood leader (interviewed April 23, 2004). Owu prince in Abeokuta (interviewed May 21, 2004). Neighborhood association zonal executive chairman in Abeokuta (interviewed May 25, 2004). Neighborhood association regional council chairman and in

Interaction Levels Within Neighborhood Associations

The constituent households were members of neighborhood associations. Service provision was funded largely with monthly fees that members were required to contribute. In the early days of neighborhood associations in Abeokuta and Ife, membership had been based on homeownership. Membership was later extended to tenants, which allowed the constituent households in each neighborhood to be equally represented in the neighborhood's decision-making. Apart from being tenants or homeowners from different ethnic groups, neighborhood members included farmers, traders, teachers, lawyers, accountants, bankers, bricklayers, carpenters, engineers, town planners, and government employees. Each association had an elected executive council consisting of between 8 and 15 members, including a chairperson, vice-chairperson, secretary, assistant secretary, public relations officer, treasurer, youth leader, and women's leader.[3]

The diversity of members and the size of neighborhoods have contributed to the complementary and interdependent ingenuity that permeated service provision by neighborhood associations in Abeokuta and Ife. Neighborhood associations in these Yoruba communities served as avenues for practicing democratic processes through the participation of members in problem-solving and service provision. With a pool of different occupational talents, problem-solving was undertaken through committees that were formed when a problem or project arose. Each committee consisted of members having the relevant skills to handle the assigned task. In addition, big neighborhoods divided into cells. The constituent cells offered members the close-knit proximity advantages that enabled quick decision-making in handling problems specific to each cell. Members of each cell met at least once a week and worked together to solve problems of exclusive interest to them. Each cell bore full

Abeokuta and Ogun State community development council executive officer (interviewed May 26, 2004).

[3] Obafemi Awolowo University senior staff and Ife neighborhood association member (interviewed April 17, 2004). Neighborhood association secretary in Modakeke (interviewed April 21, 2004). Ife neighborhood leader (interviewed April 23, 2004). Neighborhood association zonal executive chairman in Abeokuta (interviewed May 25, 2004). Neighborhood association regional council chairman in Abeokuta and Ogun State community development council executive officer (interviewed May 26, 2004).

responsibility for the election of its officers. At the same time, the functions of neighborhood associations and their constituent cells overlapped in that each neighborhood association performed neighborhood-wide functions, such as crime prevention, that benefited members who were simultaneously served by cells and task-specific committees. Specifically, neighborhood-wide committees handled issues that affected multiple cells. Decisions made by neighborhood-wide committees were subject to the unanimous acceptance of members in their general meetings that were held at least once a month.

Obviously, committees and cells served as different levels of interaction or communication and were nested within neighborhood associations in Abeokuta and Ife.[4]

Members of each association monitored one another. Neighborhood associations had task force committees that ensured that members followed their rules. In the Amolaso neighborhood in Abeokuta, for example, a task force committee carried out duties such as disconnecting the electricity supply lines of members that failed to contribute money toward the procurement of electric cables, poles, and transformers. The task force was also empowered to prevent members from holding night parties and to impose a fine of ₦5,000 (or $35 in 2004) on offenders. A fine of ₦500 ($3.50 in 2004) was imposed on members who blocked drainages. In addition, the task force ensured that houses in the neighborhood have toilets or restrooms.[5] Similarly, neighborhood associations in Ife had elected members who enforced the rules of neighbourhood associations.[6]

[4] Obafemi Awolowo University senior staff and Ife neighborhood association member (interviewed April 17, 2004). Neighborhood association task-force committee members in Abeokuta (interviewed May 20 and May 27, 2004).

[5] Neighborhood association task-force committee members in Abeokuta (interviewed May 20 and May 27, 2004).

[6] African languages professor at Obafemi Awolowo University in Ile-Ife and neighborhood association member in Ile-Ife (interviewed April 28, 2004).

Interaction Levels Between Neighborhood Associations

Functional interdependence and overlap not only shaped internal interactions within neighborhood associations but also encouraged multiple levels of cooperation among these associations. However, Abeokuta and Ife differed in how their respective neighborhood associations worked together and fitted their interactions to service provision. The differences are first discussed before using Elinor Ostrom's design principles to analyze the reasons for the differences in the context of rules and sociocultural pressures that served as the social environment of neighborhood associations in each Yoruba community.

Interactions Between Neighborhood Associations

Neighborhood associations in Abeokuta have grown multiple levels of cooperation by which challenges shared by multiple neighborhoods were addressed. These levels of functional interdependence were areas, zones, and one region. About twenty-eight (28) neighborhood associations constituted an area where the constituent neighborhood associations collaborated in dealing with common interests. The chairpersons of the constituent neighborhood associations served as area council officers. Two or three areas formed a zone for handling the problems shared by the constituent areas. The four zones were Ake, Oke-Ona, Gbagura, and Owu, and worked together in a regional council. The regional council had jurisdiction over matters that affected neighborhood associations throughout Abeokuta.[7]

These nested levels of communication in Abeokuta had autonomy over their respective jurisdictional interests as well as developed their own rules and set and executed their own jurisdictional priorities. The constituent zones, for example, organized programs that provided members with

[7] Neighborhood association zonal executive chairman in Abeokuta (interviewed May 25, 2004). Neighborhood association regional council chairman in Abeokuta and Ogun State community development council executive officer (interviewed May 26, 2004). Neighborhood association secretary and Oloroogun chief in Abeokuta (interviewed May 29, 2004).

information about health-improving strategies and investment opportunities.[8] Resource mobilization also took place at the zonal level for maintaining roads and bridges that were shared by the constituent areas. The regional council provided an avenue for dealing with problems that affected neighborhood associations in Abeokuta and collaborated with regional councils of neighborhood associations in other Yoruba communities in Ogun state. In addition, the regional council handled waste disposal management because the function benefited the constituent neighborhood associations throughout Abeokuta. In performing the waste disposal management task, the regional council required each house to have a trash bag and collected a weekly fee of ₦10 ($0.7 in 2004) per house for trash collection. The waste collection contractor for each neighborhood association was a member of the neighborhood, which enabled neighborhood association members to monitor the performance of the contractor. A minimum of 1000 houses constituted a waste collection unit. Neighborhoods with less than 1000 houses merged with nearby neighborhoods. The contractor collected trash from the neighborhood and dumped it in the treatment sites that were managed by the regional council. The contractor was paid from the trash fees collected from the neighborhood. Each neighborhood association had exclusive jurisdiction over the hiring and dismissal of its trash contractor.[9] The successful role of the Abeokuta regional council of neighborhood associations in interregional collaboration and service provision beyond Abeokuta has endeared neighborhood associations to the Ogun state government, which, in 2021, granted about ₦85.5 million ($211,634) to the associations for self-help projects (Popoola 2021).

In Ile-Ife, neighborhood associations also cooperated with each other on the maintenance of shared amenities and services, such as electricity transformers, bridges, roads, and crime prevention. Unlike Abeokuta, however, cooperation among neighborhood associations in Ile-Ife occurred along group lines. Ife and Modakeke were two groups

[8] In May 2004, the author attended a zonal neighborhood association meeting in Abeokuta during which health and investment experts gave presentations to zonal members.

[9] Neighborhood association zonal executive chairman in Abeokuta (interviewed May 25, 2004). Neighborhood association regional council chairman in Abeokuta and Ogun State community development council executive officer (interviewed May 26, 2004). Neighborhood association task-force committee members in Abeokuta (interviewed May 20 and May 27, 2004).

in Ile-Ife. Neighborhood associations among Ife worked through joint committees in dealing with common interests, but without the area, zonal, and regional levels of communication that cut across group lines in Abeokuta. Nevertheless, sociocultural associations, such as Egbe Omo-Ibile Ife, Ife Day, and Olojo Festival, handled cultural issues. Membership in these sociocultural associations was largely open to Ife. Among Modakeke, on the other hand, cooperation between neighborhood associations took place between adjacent neighborhood associations. Also, neighborhood associations within the geographical territory of Modakeke had representatives in the Modakeke Progressive Union. The Modakeke sociocultural association handled public affairs matters, such as crime prevention.[10]

The beneficial possibilities of functional interdependence and overlap did not motivate neighborhood associations to interact across group lines in Ile-Ife, as opposed to predictions about polycentric governance (Stephan, Marshall, & McGinnis, 2019). Visitors to Ile-Ife could hardly discern the physical boundaries between Ife and Modakeke. In fact, streets and bridges connected the physical boundaries of the Ife and Modakeke groups in ways that created an image of a homogenous community. Unlike Abeokuta, the lack of cooperation among neighborhood associations across group lines hindered neighborhood associations in Ile-Ife from developing higher levels of interaction for handling services that could benefit members of neighborhood associations across group lines, such as waste management, health and investment awareness, and crime prevention. At the same time, electricity transformers, streets, and bridges, which were shared by both Yoruba groups, were in deplorable conditions,[11] unlike in Abeokuta.

Neighborhood associations in Ile-Ife also lacked the cohesiveness found among neighborhood associations in Abeokuta through which neighborhood associations in Abeokuta successfully attracted huge financial support from the Ogun State government.

[10] Modakeke youth association leader (interviewed April 15, 2004). Obafemi Awolowo University senior staff and Ife neighborhood association member (interviewed April 17, 2004). Ife youth association leader (interviewed April 20, 2004). Neighborhood association secretary in Modakeke (interviewed April 21, 2004). Modakeke community leader (interviewed May 24, 2004).

[11] Obafemi Awolowo University senior staff and Ife neighborhood association member (interviewed April 17, 2004). African languages professor at Obafemi Awolowo University in Ile-Ife and neighborhood association member in Ile-Ife (interviewed April 28, 2004).

An important question then turns upon why neighborhood associations worked together across group lines and fitted interaction levels to service provision in Abeokuta, but not in Ile-Ife where polycentric governance reached a climax within the constituent Yoruba groups. One way to answer this question is to turn to sociocultural pressures and rules in Friedrich Hayek's theory of sociocultural evolution and Elinor Ostrom's (2010a, 2010b) design principles, which constitute the social environment of spontaneous orders. The prevailing social environment in each Yoruba community was developed during the pre-colonial era. There were two distinctive Yoruba groups in each community: Egba [founders] and Owu [immigrants] in Abeokuta and Ife [founders] and Modakeke [immigrants] in Ile-Ife (DP1). Since the pre-colonial era, Abeokuta had had an open policy tradition by which natives and immigrants were citizens when they took up residency in Abeokuta (DP1). The tradition emerged after Egba discarded the belief that landownership was the non-transferable ancestral right of the founding lineage, and consequently permitted immigrants to enjoy the same rights as natives. As a result, natives and immigrants in Abeokuta owned land and associated freely with individuals across group lines, participated in traditional decision-making units (DP3), and exercised the right to recall irresponsible chiefs (DP4 and DP5) (Imoagene 1976; Oguntomisin 1981; Oyerinde 2022).

There were many arenas for conflict resolution in Abeokuta. No dispute was treated lightly in Abeokuta, hence unresolved disputes within the compound in Abeokuta were taken to either township, sectional, or central *Ogboni* [judges]. Before the colonial era, for example, dispute processing in the *Ogboni* court involved payment of *owo esun* [hearing and summon fee]. At the township level, the plaintiff filed the case with the township *Ogboni* and paid the hearing and summon fee. The defendant paid half of the fee the plaintiff paid. Messengers of *Apena* [spokesman or meeting convener] would then summon the defendant to the *Ogboni* court. During the court session, the plaintiff and the defendant took turns to present their respective cases and witnesses. For the *Ogboni* court to be seen as impartial, it conducted careful and thorough investigation that served as the basis of judgment. The litigants had the right to appeal the judgment to the *Ogboni* court at the sectional or community level. There was a shared understanding that individuals had the liberty to bypass their township *Ogboni* and take their cases to the sectional or community *Ogboni* court. Interestingly, compounds were nested within townships, townships within sections, and sections within

the community-wide governance system (Ajisafe 1998; Biobaku 1991). During the pre-colonial era, as diverse individuals engaged in shared-rule and engaged in respectful contestation in a changing environment of competition and collaboration, each governing unit "administered its own justice and guarded its own interest" without fear of retribution from higher authority (Oguntomisin 1981, p. 229). Consequently, mutual trust resulted and encouraged peaceful coexistence among diverse individuals in Abeokuta (Biobaku 1991, p. 37). These habits and beliefs were the rules and sociocultural pressures that shaped the environment in which neighborhood associations in Abeokuta emerged and succeeded in fitting interaction levels to service provision at multiple levels.

In sharp contrast to Abeokuta, a citizen-stranger dichotomy had prevailed in Ile-Ife since the pre-colonial era. Unlike Egba in Abeokuta, Ife believed that land in Ile-Ife perpetually belonged to their dead, their living, and their unborn. Landownership, as the non-transferable right of Ife, derived from the sacred command of ancestors "whose spirits lay buried in the soil" (Nwabueze 1972, p. 319) and who had "placed an embargo at the pains of death" on sharing landownership with non-natives (Oyewo and Olaoba 1999, p. 126). As a result, Ife had been landlords over Modakeke who were tenants (DP1). These beliefs were incongruent with the values of Modakeke who treated their 1827 migration to Ile-Ife as a return to their ancestral home where they believed they were entitled to the same landowning rights as Ife (DP2) as well as recognized right to conduct their public affairs within their governing structures (DP3).

The failure to resolve the tension forced Modakeke to dismiss as fundamentally unfair the prevailing citizenship definition (DP1). In about 1830, for example, "a feeling of disaffection became evident between the Ife citizens and the exiles [Modakeke]" (Johnson 1921, p. 230). Modakeke felt marginalized with their status as tenant-farmers (DP2) and demanded the right to own land and gain ancestral belonging. Ife, however, treated the behavior of Modakeke as unbecoming of strangers (Ade-Ajayi and Akintoye 1980, p. 286) and as "the beginning of disloyalty to their host" (Agbe, 2001, p. 15). The ruptured relationship intensified and metamorphosed into growing divisive relationships. As tension built up, Ife ignobly labeled.

Modakeke as strangers and migrants, seized the farmlands granted to Modakeke (DP5), and "treated them like slaves" (Akintoye 1970, p. 35).

In fact, Ife were "not prepared to part with the family land to the tenants without the continued payment of royalties" (DP5) (Agbe 2001, p. 15).

Ife and Modakeke consequently split into two antagonistic groups (DP2), even though the two Yoruba groups had earlier claimed to be "sons and daughters of the same parents" descending directly from "Oduduwa, the progenitor of Yoruba race" [the founder of Ile-Ife] (Toriola 2001, p. 21). Modakeke, who initially "settled in the capital city of the Ife," "later relocated outside of the capital city" and "later took on the name Modakeke as a mark of a separate identity from that of their host, the Ife" (Akanji 2009, p. 36). Members of the two Yoruba groups also distanced themselves from the geographical area controlled by the hostile group. Modakeke eventually adopted the Oyo dialect and tribal marks as a distinctive intra-ethnic identity. In showing resentment against Modakeke, Ife whipped up anti-Modakeke sentiments and made accommodation of Modakeke difficult (Akinjogbin 1992; Johnson 1921).

After the violence of 1948–1949 (Agbe 2001; Akinjogbin 1992), Ife requested Modakeke to choose between two options (DP5): either (i) to pay *isakole* [land rent] and remain in Ile-Ife or (ii) to sell the products on their farms and houses to Ife and move out of Ile-Ife. Modakeke chose the first option and tensions continued to build up. The position of Ife was reiterated in 1997 by an Ife Yoruba chief, who declared that "Ifes would fight with the last drop of their blood because nobody would allow Modakeke to take any of Ifeland" (Ellsworth 2003, p. 164). Over the years, the tensions have escalated into a series of catastrophic violence, such as the violence of 1849–1850, 1882–1886, 1948–1949, 1981, 1983, and 1997–2000. These violent episodes demonstrate that those "who are subject to dominance will find capabilities for resistance" (Ostrom 1997, p. 286) when the dominant group—such as Ife—has "interests that are fundamentally opposed to the autonomy" of the marginalized—such Modakeke—(Borras and Ross 2007, p. 1). It is in this divisive social environment that neighborhood associations emerged within the two Yoruba groups. The hostile social environment has discouraged interactions among neighborhood associations across group lines, forcing polycentric governance to reach its peak within the geographical area controlled by each Yoruba group and hindering neighborhood associations to fit interaction levels to service provision across group lines.

Conclusion

The emergence of neighborhood associations and their multilevel interactions with each other in Abeokuta and Ile-Ife has evidenced that starting polycentric governance from scratch turns upon human interdependence beyond the control of human designers or planners. The success of these social orders for mutual benefits among diverse individuals and groups critically depends, as Friedrich Hayek and Elinor Ostrom have postulated, on the social rules and pressures that constitute the dominant environment. Herein lies the need to use human reasoning to trace the conditions for the success of polycentric governance, as opposed to the idealized visions of scholars and practitioners who have called for a blanket return to all the African institutional heritages to start social orders from scratch on the continent. As demonstrated in the case of Abeokuta and Ile-Ife, the importance of separating what works from what does not work turns upon understanding that polycentric governance systems that adopt rules supportive of interactions among diverse individuals and groups tend to be more successful in fitting interaction levels to service provision at multiple levels than political systems that do not adopt such rules. Those who advocate for a world federation, or a world without states, would do well to heed the examples of Abeokuta and Ile-Ife.

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