

Article

Recentralization, intergovernmental conflicts and territorial inequality: perspective of local governments in Peru

Edgar Quispe-Mamani ¹Wenceslao Quispe Borda ¹Osbaldo Turpo Gebera ²¹ Universidad Nacional del Altiplano Puno / Facultad de Ciencias Sociales, Puno – Perú² Universidad Nacional de San Agustín Arequipa / Facultad de Ciencias de la Educación, Arequipa – Perú

Intergovernmental conflicts, in Latin America's centralism and the recentralization in Peru, have been more acute over the last 30 years, producing sociopolitical, economic, and cultural problems at subnational levels. Based on the design of the grounded theory of Glasser and Strauss, this sociopolitical phenomenon is analyzed from the perspective of local governments in the Puno region to account for the emerging categories and subcategories of analysis regarding the dynamics of intergovernmental relations (IGR) in the local public policy process. The main argument is that, as a result of centralism, recentralization, and intergovernmental conflicts, territorial inequality reproduces and reinforces at the local level. These are expressed in a dichotomy between the deficit territorial dynamics (backward areas) and entrepreneurial territorial dynamics (growth areas).

Keywords: intergovernmental relations; recentralization; central government; local government; Peru.

Recentralização, conflitos intergovernamentais e desigualdade territorial: perspectiva dos governos locais no Peru

Os conflitos intergovernamentais, no contexto do centralismo Latino-americano e da recentralização no Peru, se agravaram nos últimos 30 anos, produzindo vários problemas sociopolíticos, econômicos e culturais em níveis subnacionais. Este fenômeno sociopolítico é analisado a partir da perspectiva dos governos locais na região de Puno, com base no desenho da Grounded Theory de Glasser e Strauss, para dar conta das categorias e subcategorias emergentes de análise sobre a dinâmica das relações intergovernamentais (RIG) no processo de políticas públicas locais. O principal argumento é que, como resultado do centralismo, da recentralização e dos conflitos intergovernamentais, a desigualdade territorial é reproduzida e reforçada nos níveis locais, expressa em uma dicotomia entre: dinâmicas de déficit territorial (áreas de atraso) e dinâmicas territoriais empreendedoras (áreas de crescimento).

Palavras-chave: relações intergovernamentais; recentralização; governo central; governo local; Peru.

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Recentralización, conflictos intergubernamentales y desigualdad territorial: perspectiva de gobiernos locales en Perú

Los conflictos intergubernamentales, en el contexto del centralismo Latinoamericano y la recentralización en el Perú, se han agudizado durante los últimos 30 años, produciendo diversos problemas sociopolíticos, económicos y culturales en los ámbitos subnacionales. Este fenómeno sociopolítico se analiza desde la perspectiva de los gobiernos locales en la región Puno, basado en el diseño de la Teoría Fundamentada de Glasser y Strauss, para dar cuenta de las categorías y subcategorías de análisis emergentes respecto de la dinámica de las relaciones intergubernamentales (RIG) en el proceso de las políticas públicas locales. El argumento principal es que, como resultado del centralismo, la recentralización y los conflictos intergubernamentales, se reproduce y se refuerza la *desigualdad territorial* en los ámbitos locales, expresada en una dicotomía entre: dinámicas territoriales deficitarias (zonas de atraso) y dinámicas territoriales emprendedoras (áreas de crecimiento).

Palabras clave: relaciones intergubernamentales; recentralización; gobierno central; gobierno local; Perú.

1. INTRODUCTION

The history of Latin America is dominated by autocratic presidencies with military caudillos, populism and hegemonic parties of the right or authoritarian left (Treek & Vaca, 2020). In this context, the structure of the Peruvian State, constitutionally, is configured according to the model of a unitary, representative and decentralized State; however, in practice, throughout the republican era up to the present, the phenomenon of centralism has been reproduced in the development and performance of governmental functions and competencies. This phenomenon has been denominated by Véliz (1984) as the centralist tradition of Latin America.

An expression of this tradition is that political, administrative and fiscal decisions and actions are made and controlled from the central power (Quispe-Mamani, 2016), where decentralization is reduced to the mere deconcentration of certain functions and competencies, eventually, to subnational governments. During the last ten years, in Peru, there has been the *phenomenon of recentralization* of resources that markedly affects provincial and district local governments. The participation of local governments in the public budget of the republic has been reduced by 4.1%. That is, from 15.9% of their share in 2010, they will have only 11.8% of their share in 2020, while the national government's share remains stable (above 70% in 2020) and the regional governments' share will increase to around 18% in 2020 (Congress de la República del Perú [CRP], 2020).

With the centralized, vertical and hierarchical control of power, the performance of local provincial and district governments is weakened. This situation leads to uncoordinated, overlapping and conflicting intergovernmental functions and competencies in the public policy management process. As Vallejo-Castello (2015) argues, the different levels of government: local, regional and national, require a shared, articulated vision and an adequate level of coordination, without subordinating among themselves. However, the bodies created for this purpose, such as the Intergovernmental Coordination Council (ICC) does not work in practice, whose main task is to monitor the country's decentralization process, which involves the transfer of functions and the establishment of goals related to territorial management.

In view of this situation, the study seeks to answer the following questions: How have centralism and recentralization developed in recent years in Peru? What are the IGRs like? How does centralism affect territorial inequality? The objectives of the study are: to analyze the dynamics of the IGR and to interpret recentralization and territorial inequality in Peru.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The theoretical background revolves around the IGR theory, the theory of local and territorial governance, and the theories of biopolitics and biopower.

First, the dynamics of interaction between the actors of the different levels of government within the framework of a unitary State is approached from the IGR theory, which implies the analysis and interpretation of the balance of power between the national power and the peripheries (Grin, Mendoza-Ruiz, & Cravacuore, 2020). According to these authors, IGRs are arenas of negotiation and compromise that seek to align different spheres of government when coordination and cooperation become important for the design and implementation of public policies. In the words of J. A. C. Pérez (2018) IGRs focus on the study of the functions, interactions, relationships, agreements, and exchanges that occur between government actors, as well as their establishment through formal coordination and communication schemes that institutions have, but also, through informal relationships. However, for Ikeanyibe, Chukwu, y Ibietan (2019), despite the availability of IGRs as a mechanism for intergovernmental coordination, in unitary states the competencies of subnational governments are often decided/modified unilaterally by the central government.

On the other hand, the implementation of IGR implies the establishment of a clear and effective institutional framework and the shared ownership of all government actors involved in intergovernmental actions, such as decentralization and the management of local public policies (Mwasaga, 2021). Complementarily, from the agency theory, governmental interaction can be understood as a cooperative relationship between the principal (central government) and the agent (local government), establishing control and accountability mechanisms from the agent to the principal; and according to the power dependency theory, the different levels of government are always interdependent to some extent (Eckersley, 2017; Mwasaga, 2021).

However, in developing countries, decentralization is used as a power recentralization mechanism (Lewis, 2014), due to the fragmentation of local administrative units, which reduces their intergovernmental negotiation capacity. Moreover, without the improvement of democratic local governance, decentralization negatively affects the efficiency of local public services and generates local government dependence on the central government (Tan, 2020), because the central government holds the real decision-making power, despite the administrative and financial autonomy of local administrations, under the argument of the integral unity of the territory.

For their part, Wockelberg y Ahlbäck-Öberg (2022) consider inter-organizational relations between central government agencies and local agencies, considering three mechanisms: Cooperation, which allows organizations to retain their autonomy vis-à-vis other organizations, these do not resolve conflicts related to the territory. Coordination, which makes the participating organizations interdependent and requires them to relinquish some autonomy, albeit at different scales. Collaboration, here power

needs to invest in new structures that have been created jointly to solve problems; it is a mechanism of interaction that requires participants to pool resources and cede their autonomy to a new structure, created to manage the interaction.

Secondly, regarding local and territorial governance theory, it is necessary to define the concept of governance, which according to Fernández-García y Mota-Consejero (2009), Peters (2007), y Torfing y Sørensen (2014), is a new style of government characterized by a complex process of directing and controlling society and the economy through collective action. This involves moving from unilateral actions to multilateral forms of action, giving rise to interactive forms of governance. Through governance, the State rebuilds its directive capacity of society, while civil society undertakes its participation and control of public affairs (Naranjo-Giraldo, Lopera-Morales, & Granada-Vahos, 2009). The “networked local governance” approach seeks to recompose the relationship between State and society. The State embodied in the different levels of government plays the role of direction and political leadership in decisions and actions for development and social welfare, and society plays the role of control and social oversight in the process of local public policies, based on horizontal networks and multilevel interaction from the territory (Quispe-Mamani, 2013). This approach includes public-state, private-business and civil society actors in the policy process.

From the perspective of “local governance as government-business cooperation” (Navarro-Yáñez, Magnier, & Ramírez, 2008), the complementarity of two visions of actors in the territory is proposed: functional localism, in which local officials seek collaboration with businesses, considering these as powerful actors that can contribute to local development; political localism, where intergovernmental actors are more oriented towards social welfare objectives.

For its part, “public governance” is presented as a new model of public management, understood and oriented from five perspectives of analysis: socio-political, public policy, administrative, contractual and networks (Osborne, 2010), based on three principles: orientation of public sector enterprises towards the community of public and private social and economic actors; relationship between subjects belonging to certain socio-economic networks; and capacity of the public actor to manage the relationships between actors (Iacovino, Barsanti, & Cinquini, 2017).

On the other hand, territorial public management implies considering the effects of the capitalist development model implemented in the world and, specifically, in Latin America and the Caribbean. In other words, from a macroeconomic perspective, the growth model of capitalist economies has been unequal everywhere, concentrating its beneficial effects on certain areas and generating a sharp dichotomy between areas of growth and areas of backwardness (Díaz-Hernández & Parreño-Castellano, 2005). This dynamic of *territorial inequality* has been deepened by globalization and metropolization/centralization. Thus, territorial inequality translates into fragmentation and social isolation that affects not only personal lives, but also the capacity of territories: their actors and the organizations in which they are articulated to define their self-development (Eizaguirre-Anglada & Klein, 2020), hindering the possibility of territories to create and disseminate meaningful experiences and knowledge.

In third place, with respect to the theories of biopower and biopolitics. Biopower is understood as the control society focused on the production and administration of life from the centralized and centralizing power of the State, whose model is medical and its objective is the security of the population (Urabayen & León-Casero, 2018; Useche-Aldana & C. I. Pérez, 2019). For such purpose, governmental regimes are constituted and with it the new governmentality that seeks to include and control the populations that are part of the community of life. In this sense, biopolitics, as the politics of life that deploys the productive power of life, stands as resistance in and from life. Thus, the biopolitics of resistance at the micro and local level traces lines of defense and escape from the production of subdued lives proposed by biopower (Calveiro, 2020; Useche-Aldana & C. I. Pérez, 2019).

From the perspective of governmentality, biopolitics is exercised positively “making live”, and as such manages to be so effective in giving entity and molding life at will, that is, life is determined or configured by a regime of power or knowledge, which also makes it the object of political interest; while it is exercised negatively “letting die” populations according to social differences and biopolitical interests of liberal and neoliberal governmentality (López, 2016). As a governmental rationality, neoliberalism implies a soft government of behaviors, and as such, in order to achieve the implementation of a business ethos, it will historically rely on extremely violent practices of dispossession, precariousness and attack on populations (Saidel, 2018). And as Foucault argued in Sylvia (2020) new technologies are being leveraged to enforce social distancing requirements. I explore social distancing through the theoretical lens of Michel Foucault’s biopolitics, with an emphasis on recognizing unauthorized movement and controlling circulation. Although reporting and widely shared data visualizations about COVID-19 have made many people newly aware that their movements are being tracked and surveilled, governments are already implementing new measures such as geofencing and artificial intelligence (AI racism, as a mechanism of social differentiation, is explicitly connected to biopower, which puts biopolitics into practice. Thus, biopower introduces racism into the structure of the state.

3. METHODOLOGY

The methodology of the study is based on the qualitative research paradigm. The methodological design is based on the grounded theory of Glaser and Strauss, which is epistemologically based on the inductive generation of categories of analysis. The methodological strategy is constant comparative analysis, which allows comparing one piece of data with another in a constant and repeated manner to identify subcategories of analysis to be used in coding, thus establishing a coherent relationship between data and theory. Coding is a fundamental element as an analytical process of selection and labeling of data to generate categories, whose conceptualization and integration in the form of theory will give rise to the interpretation of the phenomenon studied (Estrada-Acuña, Arzuaga, Giraldo, & Cruz, 2021).

3.1. Research techniques and participants

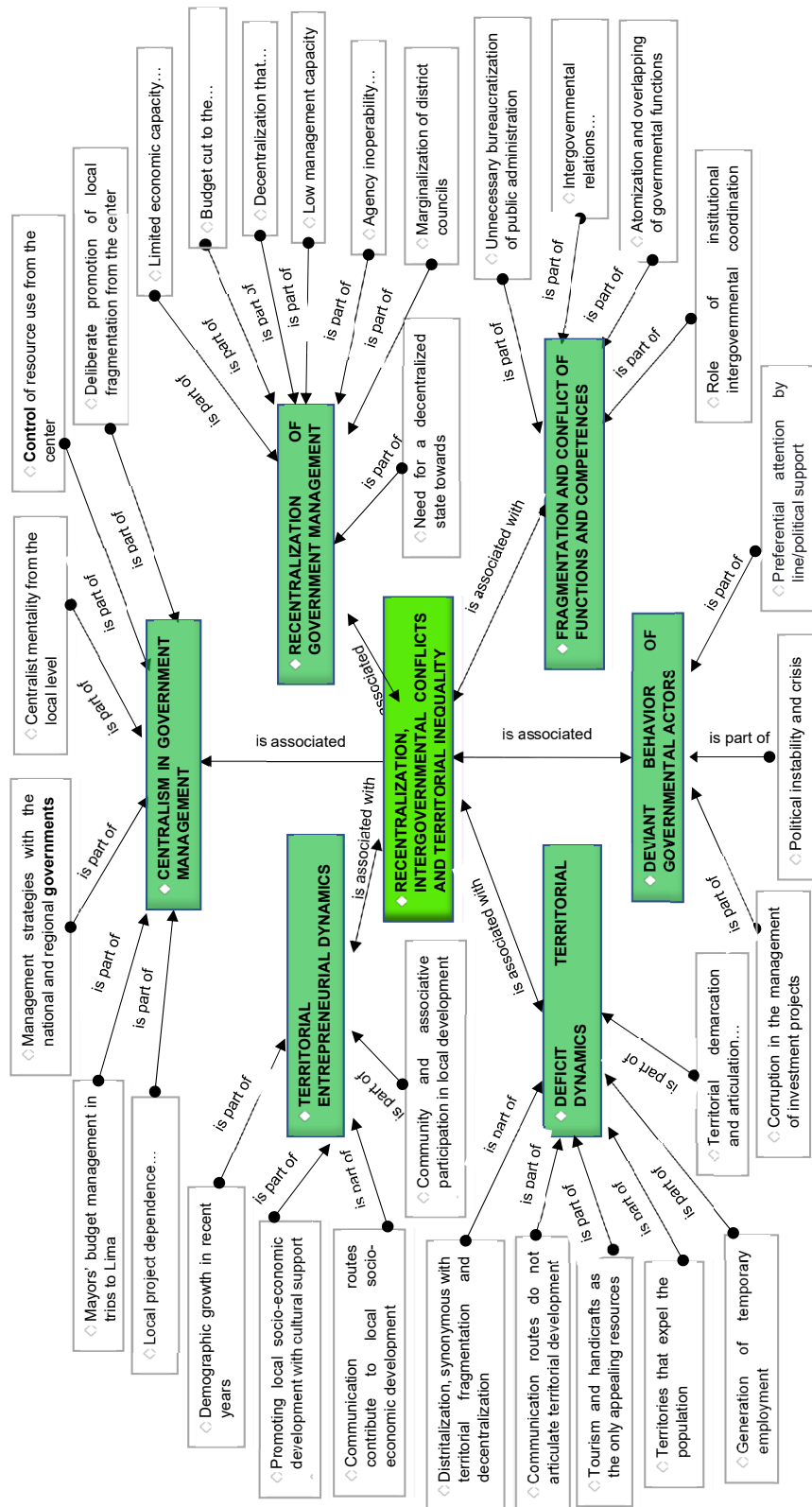
The data collection techniques applied were the semi-structured interview and documentary review. These techniques were applied in two stages: *first*, the documentary review technique was used to gather information from secondary sources on the IGR process in the country and the literature on the subject of the study. The data collection instrument used was the bibliographic record card, where the relevant information identified on the basis of the content analysis technique was summarized and recorded document by document. *Secondly*, the interview guide was applied; for this purpose, the local political actors (mayors) were strategically identified, considering their *socio-political representativeness* at the regional and national level in Puno. Once these actors were identified, the interview was requested through an official document. In this sense, among provincial and district mayors (territorial constituencies), six interviews were conducted with provincial mayors and 14 interviews with district mayors. In several cases, the semi-structured interviews, planned a priori, were converted into in-depth interviews during their implementation.

3.2. Procedure for data analysis

With the transcribed interviews, data processing and analysis have been carried out in four phases: *in the first phase*, the research team, based on the content analysis technique (Sánchez-Gómez et al., 2017) and the qualitative data analysis software Atlas.ti (Barquín, Arratibel, Quintas, & Alzola, 2022; Quispe-Mamani, Chaiña-Chura, Salas-Avila, & Belizario-Quispe, 2022), read and analyzed three transcribed interviews with higher data density (quotes/rooting), identifying the emerging subcategories of analysis that translated into the behavioral patterns of the actors and served for the coding of the data available in the other transcribed interviews.

In the second phase, using the proposed constant comparative analysis method, the research team agreed on the identification of a total of 535 citations, which were distributed and grouped into six main categories and a differentiated number of emerging analysis subcategories (see Figure 1), the same ones that allowed coding the data in the following phase.

FIGURE 1 EMERGING CATEGORIES AND SUBCATEGORIES OF ANALYSIS



Source: Elaborated by the authors.

In the third phase, with the primary interviews/documents available and the emerging subcategories of analysis agreed upon, the data were processed and analyzed using Atlas.ti 8 software, identifying the frequency of interventions/testimonies of the actors expressed in the form of rootedness/quotations for each of the emerging subcategories of analysis. *In the fourth phase*, the results of the study were analyzed and discussed using the qualitative content analysis technique and discourse analysis.

Finally, to guarantee the scientificity of the research, a combination of three methodological principles was used: the techno-methodological symbiosis between grounded theory and Atlas.ti (Y. N. Rojano-Alvarado, Contreras-Cuentas, & A. Y. Rojano-Alvarado, 2021); methodological triangulation between two different data collection techniques: semi-structured interview and documentary review to analyze the same phenomenon; and researcher triangulation, analyzing the data in a complementary manner among the three experts of the research team (Llanos-Contreras, Hebles, & Yániz-Álvarez-De-Eulate, 2021).

4. EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

4.1. Dynamics of IGR from the local government perspective

Local governments are distributed into provincial and district municipalities. At the national level, there are a total of 1,874 municipalities, of which 196 are provincial municipalities¹ and 1,678 are district municipalities² (Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática [INEI], 2021). In accordance with Law No. 27,972, Organic Law of Municipalities, they are subdivided into provincial, district and minor population center municipalities; and the metropolitan municipality of Lima and border municipalities are given special treatment.

The IGR is a form of articulation and interaction between actors at different levels of government (local, regional and national), whose purpose is the management of public policies of interest to the participating actors. This model of intergovernmental interaction is typical of unitary states based on a presidential regime, where coordination is the responsibility of the central government. In the Peruvian case, during the last decade the IGRs have been configured on the basis of the Intergovernmental Coordination Council (ICC), which was created in 2009, whose regulations were approved under Supreme Decree No. 079-2009-PCM, modified under Supreme Decree No. 005-2011-PCM, and recently reformed under Supreme Decree No. 050-2021-PCM, whose operational bodies are: the Executive GORE³ and the MUNI Executive⁴.

The empirical results of the research regarding the dynamics of IGR between central and local governments revealed six categories of analysis: 1) centralism in government management,

¹ The provincial municipality is the third level of organization of local governments, in its territorial circumscription it has a determined number of districts.

² The district municipality is the second level of local government organization, with smaller population centers being the first level. It is a smaller district and depends organically and politically on the provincial municipality.

³ GORE Executive is a space in which Peruvian ministers engage in bilateral dialogue with regional governors and their respective technical teams, thus strengthening relations of trust and improving mutual understanding for the management of regional public policies.

⁴ MUNI Executive is a space in which the ministers of Peru engage in bilateral dialogue with provincial and district mayors and their respective technical teams for the management of local public policies.

2) recentralization of government management, 3) fragmentation and conflicts of functions and competencies, 4) deviant behavior of government actors, 5) deficit territorial dynamics in the context of centralism and intergovernmental conflicts (IGC), and 6) entrepreneurial territorial dynamics in the context of centralism and IGC.

With respect to *centralism in government management*, Box 1 presents the seven subcategories of analysis that emerged in the study, where the mayors maintain by consensus and strongly that the management of public investment projects depends on the sectoral ministries of the central government (E=59). Likewise, for the viability of investment projects in their territorial areas of reference, the mayors are obliged to travel frequently to the city of Lima, which is why they express their discomfort with the phenomenon of centralism.

“Look, centralism is like reaching the summit for a municipal management, but even more if you go alone, it is like reaching the sky” (quote 3:1).

BOX 1 CENTRALISM IN GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT

Category of analysis	Subcategory of analysis	Rooting (quotes)	Representative quote (testimonial of the participants)
Centralism in government management	Dependence of local projects on ministries.	59	In terms of budget, we still depend on the Ministry of Economy and Finance, so many of our projects are in the Ministry of Housing, Ministry of Transportation, MINCETUR (Ministry of Foreign Trade and Tourism) and the Ministry of Education (quote 6:2).
	Budget management trips of mayors to Lima.	33	The pressure was worth it, you have to insist, you have to go to Lima to live there when you have your project, you have to look for all the channels to put pressure on all sides (quote 3:33).
	Management strategies with the central and regional government.	15	We have tried to pursue all possible avenues: one is through the congressmen who open the doors of the ministries, and another directly with the ministries through their advisors (quote 5:15).
	Centralized mentality from the local level.	8	The project is still in the decentralized agency in Puno, that is bureaucracy and one can suspect that something is wrong [...]. These days we are demanding that these spaces be closed, because we are making the projects more cumbersome and that everything be evaluated in Lima (quote 4:6).

Continue

Category of analysis	Subcategory of analysis	Rooting (quotes)	Representative quote (testimonial of the participants)
	Concentration of economic and budgetary resources in the central government.	7	We only manage 30% of the budget between the region and the municipalities; 70% remains in the central government sectors, where we are supposed to manage (quote 9:3).
	Resource execution control from the center.	4	Now there is more control than resources, and even those controls make the municipalities invest more in those controls (quote 5:7).
	Deliberate promotion of local fragmentation from the center.	2	We have tried to make this commonwealth, because alone you do nothing, but its recognition depends on the president of the PCM (Presidency of the Council of Ministers); we are 3 years on the issue of recognition of the commonwealth, each time he tells us that this is so and that this is not so, in other words, I have had enough (quote 2:30).

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

In addition, Box 1 shows that, in order to make the management of the various investment projects in their territory viable, mayors must develop various advocacy strategies in the decision-making bodies of the sectoral ministries, because the economic and financial resources are concentrated there. In this process, the entrapment of projects in the decentralized agencies of the sectors at the regional level generates a centralist mentality in the mayors themselves. Once the projects are approved, they face control mechanisms from the central government, which implies expenses for local governments. This situation creates in the mayors' social imaginary the idea of a deliberate fragmentation of local stakeholders from the center.

In relation to the recentralization of governmental management, Box 2 shows the collective imagination of the mayors, according to which the very experience of decentralization in the country is leading to a process of recentralization of governmental management. This situation would be occurring in a context in which local governments have a scarce economic and technical capacity (E=24), the budget cuts they have suffered in the last 10 years and the political marginalization suffered by district municipalities; added to all this is the scarce management capacity of the regional government. This landscape of economic, technical and political vulnerability of subnational governments would have generated favorable conditions for the recentralization of resources to the central government.

As an alternative to the recentralization of the current decentralization process, the mayors propose a model of a decentralized State towards localities and regions, without intermediary agencies that hinder the decentralization process of functions and competencies towards subnational governments.

BOX 2

RECENTRALIZATION OF GOVERNMENTAL MANAGEMENT

Category of analysis	Subcategory of analysis	Rooting (quotes)	Representative quote (testimonial of the participants)
Recentralization of governmental management	Limited economic and technical capacity of local governments.	24	You think that with 9 million that I have and 3 million for investment, I am going to be able to do a large-scale project! You can't do much, if the file costs 1 million, even 2 million; so what do we do, little things here and little things there (quote 2:17).
	Budget cuts to municipalities.	17	Before, when I was mayor in 2007, 2008 until 2010 my opening institutional budget (PIA) was 21 million, now in this period my PIA is only 9 million (quote 2:15).
	Decentralization leading to recentralization.	14	Decentralization re-centralizes because we ourselves ask that in this matter we are better evaluated in Lima, I believe that even a local from Puno is the enemy of another local from Puno (quote 9:10).
	Limited management capacity of the regional government.	12	The government should decentralize those special programs it has, but President Castillo plans to give to the regional governments, they do not have the capacity to spend, they cannot solve the problems of the region (quote 8:7).
	Marginalization of district municipalities.	11	In Lima they serve depending on the face; if he is a district mayor, he should wait or better come back tomorrow. The district mayor should be served as a priority because that mayor spends a lot of money to be in Lima for 3 or 4 days, while the provincial mayor can stay because he has more resources (quote 2:10).
	Need for a decentralized State towards localities and regions.	6	[...] these special programs should be passed directly to local governments, and not to the regional government, because if they are passed to the regional government, another centralism will be created in the same way (quote 8:11).
	Inoperability of decentralized agencies at the regional level.	4	The Ministry of Housing tells us that something will be declared approved here in the region and in Lima they would not have to evaluate it again, they would only have to grant the budget; however, this does not happen (quote 13:14).

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Regarding *fragmentation and conflicts of functions and competencies*, according to Box 3, the mayors state that, in addition to the disjointed or atomized work of the three levels of government, in the process of managing local public policies there is overlapping and conflicts of competencies at the various levels and sectors (E=21). This process is made more acute by the excessive bureaucratization of public management, i.e., from the mayors' perspective, the procedures implemented by the different sectors of the central government are very cumbersome and very slow in issuing decisions regarding the viability of investment projects.

The institutional mechanisms for intergovernmental coordination are not complying with the role of articulating decisions and actions aimed at decentralizing functions and competencies to subnational governments, but are only acting as informative and consultative instances for formal coordination among the actors of the three levels of government: these are the cases of the Executive GORE (a space for dialogue between the central government and regional governments) and the Executive MUNI (a space for dialogue between the central government and local governments), instances best known to the mayors, who are totally unaware of the CCI.

Faced with the fragmented work of local governments in the management of investment projects before the central government, the mayors propose as an efficient and effective mechanism for IGR, inter-municipal association, a mechanism that is also recognized and institutionalized in the country, but which local actors have not yet put into operation.

BOX 3 FRAGMENTATION AND CONFLICTS OF FUNCTIONS AND COMPETENCIES

Category of analysis	Subcategory of analysis	Rooting (quotes)	Representative quote (testimonial of the participants)
Fragmentation and conflicts of functions and competencies	Atomization and overlapping of governmental functions.	21	We elaborate projects for the improvement of health centers, educational centers and we look for budgets, but we lack coordination with the regional government because they also formulate projects of this nature (quote 6:20).
	Excessive bureaucratization of public management.	24	Another problem we mayors have is that everything is bureaucratized in the ministries, a lot of paperwork, to talk to a person you have to go through several filters and finally they tell you the same thing (quote 2:6).
	The need for IGRs based on municipal associativity.	24	We, for example, now that we are four mayors in the Basin, we have opened the doors quickly, we have two points of entry, one through the Basin and the other because we are directors of REMURPE (Network of Urban and Rural Municipalities of Peru), that helps me (quote 3:4).
	Role of institutional mechanisms for intergovernmental coordination.	12	Basically, it is to have the information on how to channel the projects, that is what we find out through these MUNI-Executives, the officials come to inform us of the opportunities through different ministries (quote 5:26).

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

However, during the study, the category of analysis referring to the deviant behavior of government actors emerged, made up of three emerging subcategories of analysis (see Box 4): corruption in the management of investment projects, especially in the sectoral ministries, such as the Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF), Ministry of Education (MINEDU), Ministry of Health (MINSA), Ministry of Housing, Construction and Sanitation, among others. Corruption is one of the structural problems that has become institutionalized in the country, which during the last three decades has permeated the functioning of the political system, degenerating it at different levels and producing permanent political crisis and instability. This problem has been clearly recognized by the mayors. In this sense, the preferential treatment by political line/support would have negatively influenced the management process of local public policies. This last modality of deviant behavior of governmental actors is related to political clientelism, i.e., those public decisions and actions that respond to certain political favors: exchange of public goods and services outside regular or legal procedures.

As an example of this situation, all former presidents of the republic and many other high-level public officials have been indicted by the justice system. This dynamic of centralized public policy management has hindered and impaired the implementation of local public policies in response to local demands and needs.

BOX 4 DEVIANT BEHAVIOR OF GOVERNMENTAL ACTORS

Category of analysis	Subcategory of analysis	Rooting (quotes)	Representative quote (testimonial of the participants)
Deviant behavior of governmental actors	Corruption in management of investment projects.	18	The Comptroller's Office should do its job, investigate all the mayors who have brought these works either through the congressmen or through the Ministry of Economy and Finance, where they have the godfather who is the construction company and they themselves make the terms and conditions and everything is tied up, and they corrupt the mayors (quote 16:2).
	Preferential attention by political line/support.	8	Sometimes they have to like me, because I am not of their party and they kind of isolate us and see us as ugly ducklings (quote 3:40).
	Political crisis and instability.	8	With this political crisis, in the time I have been in office we have had 5 presidents of the republic, 3 congresses, and on top of that the COVID. This crisis has affected a lot, because suddenly there was a change of ministers, directors, specialists and others (quote 1:15).

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Likewise, permanent political instability in the country has become a “surprisingly normal” political phenomenon in recent years, because the political behavior of government actors is based more on short-term decisions and actions, and less on medium- and long-term policies and plans. This procedure in public management has a negative impact on the implementation of territorial development policies.

Regarding the *weak territorial dynamics in the context of centralism and the CIGs*, the mayors’ demand for creation of districts of smaller geopolitical areas (E=52), such as new towns (see Box 5), has a double meaning: first, as a synonym of fragmentation and territorial inequality and, second, as a decentralization mechanism in the face of centralism and the recentralization of public resources. This is because the centrality of economic dynamics in certain territories means that some local areas are marginalized. In this context, territorial articulation and development are weakened. Local actors choose to revalue local resources and potentialities for their subsistence, such as tourism and handicrafts, generating temporary work opportunities. These territories, eventually, tend to expel the population.

BOX 5 WEAK TERRITORIAL DYNAMICS IN THE CONTEXT OF CENTRALISM AND IGCS

Category of analysis	Subcategory of analysis	Rooting (quotes)	Representative quote (testimonial of the participants)
Weak territorial dynamics	Creation of districts: a synonym of territorial fragmentation and decentralization.	52	I think it is more of a myth, because in the end they are going to have to divide the 6 million budget for each of the towns, FONCOMUN (Municipal Compensation Fund) is based on the number of inhabitants, it does not depend on the district, there are districts that only have 300 thousand soles a year, with a PIA like this they only have enough to pay the personnel (quote 10:26). [...] also allows for the decentralization of the care provided in the province of Puno in different services required directly by the population (citation 6:40).
	Communication routes no longer articulate territorial development.	22	I have a regional level project which is the Pueblo Libre-Huapaca-San Miguel and Lloroco road, that is, it joins with the district of Huacullani and joins with the Pan-American highway that goes to Tacna, this project started in 2018, they laid the first stone, the population received the authorities with great fanfare, but for the following years they have not programmed a budget, it is abandoned (quote 1:49).

Continue

Category of analysis	Subcategory of analysis	Rooting (quotes)	Representative quote (testimonial of the participants)
	Tourism and handicrafts as the only appealing resources.	19	The aspect that is always putting us in its place and at the national-regional level is that we are known for Lake Titicaca, so I repeat that tourism is the basic source of development (quote 6:29).
	Territories that expel the population.	14	Instead of growing as a population, we are decreasing. Yesterday I was talking with a director and we were talking about the students; instead of a vegetative growth we are decreasing, for example, a school that had 1200 students, currently has only 500 and the schools in the districts that had around 500 to 400, currently do not even reach 100 (quote 8:30).
	Generation of temporary employment.	9	We have been managing some projects that are executed on a temporary basis, such as TRABAJA PERU (a government social program), so that the population can keep working and thus earn some income for the family (quote 1:39).
	Insufficient demarcation and territorial articulation.	7	The first thing would be for the national government to see the part of the territorial demarcation between departments, and the regional governments, which if they are their competence, would see the territorial demarcation between provinces and districts (quote 2:51).

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

The socioeconomic reality expressed in Box 5 shows the effects generated by the phenomenon of centralism and the recentralization of public resources to the central government. The unfinished process of territorial demarcation at the departmental/regional and local levels, for which the central government is directly responsible, contributes negatively to this. According to Article 1 of Law No. 27,795, Law of Demarcation and Territorial Organization, this is the sole competence of the Executive Branch to achieve the regulation of limits and the rational organization of the territory of the Republic.

BOX 6

ENTREPRENEURIAL TERRITORIAL DYNAMICS IN THE CONTEXT OF CENTRALISM AND GICS

Category of analysis	Subcategory of analysis	Rooting (quotes)	Representative quote (testimonial of the participants)
Entrepreneurial territorial dynamics	Promoting local socioeconomic development with cultural support.	43	In the district, productive projects are being promoted, one is the milk processing plant, the other is the improvement of the forage floor and genetic improvement (citation 1:43). In my district, the vast majority is dedicated to milk, I think it is like white gold because a person receives 1,500 soles a week, a family gets 6,000 soles a month and so there are several, so there is a good income and they are more dedicated to livestock, so we have also bought tractors to plant alfalfa and oats (3:41).
	Demographic growth in recent years.	15	People want economy, if there is economy here people stay and if there is not, they leave in search of a better quality of life in other regions. So last year we planted 7300 kilos of garlic and 180 families worked, and this year we are planting more than 120 thousand kilos of garlic, we have 800 people participating; it is a good amount and it is the second year. We hope that this activity becomes more adequate in the district so that the following year it can double and we have seen that we are growing (quote 7:23).
	Community and associative participation in local socioeconomic development.	12	In Taraco there are more than 150 producer associations and others are by communities. Taraco has 13 communities and partialities; it is the president and the lieutenant governors with whom we coordinate directly for any improvement, especially of the roads or any project they need. We coordinate more with the producers' associations (quote 5:46).
	Roads contribute to local socioeconomic development.	11	There has been an improvement in the road system, for example, last year more than 100 kilometers were repaired with the funds given by the national government through Arranca Perú. More than 100 kilometers were repaired with that money. This is the district in which we have covered the most kilometers. So, the roads have been improved and this has made it easier for the producers themselves to transport their products (quote 7:27).

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Finally, in relation to *entrepreneurial territorial dynamics in the context of centralism and the CIGs*, the “promotion of local socioeconomic development with cultural support” (E=43), emerges as a collective expression of the mayors based on productive entrepreneurship actions aimed at strengthening local economies (see Box 6). These territorial dynamics of entrepreneurship, in certain local areas, are produced around the enhancement of local potentialities, both of a socio-community and economic-productive nature.

The socio-community potentialities revalued at the local level are manifested in “community and associative participation in local socioeconomic development”, which is directly and indirectly articulated with the other subcategories of analysis. In other words, to the extent that a strong associative and productive fabric is developed at the local level, it necessarily contributes to the process of local socioeconomic development.

On the other hand, the local economic-productive potential is based on the natural resources of the territory, such as dairy farming, agriculture and commercial horticulture, tourism, and handicrafts, among others. These local potentialities achieve their viability and maturity to the extent that there are favorable conditions of territorial articulation with local, regional, national and international economies. In this sense, the “communication routes that contribute to local socioeconomic development” constitute another of the emerging subcategories of analysis, which complements and supports the main category.

All these processes that energize local economies lead, to a large extent, to the achievement of the expected results of local socio-economic development: the personal and social fulfillment of local social and economic actors, the satisfaction with the dynamics of territorial development, and the attractiveness of the local territory. This territorial dynamic is manifested in the “demographic growth in recent years”. This situation reflects the dynamics of entrepreneurship that is generated in some local areas, as a result of a series of dynamizing elements of territorial development.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The fact that the management of local public policies depends on the ministerial sectors of the central government means that the centralist tradition (Véliz, 1984) of the Peruvian State continues to be entrenched with respect to the solution of local needs, problems and demands, because the administration of public resources in its various modalities is concentrated in the central government. For their management, local actors have to turn to central instances, through formal and informal procedures (J. A. C. Pérez, 2018). In this process, relations and balance of power are established between the center and the periphery (Grin et al., 2020), cooperation between the central government and local governments with a control and demand for accountability of the center towards the periphery (Mwasaga, 2021), interdependence between the central power and local powers (Eckersley, 2017). However, the solution in the face of centralism and unbalanced power relations among government actors is the establishment of a clear and effective institutional framework and the shared commitment of all actors involved in the process of decentralization (Mwasaga, 2021).

The study shows that there are several elements and patterns of behavior of government actors that support the argument that the current decentralization experience is leading to the recentralization of resources to the central government. The fragmentation and weakening of local governments would

be strengthening the real decision-making power of the central government (Lewis, 2014; Tan, 2020), or through the deliberate choice of the IGR strategy, based on coordination and cooperation, only, and not based on collaboration (Wockelberg & Ahlbäck-Öberg, 2022), would be leading to fragmentation and conflicts of functions and competences among the three levels of government. From biopolitics and biopower, those patterns of behavior developed in the framework of IGRs oriented to decentralization, respond to the administration and control of life in the territory from the centralized and centralizing power of the State (Urabayen & León-Casero, 2018; Useche-Aldana & C. I. Pérez, 2019) and through the various regimes of liberal and neoliberal governmentality (Calveiro, 2020; López, 2016).

As part of the neoliberal development model implemented in the country, the dynamics of the IGR in the context of centralism and recentralization of resources in the central government, has reproduced and strengthened the phenomenon of territorial inequality, expressed in a sharp dichotomy between backward areas and growth areas (Díaz-Hernández & Parreño-Castellano, 2005; Eizaguirre-Anglada & Klein, 2020). In backward areas, weak territorial dynamics are produced: territorial fragmentation and marginalization, promotion of traditional subsistence activities and temporary employment, affecting local actors in defining their self-development. Meanwhile, in growth areas there are entrepreneurial territorial dynamics: enhancement of local socio-community and economic-productive potentialities, oriented to local socioeconomic development.

Based on the data and the experience of the IGR between central and local governments, within the framework of the decentralization process, it is argued that the construction of a unitary and decentralized State would end up being illusory. This situation implies adopting new approaches, new strategies, new wills and resolute commitments on the part of government actors, in order to redirect the process. In this perspective, from the local level, IGRs are proposed for local socioeconomic development, based on associativity and the pooling of actors, based on the approaches of local and territorial governance (Fernández-García & Mota-Consejero, 2009; Peters, 2007; Torfing & Sørensen, 2014) networked local governance (Quispe-Mamani, 2013) local governance as government-business cooperation (Navarro-Yáñez et al., 2008) and public governance (Iacovino et al., 2017; Osborne, 2010).

The process of inclusive, integrated, equitable and sustainable territorial development implies the adoption of the socio-territorial management model based on local and public governance, involving a diversity of networked actors, transforming IGRs based on unilateralism to multilateral and multilevel networks. This task, in turn, implies the introduction of the polycentric governance approach (De la Mora-De la Mora, 2017; Ostrom, 2014; Paniagua & Vergara, 2022), understood as the multiplicity of decision-making centers acting autonomously. That is, to the extent that each entity/jurisdiction participates in a competitive, cooperative or centralized manner in the resolution of conflicts, it is possible that for the management of public goods and services each of them operates coherently with predictable patterns of interactive behavior. In this process, the role of the principles of cooperation, coordination, integration and functional complementarity of socio-territorial spaces and the institutions that regulate social interactions is transcendental. However, for all this to be viable, institutional changes in structural terms are necessary, i.e., the adoption of a more plural State model, with decentralization and real participation of local and regional actors in the territorial development process. In this sense, more research is needed.

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Edgar Quispe-Mamani



<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4877-8551>

Doctor in Political Theory, Democratic Theory and Public Administration from Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (UAM); Master in Sociology from Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú (PUCP); Bachelor in Sociology from Universidad Nacional del Altiplano Puno (UNAP); Undergraduate and graduate professor at Universidad Nacional del Altiplano Puno (UNAP); RENACYT-CONCYTEC research professor.

E-mail: edgarquispe@unap.edu.pe

Wenceslao Quispe Borda



<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4842-3286>

Master in Social Management from Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú (PUCP); Master in Social Sciences with mention in Evaluation of Social Programs from Universidad Nacional del Altiplano Puno (UNAP); Bachelor in Sociology from Universidad Nacional del Altiplano Puno (UNAP); Undergraduate teacher at Universidad Nacional del Altiplano Puno (UNAP). E-mail: wquispeb@unap.edu.pe

Osbaldo Turpo Gebera



<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2199-561X>

Doctor in Education from Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos (UNMSM); Master in Education Administration from Universidad Católica de Santa María (UCSM); Bachelor in Education from Universidad Peruana Cayetano Heredia (UPCH); Professor of Educational Research at Universidad Nacional de San Agustín Arequipa (UNSA). E-mail: oturpo@unsa.edu.pe

AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTION

Edgar Quispe-Mamani: Conceptualization (Lead); Data curation (Lead); Formal Analysis (Lead); Investigation (Lead); Methodology (Lead); Project administration (Lead); Resources (Lead); Software (Lead); Supervision (Lead); Validation (Lead); Writing - original draft (Lead); Writing - review & editing (Lead).

Wenceslao Quispe Borda: Conceptualization (Supporting); Data curation (Supporting); Formal Analysis (Supporting); Investigation (Supporting); Methodology (Supporting); Resources (Supporting); Validation (Supporting); Writing - original draft (Supporting).

Osbaldo Turpo Gebera: Conceptualization (Supporting); Data curation (Supporting); Investigation (Supporting); Methodology (Supporting); Resources (Supporting); Validation (Supporting).