

# Proceedings of the Workshop: State of the Art of Local Governance - Challenges for the Next Decade

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## POLICY BRIEF NO 1

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## PREFACE

The mandate of The Swedish International Centre for Local Democracy (ICLD) is to contribute to poverty alleviation and to strengthen the individual's freedom and rights by promoting local democracy. In order to fulfil this mandate, we offer capacity building programmes through our *International Training Programmes*, decentralized cooperation through our *Municipal Exchange Programmes* and, most importantly, knowledge management through our *Centre of Knowledge*. The Centre will document key lessons learned from our ongoing activities, initiate and fund relevant research, engage in scholarly networks, organize conferences and workshops and set up a publication series.

The proceedings are the result of a workshop held in Visby, Sweden, 29-30 April 2010 which succeeded in gathering some of the most distinguished scholars and policymakers in the field of local governance to discuss the State of the Art of Local Governance – Challenges for the Next Decade. The purpose of the workshop was twofold: firstly, it was designed to sum up findings and insights gained in recent decades through experiments with local democracy, and secondly, it aimed to consider what the key challenges and crucial policy issues will be in the coming decade. In the on-going process of establishing the ICLD, our ambition has been to provide a forum in which the gap between research, policy and practical experiences from the field may be addressed. This workshop is therefore intended to be the first of a series and the next international event (Phnom Penh, Cambodia) is planned for the spring of 2011.

The full papers from the workshop are published in the ICLD working paper series and can be downloaded from the ICLD web site.

Visby, Sweden, December, 2010

**Birgitta Svensk**  
Secretary General

## The rationale of the workshop

Following the rapidly changing political and development agenda in the post-cold war era, issues of governance and democratization have come to the forefront and given rise to the novel and complex field of development intervention. In the 'Third Wave of democracy' multi-party democracies were formally established on a broad basis and this prompted debates and negotiations about forms and depth of governance. However, the deeply politicized issues concerning forms of governance have in many cases been hotly contested. Most democracies have failed to consolidate or deepen and transitions have not proceeded according to expectations but instead have produced hybrid forms of government. Until recently, this tended to be attributed to a lack of capacity, which was seen mainly in technical terms related to the simple transfer of skills, procedures and organizational models from North to South. These included elections, human rights monitoring or gender equality. With hindsight it is evident that not enough attention was paid to democratic values or the broader political and social context in which capacity development efforts took place.

There was consequently a need to make 'democratization' more substantial and ambitions therefore developed to improve governance structures and enhance participation. This led to a focus on the local as seen in seminal works such as those by Cheema & Rondinelli (1983); Crook & Manor (1998); Manor (1999); Blair (2000); Crook & Sverrisson (2001). This brought new concepts to the fore in both policy and research, such as 'democratic decentralization', 'local governance' and 'community participation'. While introducing the local was an attempt to remedy the problems in democratization, the concept also fits well with development discourses about local participation and grassroots involvement, with processes of peace building in the wake of conflict and with requests for multilevel governance in an era of accelerating globalization. From a more structural perspective, the goal pursued in the neo-liberal 1980s - especially in Africa with its extensive Structural Adjustment Programmes and replacement of the state by the private sector - largely failed to produce the desired results. In particular, service provision for and protection of the poorest and of sub-altern groups was inadequate. The 'bringing-the-state-back-in' movement did not mean the return of a centralized, over-sized and inefficient state; it meant the introduction of a more local state presence that was designed to better respond to local needs. This movement took place under the 'third wave' and had to be democratic or at least to harbour democratic ambitions. Again, the 'macro- trends' of the late 1990s resonate both with previous development discourses as well as with each other.

The field of local democracy emerged from this and it has since been growing into a 'silent revolution' (Campbell, 2005) with great potential and implications. However, and as pointed out in critical analyses of the *New Local Politics of Democratisation* (Harriss et.al, 2004) that was referred to in some presentations in the workshop, the dynamics of this are complex, multifaceted and poorly understood. The field is under-conceptualized (e.g. how should the concept of 'local democracy' or 'sub-national' be understood in a semi/non-democratic national context?) and under-researched (what are the experiences and how can they be collectively comprehended?), but it is nevertheless a key variable in the nexus of politics and development, and the local and the national. Moreover, these developments relate positively (and sometimes negatively) with trends such as the development of a rights-based approach, the drive for enhanced gender equality and efforts to alleviate poverty.

Still more important may be the relation between research findings and policy processes. For example, what impact does decentralization have on poverty reduction and capacity development, why and when is democratic space being secured under decentralization as opposed to being limited by the elite, and when does devolution integrate society and reconnect the centre with the local instead of fragmenting and distancing? These questions have to do with the typical weak links in many development and governance contexts, and they require well-designed research that will be able to inform policy.

This workshop was intended to highlight in what ways experienced scholars and practitioners might be able to identify the gaps in global research on local democracy/governance. The mixture of participants from the major

international organizations in this field made for a creative and constructive environment. Theoretical considerations, models of local governance and solutions to various theoretical questions could immediately be addressed with the experiences of practitioners and vice versa. Interestingly, it became clear that the division between practitioners and researchers is often artificial since many individuals work in both fields and are therefore able to give insights both from their practical experience and from their theoretical understanding.

With such a diverse gathering of people the workshop was bound to cover a wide field of research. The discussions were guided by a number of themes: *the politics of decentralization; the developmental impact of decentralization; decentralization design and the role of civil society; decentralization as a strategy for post-conflict reconstruction; and decentralization and the international donor community*. The following is a humble attempt to distil the most interesting material from the presentations, discussions and debates during the workshop and to highlight some of the most important and challenging issues for the research community.

## Local democracy: definitions, issues and relevance

In *Considerations on Representative Government* (1861) Mill presented two main arguments in favour of local government which went beyond the perspective of the utilitarians and their emphasis on administrative efficiency and central supervision. Mill argued firstly that local political institutions are an essential part of a democratic government system because they widen the opportunity for citizens at the local level to participate and thereby learn the essence of democracy. Secondly, Mill claimed that it makes sense to give good scope for local administration because local interest, knowledge and capacity increased efficiency and the likelihood of services being provided. People should be able to make decisions about their local community through local government. Mill's argument is still valid, and there has been a revival of interest in the role of local democracy in facilitating and encouraging political participation as part of a broader democratic polity (Stoker, 1996).

Local democracy, and its institutional embodiment in local government, holds a special place in normative political theory and seemingly in the workshop as well. As stressed by Lawrence Pratchett, orthodox justifications for local government include pluralist arguments that institutions of local democracy enable a diffusion of power throughout society, that local democracy supports diversity in the face of an otherwise uniform set of central policies and that it enhances local responsiveness (Pratchett, 2004). International IDEA argues in its *Handbook on Local Democracy* that the core of local democracy could be narrowed down to four key concepts:

- i.) Good government and social welfare
- ii.) Political education
- iii.) Deliberation
- iv.) Citizenship and community

Local democracy and local governance are not equal and they are not easily defined concepts. Local democracy is often described as the foundation of enhanced quality and more enduring democracy while local governance is often defined as the level at which the citizen has the greatest opportunity to participate actively in decisions affecting society. It is also stressed that the shift from government to governance has meant that citizens and civil society have become involved in the pursuit of the public good and not just in the official processes of government.<sup>1</sup>

Systematization of this field may be aided by clarification of some key concepts. *Governance* is, as stated above, a broad concept which involves citizens and CSOs in political processes and not only in the official processes of government. *Good governance* is an indeterminate term used to describe how public institutions conduct public

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<sup>1</sup> *Democracy at the Local Level*. The International IDEA Handbook on participation, representation, conflict management, and governance (2002:13).

affairs and manage public resources in order to secure Human Rights (UNESCAP, 2009). Or as Cheema (2007:2) puts it:

As globalization pushed more countries to adopt market or quasi-market economies, and as technology drove the growth and the integration of worldwide communication and transportation networks, demands for political and economic participation grew even in countries that had totalitarian, authoritarian, or dictatorial governments and in which the state traditionally played the dominant or controlling role in managing national affairs. Good governance came to be seen as transparent, representative, accountable, and participatory systems of institutions and procedures for public decision making.

*Democratic local governance* is a descriptive term for a particular form of local government that can be evaluated either positively (its existence or effects) or *normatively* (its goodness or badness).

The discussions in the workshop ranged from scrutinizing overall models of governance via technical and administrative applications to philosophical debates about the core values of democracy. This may seem broad but all dimensions need to be considered both in research and practice. Development interventions that emphasize technical support and routines but lack political analysis are now commonly recognized as a major problem for establishing local democracy or democratic decentralization. Often local democracy or democratic decentralization are simply assumed to “do things”, such as increase efficiency, at the same time as they convey something that is vaguely understood to be democracy. As expressed by one of the participants, Anders Sjögren:

The typical official rationale for decentralization rests on the assumption that such a policy “brings government closer to the people”, as the catchphrase goes, and thus enhances bureaucratic and political accountability and responsiveness. This proposition has been echoed by a discursive emphasis on community participation in local settings, where development is supposedly more efficiently and democratically promoted.

Sjögren, 2010:2

However, as a normative concept local democracy is still contested as the search for core issues and common ground continues. In this search, it is crucial to establish key concepts of democratization, such as accountability, government responsiveness, transparency, representativity and participation. Such theoretical realms are in turn linked to different measures of intervention, such as budget support, institution building, and participatory planning and budgeting. The theoretical landscape is varied and although all seem to agree on the importance of the key concepts - or foundation - of local democracy, different concepts are emphasized in different contexts and by different scholars.

To some, like Merilee Grindle and James Manor, accountability is *the* most significant cornerstone of democratic decentralization (Grindle, 2010; Manor, 2010).

[Mechanisms for enhanced transparency] tend to work well only when they are linked to reliable mechanisms to ensure downward accountability - which is unusual. Accountability plainly matters more than transparency, even though the latter is very important.<sup>2</sup>

Establishment of a local government is easy, but in order to work in a democratic manner, downward accountability needs the discretionary power to achieve the democratic goals.

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<sup>2</sup> As an illustrating example, he refers to the biggest decentralization programmes in the world, the Panchayat Raj in India (Manor, 2010: 7).

For Scott Guggenheim, representativity, or the more common lack of it, should be the main concern as many local democracy interventions are managed by CSOs or NGOs with unclear community representation. Moreover, democratic decentralization without due representation is, according to Jesse Ribot, a recipe for the elite cooptation of would-be democratic processes. This was also underlined by Törnquist with reference to the recent book on *Rethinking Popular Representation*. To Ribot and Törnquist, the failure in achieving democratization lies mainly in the failure of governments and large outside agencies or organizations to recognize local institutions and partners that represent the citizenry and whose choices nurture the creation of public domains. The politics of recognition are decisive for strengthening either parallel structures that compete with and undermine local legitimate authorities or it can strengthen government structures and thereby achieve more sustainable, legitimate and, importantly, accountable state institutions. Strengthening local institutions also enhances what may be called responsiveness: “to be democratic, institutions must be representative: accountable to the people and empowered to respond” (Ribot, 2010: 8).

Along the same line, Leonardo Romeo, in agreement with Manor and Ribot, emphasizes the importance of autonomy in local governance. Downward accountability should be balanced with the autonomy to act independently enough to sustain legitimacy and efficient governance.

But even before starting to explore the political and institutional constraints on local governments’ action for local development, one needs to understand how, in any particular country context, the key issue of balancing *autonomy* and *accountability* in local government is addressed and resolved both *de jure* and *de facto* in the constitutive legislation and in the practice of inter-governmental relations.

Romeo, 2010

After all, Romeo claims, local institutions act as agents of both government and local constituencies (ibid). Local government should, however, not be assessed only in terms of downward accountability, representativity and so on. Throughout the discussion at the workshop the issue of efficient service delivery was hailed as equally important. Andrew Nickson used the government and the managerial ideal types of democracy to illustrate this spectrum of local democracy. The former emphasizes the above-mentioned fundamental dimensions of local democracy where a close relation to citizenry or community is important (principle of subsidiary), while the latter is more top-down and instrumental, and emphasizes efficiency of governance rather than democratic values. Nickson found that despite the struggle to achieve the governmental type of democracy, the main achievements of political reforms in Latin America have been the implementation of the managerial type, with better service delivery and the consequent strengthening of local institutions, particularly in terms of legitimacy (Nickson, 2010). In fact, the interdependence between the two types is clear as local government must be assessed not only according to its ability to reflect the will of the citizenry, but also according to its efficiency in delivering services. While this might not be clear in a theoretical sense, it is certainly clear among local communities where local democracy interventions or democratic decentralization are more likely to be assessed in the short term according to their ability to deliver rather than according to their democratic features.

In her analysis of political reforms in Mexico, Merilee Grindle elaborated three mechanisms to achieve downward accountability or ‘government by the people’: elections, collective action and claims for citizenship rights.

- Can citizens use the vote effectively to reward and punish the general or specific performance of local public officials and/or the parties they represent?
- Can citizens provoke responses to their collective needs from local governments?
- Can citizens be assured of fair and equitable treatment from public agencies at local levels?

In other words, to what extent do citizens have recourse to sanctions, benefits and rights when local governments

assume more responsibilities and political systems become more competitive? (Grindle, 2010). An important strength of this framework is its simplicity and usefulness in comparative studies for assessing what Grindle refers to as government 'by the people'.

When discussing local democracy, the workshop agreed that this, like any kind of democracy, implies accountability of the elected leaders to the people, although the core of this is problematic. This is why the most prominent scholars are no longer primarily concerned with what local democracy is, but rather with what obstacles and opportunities are involved in achieving it. Although there are various theoretical angles on this, and various experiences of research prompted scholars at the workshop to emphasize different aspects of the core concepts, the main concern was the impact and achievements of interventions by governments, donors and civil society. A somewhat bleak picture emerged, although some glimpses of hope were visible in interventions in Indonesia (Antlöv & Wetterberg, 2010; Guggenheim, 2010). The implementation of local democracy reforms is clearly problematic for a number of reasons, which could be summarized:

- The grand theory research and the 'one-size-fits-all' policy have proven a failure. In many reforms and interventions there is a lack of analysis of, and adaptation to, local political, economic and cultural conditions.
- The utilization of non-government actors (so called 'parallel institutions') and, hence, the bypassing of government institutions lead to conflict and unsustainable interventions. Most common is the reliance on CSOs with little or no representation from local communities.
- Failure to nurture 'stateness', state legitimacy and identification with a state rather than local and/or global identity groups.
- Neglecting the realm of politics and emphasizing the technical and procedural aspects of democratization.
- Failure to create sustainable public spaces for local engagement.
- Failure to combat corruption and clientelism and in some cases even the strengthening of such practices.
- Failure to establish adequate accountability mechanisms and relations (elections being inadequate at best).

Hence, the research agenda stands tall.

## Contextualizing local governance

The heritage from the 'Third wave of democratization' and the assumed but, in reality, incomplete victory of a uniform model of liberal democracy was reinforced by the tendency of donors to replicate 'best practices' across the globe. Given this, a broad consensus has emerged among scholars today that governance and democratization should be contextualized and that failing to do so will produce a skewed picture of local developments. Nevertheless, the paucity of contextual analysis is still striking, particularly in development policy circles where there is an inherited tendency to reduce complexity in order to seek a simple 'what works' formula (Manor, 2010). In his presentation, Scott Guggenheim made a similar point when he highlighted the sociological specifics of different locations and noted the problems of 'rubberstamped replications into other areas'. Olle Törnquist stressed the importance of using (comparative) historical and political economy analysis in order not only to understand the obstacles to establishing local democracy but also to identify dilemmas in parts of the global South that recall problems that have been faced and handled more successfully in other contexts, such as Brazil and the Indian state of Kerala and even in some of the historical dynamics in Scandinavia alternative. Needless to say, this kind of research would greatly benefit governance interventions.

Merilee Grindle stressed the importance of a more thorough analysis of existing government structures. These

are usually built of informal networks that in turn interact with efforts to establish democratic decentralization (Grindle, 2010). According to Anders Sjögren, the case of Uganda illustrates how such efforts are ‘.../confounded by traditionalist aspirations for ethnic communities, kingdoms or not, and by the informalisation of economic and social life generating informal networks’ (Sjögren, 2010:8). He continues: “More to the point, formal and informal regulatory structures are closely connected, in immediate local arenas as well as in the ways in which between these arenas are linked to actors and institutions at higher levels of politics” (ibid, 5). There is, in other words, a need to understand informal political institutions and structures not only because the state interacts with them but because state authority in the local context is ultimately built upon these informal institutions.

The field of local governance has for obvious reasons focused mainly on the local level of government, and on local communities and so on. Two reflections are important in this regard. Firstly, there is the issue of confining and defining the local. It is to some extent taken for granted that the local can be confined to specific administrative bodies, such as a village or a municipality. However, social bonds determining local politics often cut across administrative boundaries and create patron-client relations and loyalties that extend into other political entities. Cultural affinities across such boundaries also influence the political content and ideologies. Ribot, for instance, identified the middle level of government as an area of importance - and, commonly, neglect. Province and district administrations or their equivalents are often seen either as purely executive institutions or agents of obstruction. Nevertheless, donors and governments expect these same middle level institutions to manage and implement democratic programmes or reforms or, if this proves impossible or too time consuming, to ignore and bypass them. In general, it is not always clear which role mid-level governments are playing in assisting local governments; they may in fact be detrimental to the establishment of strong local government and occasionally intentionally so.

Although there is, then, clearly a need to contextualize local governance, there is also a need to find the generic bases of local democracy. This is captured by Manor’s call for accountability and devolution of resources and power and by Ribot’s and Törnquist’s emphasis on representation as the most important agent of positive change in general and on local democracy as a means of poverty alleviation in particular.

## Local democracy as undermining, paralleling and legitimizing the state

The support for local democracy reforms in the South emerged after a period of rather crude neo-liberal approaches to development. In the mid-nineties, the dismantling of the state was followed by a period of re-emphasis of the importance of public institution building. This has not meant a return to the modernization paradigm of the pre-neoliberal era; it has meant the distilling of the corrective functions of state institutions in relation to development in general and market forces in particular. However, it was soon realized that the gap between central state structures and local communities would not be easily bridged and the solution became the utilization, and often construction, of civil society.

Although the involvement of civil society is generally seen as a cornerstone for anchoring democracy (Antlöv & Wetterberg, 2010), it is also widely agreed that the reliance on CSOs and the consequent bypassing of government institutions has been a major weakness of most donor efforts (Blair, 2010; Manor, 2010; Grindle, 2010; Ribot, 2010; Harriss et. al 2004; Törnquist et.al 2009).

A number of issues emerged in the presentations and discussions. Firstly, CSOs are often considered to be more efficient since they do not need to follow bureaucratic procedures and are not caught up in the government planning systems and power struggles. Cheema’s paper and presentation presented the most focused analysis of the role of civil society. He pointed out a number of important roles that are played by civil society in local governance reforms, such as acting as watch dogs and mobilizing human and material resources. Civil society actors also play a role in implementing and sustaining democratic reforms.

At the local level, civil society organizations are actively engaged in community development, skill improvements for sustainable livelihoods, and access to basic social services. Through local elections and local elected councils, they can hold local leaders accountable and influence the articulation of local needs and priorities.

Cheema, 2010:10

With cases from Indonesia, Antlöv & Wetterberg

[D]emonstrate specific ways in which civil society engagement has strengthened democracy through local-level innovation, mobilization, and higher standards for accountability that reflect changed relations between officials and civil society organizations”.

Antlöv & Wetterberg, 2010

Also Öjendal & Kim are optimistic about the role of civil society in their study of post-conflict reconstruction in Cambodia, where the reform process

[H]as opened up political space in a benevolent (i.e. democratic) way, allowing for a positive relation between civil society and the local state to grow, and in the process reducing the ‘governance gap’, and enhancing the legitimacy of the local state.

Öjendal & Kim, 2010:17

Constructing a local government-civil society nexus is therefore crucial for avoiding bypassing and fragmentation (Öjendal & Kim, 2010; Morrison, 2010; Jackson, 2010).

However, there is an obvious risk that civil society organizations may become so strong that they begin steering local political processes and *de facto* undermining attempts to build sustainable and legitimate local governance. From a donor perspective, NGOs are typically chosen because they are good and efficient implementing agents or consultants (Fredborg-Larsen, 2010) rather than being institutions that represent democratic values. Generally, donors have relied on CSOs for short-term success instead of risky and costly institution building within government structures. Such development policies have not only tended to undermine the strength and legitimacy of local government institutions, but also to call into question the political motives behind donor activities and the way in which ‘the North’ nurtures a post-development critique.

Jesse Ribot expands this critique when he applies what he calls ‘the institutional choice and recognition framework’, in which he identifies central government and donor’s recognition of local institutions as a decisive issue in performance of local democracy programmes (Ribot, 2010:10, 24). Mistrust in local authorities spurs higher levels to recognize and choose parallel local authorities, NGOs or ‘ethnic leaders’. Ribot is critical to what he calls the ‘civil society approach’

[The] civil society approaches are used to selectively empower class, party, ethnic and gendered allies, reproducing and entrenching existing social stratification. This civil society approach is not enabling all groups within society to influence governance on an equal basis. [H]owever, where civil society emerged from social movements, it appears that a civil society

approach was effective at broad-based representation and serving interests of the poor.

Ribot, 2010:16

While there is broad-based agreement about the short-sightedness of nurturing parallel local authorities, Ribot’s

distinction between NGOs in general and popular-based civil society is important. Reliance on and recognition of private NGOs has for too long been used as an excuse for governments and donors to ignore the need to respond to real popular demands since some of these NGOs may in fact be pursuing their own agendas rather than popularly supported ones. In such cases, local government may appear to be showing accountability while there is in practice no downward accountability. It is therefore necessary to clarify the terminology and make clearer distinctions between social movements with a solid popular social base and downward accountability on the one hand, and the broader term of upwardly accountable NGOs on the other. Similarly Törnquist questioned Antlöv and Wetterberg's optimistic conclusions from Indonesia claiming that they did not discuss the importance of their case studies in view of the results that point to the fragmentation and lack of representative democratic politics among the civil society community in Indonesia according to panels of case studies (Prasetyo et.al. 2003) and the national participatory democracy surveys (Priyono et.al. 2007; Samadhi et.al 2009).

Another issue that deserves more attention is the legitimacy of the state or a return to the 'idea of the state' (e.g. Kamala Chandrakirana and Leonardo Romeo's presentations). This is more than a demand for discourse analysis of local governance and it is a far cry from the post-colonial emphasis on the dominance of the state over local communities. It is an appeal to recognize the nation-state's power to prevent parochialism, chauvinism and discrimination (Chandrakirana, 2010). Ideally, the state should not be based upon ethnic factors but upon broader concepts of citizenship and belonging. The call for 'stateness' is also an attempt to complement the local - centre dichotomy with a global analysis that covers broader processes of fundamentalism and modernization and the appeal of these to local elites in ways that may not be beneficial to marginalized groups such as the poor, ethnic minorities or women. From another perspective, the problem appears to be the inability of the state to reflect the needs and protect the rights of local communities or 'a weak sense of national and global citizenship at the local level' (ibid, 2010).<sup>3</sup> One important implication raised by Ribot is that decentralization, and particularly the bypassing of government institutions, may even undermine the strength and legitimacy of central governments and instead strengthen the local elite and the reactionary policies they are supposed to counter.

Many of the 'indigenous' governance systems, when analyzed as political systems rather than being viewed as *cultural forms*, would be labeled autocratic, despotic, oppressive, patriarchal, gender biased or gerontocratic. Some indigenous cultures condone and continue forms of servitude and slavery. But when we call them 'indigenous', it is as if the nature of authority and governance is suddenly obscured behind a fog of cultural relativism. All local authorities need to be evaluated according to how they represent people, encourage citizenship and produce an inclusive public domain (Ribot, 2010). All this is to be balanced with the discussion above about context and legitimacy.

## Local democracy as a political or a technical issue

There is a widespread understanding that efforts to encourage local democratization, or from a donor perspective, investments in local democracy, should 'pay-off' not only in terms of service delivery but also as tools for achieving larger development goals such as growth, poverty alleviation, conflict resolution or post-conflict reconstruction. This functionalist perspective is contested, though, as democracy has inherent values of its own (as does the 'government type' mentioned by Nickson above). However, local democracy earns legitimacy precisely because it is supposed to 'do something' and it is often marketed not for its democratic values but for what it is supposed to accomplish in tangible terms. Below, we will return to the issues involved in expected outcomes such as poverty alleviation, public administration reform, service delivery and post-conflict reconstruction. Putting emphasis upon what local democracy is supposed to accomplish aside from democracy itself tends to focus attention on technical issues instead of politics and values (ideologies).

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<sup>3</sup> There are many other examples, but maybe India constitutes the ultimate showcase with a number of states administrations utilizing parochial identities to nurture their political power base (see e.g. Manor, 2009).

These issues were raised and it was noted how appraisals and evaluations of development interventions have tended to be devoid of political analysis. However, even the most technical decentralization schemes are political projects.

[T]hose [who] are narrowly technocratic and regard 'politics' as merely an oddity, a constraint, or something to be overcome, contained, or even excluded - are missing the main point. They are also seeking to achieve goals which are infeasible and perverse. The aim of analysts and designers of decentralized systems should not be to marginalize politics but to embrace it. They should seek to create structures, processes and rules which enable politics to flourish, and which channel it into constructive avenues.

Manor, 2010:6

The various dimensions of democratic decentralization and governance all show that interventions are political, but also that we need thorough political analysis of local power hierarchies, their economic and political foundations, how they play on political processes and how they influence the outcome of interventions and reforms. The political economy of decentralization - who gets what - at the central as well as the local level is critical to a thorough understanding of any reform.

There is also a need to understand the role of political parties and, more specifically, their ideological impact on local governance. This is illustrated, for instance, by the communist parties of Eastern Asia. Ignoring the ideological dimensions of CSOs or omitting political parties from analysis or in development efforts distorts the picture of both the challenges and potential solutions.

Assistance to civil society (civic education, advocacy NGOs, media assistance) often disregards power structures - it generally does not assist pro-democracy activists to engage with political parties or challenge power structures (Antlöv & Wetterberg, 2010:3).

The absence of political analysis may result from the fact that donors are largely distant from the implementation of development efforts (Fredborg-Larsen, 2010). Also, governments in the South as well as the donor community operate under strict time constraints. In fact, the issue of time was addressed in several papers and presentations during the workshop. The message was clear: democratization takes time! Donor-driven programmes were criticized for having too lofty and too technically-oriented goals to be fulfilled in too short a time; most scholars agree that democratization rests upon values and culture that change slowly. Indeed, the project cycle approach to democratization may even be detrimental to more subtle, yet more sustainable, dimensions of democratization.

## Local democracy as a development tool

Whether or not governments are in fact emphasizing top-down control of local institutions and whether there is an increased demand for efficient service delivery are empirical questions. Either way, this issue illustrates the significance of improving vertical (i.e. global-central-local) relations in any decentralized system. As Henrik Fredborg-Larsen from the UNDP puts it: "participation of citizens needs to be more actively encouraged to increase accountability of service providers" (Fredborg-Larsen, 2010:12). Or as Judith Tandler argues, we need: "service-delivery approaches that facilitate demand-driven pressures for accountability" (Tandler, 2010:8). Many seem to agree that enhanced local democracy has the potential to improve the efficiency of service delivery and that it holds elected and non-elected government bodies accountable if they do not deliver the services that people demand. Unfortunately, service delivery has proven to be a key concept in the current debate on local democracy; of course, service delivery is an important element in an effective democratic system but democracy is not all about efficiency.

Firstly, local democracy may be seen to be a tool for poverty alleviation, economic growth or development. In relation to poverty alleviation, James Manor stresses that success largely depends on how we define poverty. If the aim is to increase the incomes of poor people, the results may be meager. However, if we mean by poverty the ability of poor people to increase their capacity to influence and improve their living conditions, local democracy appears to be a useful tool.<sup>4</sup> Manor continues:

I argued in 1998 that democratic decentralization had considerable promise for reducing poverty which arises from inequalities *between* regions or localities - because many decentralized systems include provisions to redistribute resources from prosperous to poorer areas, and because those systems knitted poor, remote areas into regional or national networks which enabled them to gain greater assistance from higher levels. But decentralization had far less promise in reducing poverty which arises from inequalities *within* regions or localities - and that is usually the *main* problem.

Manor, 2010:9

The main problem in local democracy or decentralization reforms is, according to many researchers and practitioners, the phenomenon of 'elite capturing'. As stressed by Jan Rudengren, the local elite may manage to drain the flow of resources and power. Patronage based systems tend to worsen the problem and state structures tend to develop symbiotic relations with local elites, if for no other reason than simply to exercise some kind of power, control and stability. Furthermore, local elites are put in charge of carrying out measures to alleviate poverty - an endeavour that is often not in their own interest (cf. Crook and Sverrisson, 2001).

To increase the pressure on local elites and local state institutions, James Manor highlights the need for increasing 'political capacity'.

The term 'political capacity' here implies four things: poor people's political awareness, confidence, skills and connections (to people like themselves and to allies who are unlike them). It is surely appropriate to see a severe shortage of these things as one important dimension of 'poverty'.

Manor, 2010:11

By increasing the political capacity of the poor, the local elite will face increased pressure and political competition. For some, this might appear to be an easy problem for which education is the obvious solution. For others, education can be a means of control and suppression. In this latter perspective, the means need more thorough analysis.

While some participants stressed people's capacity to participate politically in order to increase accountability, Jesse Ribot claims that 'to produce and maintain the "opportunity" for equal inclusion will require the production of a meaningful public domain with built in bias that favor poor and marginal groups' (Ribot, 2010:15). Here, as mentioned above, the issue is to increase representativity by forming political domains in which people can participate in local politics. Nevertheless, Ribot agrees with Manor that local government usually does not serve the poor unless mandated to do so from above (see also Crook & Sverrisson, 2001).

Secondly, local democracy can be seen to be a cornerstone in political and public administration reform that stresses effectiveness, efficiency and equal distribution of services (Nickson, 2010), but also in shaping and deepening democracy itself. Besides a number of more or less democratic Public Administration Reforms (PAR), a manifestation of the effort to alleviate poverty and enhance administrative efficiency and democracy is participatory budgeting. Harry Blair defines the concept as follows:

Participatory budgeting is a process of democratic deliberation and decision-making, in which ordinary residents decide *directly or indirectly through specially selected representatives* how to allocate

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4 Manor, Perspectives on Decentralization, 2010: 6

part of a municipal or public budget.

Blair, 2010:2

He concludes that

In sum, there is some evidence for PB enhancing empowerment through participation, less but still real indication of its efficacy in poverty alleviation, but none so far for any impact in improving wellbeing. It can be argued that PBs' time span has been far too short to expect any real signs of wellbeing, and that furthermore, given the Western countries' own experience in improving wellbeing, citizen empowerment is the place to start on what has to be a long term drive to achieve it.

Blair, 2010:24; c.f Evans, 2004

Enhanced empowerment is without doubt an achievement that should be applauded. However, it is not difficult to find contradictions since democratic values may conflict with either non-Western conceptions of governance (Törnquist's presentation) or the drive for efficiency in local governance. In order to achieve inclusion, issues such as transparency, public consultation and participation may be sacrificed for more technical aspects of governance. It is easy to see that such sacrifices often coincide with local elite interests in omitting important democratic elements and practices. Obviously, there is a need to accomplish efficiency in local governance without sacrificing democratic values, or to put it more bluntly, to make local governance reforms 'pay-off' while keeping a public eye on their performance.

Thirdly, the workshop probed into the surprisingly little discussed role of local government/democratization in post-conflict settings (cf. UNDP, 2007). It was observed that under conditions of state collapse, the re-building of state institutions on a local level may be the key to reconstruction and normalization (Öjendal & Kim, 2010; Morrison, 2010; Jackson, 2010; cf. Guggenheim's presentation). In such a setting, 'trust' in political processes is largely absent and the building of state structures and the establishment of reciprocities may at first be achieved only in 'small circles'. The legitimization of a 'new state' may also be easier to achieve at the local level, especially since peace agreements are necessarily central accords. Local governance reforms are in essence the operationalization of a peace agreement and an integral (but often unspoken) part of it. This is evident in the fact that infant democracies are typically born with national elections before proper institutions are established. Therefore, decentralization processes that have a democratic content are paramount under these conditions.

However, there are risks. For reasons mentioned above, it was also observed that decentralization may further fragment an already fragile state (Jackson, 2010; Chandrakirana, 2010) and bring consequences that are quite the opposite of what was intended.

But two other types of accountability define the extent to which local governments may be able to deliver genuine local development. The first is the local elected bodies' accountability to their own constituencies, which, obviously shapes their responsiveness to local priorities. The second, and critical one, is the accountability of local administrations to elected local bodies. Again in many countries this accountability is extremely weak and, no matter what the de jure powers of local authorities are, the de facto implementation of their policies remains substantially constrained by a non-accountable local administration.

Manor, 2010:6

As was argued above, the utility of decentralization and the strengthening of the local in a post-conflict reconstruction process have great potential but they are highly dependent on the particular context. Certainly, more research is needed in this field.

## Conclusions and future challenges

A broad and ambitious endeavour like this workshop necessarily leads to several conclusions. Leonardo Romeo identifies the precondition for successful local democracy reforms as the political commitment of the national government to local development. In his view, 'local development' will not be achieved through decentralization as such, but will depend on local aspects of a local government's responsibilities. A national legal and institutional framework should guarantee transfer of capacity and resources for local development. The result should be the achievement of local sustainable accountability, institutional division of labour and resources and the strengthening of human and administrative capacities (Romeo, 2010).

While local democratization in different forms was meant to overcome a number of issues and achieve crucial development goals back in the 1990s, it has become clear that after more than two decades of local democracy reforms and interventions, a number of 'new' problems have arisen. The first goal of the workshop was to sum up experiences gained and several factors were found: vesting power in CSOs, local institutions and nourishing local political processes have been associated with elite capture (Blair) and the emergence of CSOs characterized by anything but key democratic features (Ribot), corruption, clientelism, discrimination and marginalization (Manor, Blair, Chandrakirana). Indeed, it is easy to become cynical about local democratization efforts, but the benefits may outweigh problems. Manor points out that once fundamental rights have been established, it is not that difficult. Öjendal and Kim show - as do Jackson, Sjögren, Guggenheim and Morrison - distinct benefits from the local approach in a post-conflict setting, and Cheema, Ribot, Romeo and Antlöv offered some hope of the possibility of driving these processes from below. Grindle, Nickson, and Blair all note progress (at times radical) in governance performances that may be attributed to reforms of local governance.

Moreover, and as mentioned earlier, local democracy reforms take time to deliver and establish. However, this is reason for optimism. Both Ribot and Manor mention the positive erosion of the hierarchical local power structure due to the Panchayat Ray reform in India (Manor, 2010). The participation of women in local politics was questioned initially in the mid-1990s as they were hostages to the male dominant local councils and had little or no political influence. Today, we know that women actually gained political influence simply by being put in the local councils and when their constituencies began to hold them accountable for their position of power. Leonardo describes a similar scenario for commune councils in Cambodia (Romeo, 2010; cf. Kim, 2011).

In a way, decentralization has moved from being a bold policy move to being a regular feature of a modern state (or the attempts to create one). Whether it is globalization, the failure of the private sector, or increased demands for democracy, human rights and gender equality that are the driving forces behind the rise of the importance of 'the local', it does seem as though the local has become a central political, institutional and social dimension of emerging modes of good governance. It is also clear from the workshop that more efforts are needed to provide clear policy support on critical issues (see below).

The second aim of the workshop was to look ahead but without necessarily expecting a clear agenda for action. However, the workshop hinted at areas of future concern. Research and practice in the field of local democracy should:

- Perform thorough contextual analysis.
- Increasingly rely on government structures.
- Consider measures to enhance accountability and counter elite capture.
- Realize the importance, but also weaknesses, of civil society.
- Allow time for democratic practices to adapt and settle.
- Consider decentralization as a tool for (re-)legitimizing the state.
- Take note of politics at all levels.

Participants at the conference expressed pessimism and optimism in different ways. There are reasons to be concerned about the backlash of programmes, while re-centralization seems to be a pervasive and constant process (cf. Smoke, 2010) if local democratic reforms do not deliver, there is an even greater danger of re-centralization.

The mixed experience of practice has tempered such optimism, and most observers are now aware that not only are reforms often hampered by lack of resources and capacity that tends to result in re-centralization but also that decentralization is an inherently political process.

Sjögren, 2010:2

Smoke takes one step further, seeing re-centralization as possibly inherent in decentralization:

In some cases a degree of recentralization is brought about indirectly by legal measures that increase the power and influence of national politicians. In a number of countries with empowered local governments, for example, constituency development funds give nontrivial resources to elected national politicians to meet the demands of their constituents ... [S]uch sources of funding managed directly by elected national legislators complicate accountability relationships in situations where local governments already face credibility deficits. ... In still other cases, recentralization is more informally pursued - without explicit changes in laws or regulations - through either regularized or ad hoc actions of politicians and bureaucrats at higher levels of government who face incentives to limit the functions of lower levels of governments or to constrain the behaviour of officially empowered local politicians and officials.

Smoke, 2010

From the highly informed presentations and discussions that took place at the workshop, this list could be made far longer. However, the varied experiences and the magnitude of obstacles and challenges noted demand a degree of humility and apprehension about defining *the* way ahead.

Overall, the workshop generated some fiery intellectual discussions based on the most recent research in the field. For ICLD, this was a seminal event that provided a strong platform for the planning of future strategies and activities. It also resulted in a wealth of papers which will in due time be edited into cutting edge publications. The first of these is a number of working papers in ICLD's ambitious series. These will be available in hard copies as well as in electronic versions from our web site ([www.icld.se](http://www.icld.se)). In addition, revised versions of these papers will be published in regular academic publications and policy-relevant documents.

# APPENDIX

## List of Participants

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## Workshop Program

### Wednesday 28 April

18.00 Reception at ICLD

### Thursday 29 April

9.00-9.30 Registration, coffee and mingle

#### Session 1:

9.30-10.00 Welcome speeches:

Åsa Ehinger-Berlinger and John Samuel

10.00-10.10 Introduction to the workshop

Anki Dellnas, *ICLD and the State of the Art of Decentralization*

Joakim Öjendal, *Workshop-theme and ambitions*

#### Session 2:

10.10-10.30 James Manor, *Perspectives on Decentralization*

10.30-10.50 Kamala Chandrakirana, *Decentralization and Discrimination in Indonesia: The Price of Local to National Disconnects*

10.50-11.10 Coffee

#### Session 3: *The politics of decentralization*, Chairman: Anki Dellnas

11.10 Harry Blair, *Participatory budgets and local governance*

11.30 Merilee Grindle, *Sanctions, Benefits, and Rights: Three Faces of Accountability*

11.50 Hans Antlöv, *Participatory Planning, Deliberative Spaces and the Consolidation of Local Democracy in Indonesia*

12.10 Commentators and general discussion

Shabbir Cheema and Jesse C Ribot

12.30-13.30 Lunch

*The politics of decentralization* (cont.), Chairman: Bent Jørgensen

13.30 Jesse C Ribot, *Choice and Recognition: Democracy Effects of Sectoral Decentralization*

13.50 Olle Törnquist, *Representation of popular aspirations in the context of decentralization*

14.30 Shabbir Cheema, *Engaging Civil Society to Promote Democratic Local Governance: Emerging Trends and Issues in Asia*

14.50 Discussants and general discussion

Harry Blair and Merilee Grindle

15.10 Coffee

#### Session 4: *Developmental impact of decentralization*, Chairman: Hans Antlöv

15.30 Leonardo Romeo, *Local Development through Local Governments ( LDLG ) a personal reflection on two decades of practice*

15.50 Andrew Nickson, *Decentralisation in Latin America*

16.10 Discussants and general discussion

Paul Smoke and James Manor

16.30-17.00 Reflections on the day

Leonardo Romeo and Andrew Nickson

18.30 Conference dinner at Bildstenssalen, Gotland Museum

### Friday 30 April

8.30-9.00 Introductory Speaker - Judith Tendler, *The rule of law, economic development, and modernization of the state in Brazil: lessons from existing experience for policy and practice* focusing on conflicts of various interests groups in decentralization

#### Session 5: *Decentralization Design and the role of civil society*, Chairman: Merilee Grindle

9.00 Hans Antlöv, *Participatory Planning, Deliberative Spaces and the Consolidation of Local Democracy in Indonesia*

9.20 Scott Guggenheim, *Globalization at the Grassroots: Recent Experiences with Community Development in Asia*

10.00 Discussants and general discussion

Judith Tendler and James Manor

10.20 Coffee

**Session 6: Decentralization as a strategy for Post-conflict Reconstruction**, Chairman: Bent Jørgensen

10.40 Joakim Öjendal, *Post-conflict Reconstruction in Rural Cambodia? - An Empirical Review of the Potential of a Decentralisation Reform*

11.00 David Jackson, *The role of local government in post conflict environments*

11.20 Joanne Morrison, *Entry Points for decentralization in failed/fragile states and conflict countries*

11.40 Anders Sjögren, *The local and national politics of land in Uganda*

12.00-12.30 Discussants and general discussion

Leonardo Romeo and Henrik Fredborg Larsen

12.30 - 14.00 Lunch

**Session 7: Decentralization and the international donor community**, Chairman: Joanne Morrison

14.00 Henrik Fredborg Larsen, *Governing Local Service Delivery for the MDGs*

14.20 Jan Rudengren, *Development, decentralization and democracy and the role of ODA; the case of Cambodia*

14.40 Per Nordlund, *Supporting decentralization and democratically accountable Sub-National Authorities in Cambodia*

15.00 Discussants and general discussion

Scott Guggenheim and Olle Törnquist

15.30-16.00 Coffee

**Session 8: Roundtable debate - Theory meets practice**, Chairman: Joakim Öjendal

Participants: Kamala Chandrakirana, Shabbir Cheema, Per Nordlund, Henrik Fredborg-Larsen, David Jackson, Judith Tendler, Scott Guggenheim.

16.45-17.00 Concluding the workshop, Anki Dellnas

18.30 Dinner at Hotel Wisby

### **Saturday 1 May**

08.45 Excursion day - Gotland and Fårö

### **Monday 3 May**

9-15.00 Sida meeting in Stockholm

## Book Of Abstracts

### *Development, decentralisation and democracy and the role of ODA; the case of Cambodia*

**Jan Rudengren**, SPM Consultants

Based on a review of current theoretical thinking in mainly two areas: (1) on the relationship between development, decentralisation and democracy and (2) the role of ODA in supporting these processes especially regarding rhetoric and practice, the paper will analyse the development, decentralisation and democracy in Cambodia at various levels.

The analysis will cover several dimensions and their change over time grouped into three periods:

The immediate post-conflict period, when ODA was geared at reconstruction and emergency. CARERE being the main programme of analysis – 1991-1996.

Local development takes a more prominent role over short term reconstruction. Seila and other area development programmes being the centre of the analysis – 1996- 2006.

Sub-national development closely linked to state management functions. The new SNDD programme being at the centre – 2006 –.

The dimensions of the analysis in these three periods will be on relationships and changes in: Which level is the focus of the development efforts? Who has the control of financial resources and programme formulation? What is the role of central government and sub-national authorities? What role has ODA played in these changes? To what degree have donor cooperation and coordination changed?

The paper will end in recommendations on the donors' support to the current Sub-National Democratic Development programme.

### *Participatory Planning, Deliberative Spaces and the Consolidation of Local Democracy in Indonesia*

**Hans Antlov and Anna Wetterberg**, RTI International

In debates over decentralization's capacity to deepen democracy and improve developmental outcomes, state entrepreneurship is often seen as a critical factor (eg. Grindle 2007). Innovative leaders, elected through newly instituted local elections, are able to mobilize state resources and target public services within often weak institutional structures. To further consolidate decentralized democracy, however, we argue that it is necessary to deepen and improve the nature of civil society engagement with decentralized state structures. Technical support for the bare minimum of democratic cornerstones of elections and national-level state institutions does not by itself create social justice or a substantive democracy. To support democracy, it is not enough to simply bring government closer or open up spaces: there need also to be actions that allow new voices to be heard and give power to people to be involved in governing their communities. In addition, local leaders, however innovative, cannot push for changes alone. Much effort must go into community and political organizing, into building the capacity of civil society to engage government—to re-politicize communities. Using examples from Indonesia, the paper points to cases of local-level innovation and mobilization that increased trust between officials and CSOs, raised standards for accountability, and improved service delivery. These experiences demonstrate that a focus on citizen participation and accountability among state and civil society actors can consolidate decentralization and democratization advances to produce positive development outcomes.

*Governing Local Service Delivery for the MDGs*  
**Henrik Fredborg-Larsen, UNDP**

This paper discusses the role of local governments in scaling up support for the MDGs. It argues that for local governments to play their role in countries assigning significant responsibilities for MDGs related service delivery to them, three major changes might need to be made in the national framework for local governance and assistance from development partners. First, more efforts are required to develop improved arrangements for the institutional roles and functions of different state and non-state agents at various levels of government all contributing to the delivery of individual services - replacing to a large extent the notion of decentralization that currently guides much policy development and practice of development partners. Second, development of new, up-scaled, financing mechanisms are needed that are cross-sectoral and target the prime local MDG challenges - complementing existing block grants, which are crucial for local democratic development but rarely used for the most important development challenges, and sectoral funding routes. Third, a capacity development effort is needed that responds to the fundamental question of what it will take to put local governments in a position to manage their delivery responsibilities. These three sets of changes need to go hand in hand with efforts to improve the inclusiveness and accountability of the elected councils making final decisions on priorities - suggesting that the prime focus on participatory local democracy is complemented with more efforts to improve local representative democracy. Overall, the paper argues that while some sectoral responses have been made to the global challenges of scaling up support for the MDGs, the mechanisms to assist local governments to scale up their responses are urgently needed.

*Participatory budgets and local governance*  
**Harry Blair, Yale University**

Citizen-determined budget priorities have become a favorite theme in decentralization for international donors over the last couple of decades, not surprisingly, for what could make for a better way to bring government closer to the governed than having citizens decide how to spend public funds? And how better to give citizens the incentive to accept taxation than to give them a role in determining how their taxes are spent?

What has been the track record of this approach to local budgeting, and what lessons can be drawn from it for local governance? This will be the present paper's central theme.

The paper will begin by looking at the most ambitious, most studied and arguably most successful effort in participatory budgeting: the Porto Alegre initiative and its successors in Brazil (while this was not a donor-sponsored endeavor but rather an entirely indigenous one, it nonetheless serves nicely as an example of the high end in participatory budgeting, against which other efforts can be compared). I then go on to offer a number of examples that have been driven by donor funding in Bangladesh, Cambodia, El Salvador, Indonesia, and Serbia. Two of these (El Salvador and Serbia) have been post-conflict initiatives seeking to repair societal divisions and build linkages to the state. Two others (Bangladesh and Indonesia) have tried to bolster early stage democracies after long authoritarian interludes. The last one (Cambodia) has aimed at making a declining democracy more accountable to its citizenry. In addition, reference will be made to two other domestically initiated programmes, in which the central government functioned in effect as an outside donor: Bolivia and the Philippines. The donor in all cases has been USAID, except for Bangladesh, where it has been the World Bank. Altogether these six + two cases essentially cover the spectrum of the possible in participatory budgeting.

*Why Should we Concern Ourselves with Urban Governance? Revisiting the Global-Local Nexus*  
**Jon Pierre**, University of Gothenburg

Globalization, as an economic, political and cultural process, has redefined domestic institutional relations and the role of cities. More recently, there has been a rediscovery of cities and urban governance, both in terms of how global economic pressures impact upon cities and localities but also in terms of cities as global actors. The paper will explore such global-local linkages and discuss the scope of local political and economic action and the significance of urban governance institutions in a globalized world. The paper will explore the paradoxical argument that globalization is to a large extent sustained by urban and regional governance and that a decline or collapse in that governance has transnational ramifications.

*Recentralization in Developing Countries: What does it look like, why is it happening, and what are the consequences?*

**Paul Smoke**, New York University Wagner School

Some type of decentralization has been a nearly ubiquitous element of public sector reform in developing countries for the past two decades or more, with highly uneven results. Throughout this period, particularly in more recent years, recentralization has emerged to various degrees in policy debates and in practice. Some recentralization efforts have been very high profile, while others have occurred almost without being noticed. Literature dedicated to this topic is fairly limited.

Recentralization can take multiple forms. At one extreme it involves the formal retraction or alteration of robust/detailed decentralization policies and legislation. In more typical cases where the decentralization framework is more general in nature, recentralization occurs through the adoption of additional laws, regulations and decrees that clarify, modify or dilute the formal provisions of the original enabling legislation. In still other cases, recentralization is more informally pursued—without explicit changes in laws or regulations—through actions of politicians and bureaucrats at higher levels of government who face incentives to limit the functions of subnational governments or constrain the behavior of local politicians and officials.

The factors that motivate recentralization vary considerably. In some cases, recentralization is primarily a reaction to the weak performance of subnational governments empowered under the original decentralization efforts and the emergence of a sense that these reforms had gone too far too quickly. In other cases, recentralization results from shifts in underlying political and bureaucratic dynamics that create forces less receptive to the original decentralization parameters. The specific actions taken can be motivated by different intentions on the part of higher level officials, ranging from a desire to reassert control over powers and resources they lost under decentralization reforms to an aspiration to assist subnational governments to achieve better performance.

The effects and consequences of recentralization can also be rather diverse. In some cases, recentralization can to some extent correct the mistakes of poorly conceived decentralization reforms and help to empower subnational governments to carry out their remaining responsibilities more effectively. On the other end of the spectrum, recentralization can negatively affect the ability of local governments to undertake meaningful functions and undermine their credibility with their local constituents.

In this paper I will review in a preliminary way the range of recentralization efforts, primarily through examining a number of cases I have observed over many years, including Cambodia, Indonesia, Kenya and Uganda. I will document the specific nature of each recentralization initiative and try to understand why it is happening, as well as attempt to consider the consequences of the associated policy or procedural changes. The paper will conclude with some comments on what can be learned from the experiences reviewed and make recommendations for future research.

*Local Development through Local Governments (LDLG): a personal reflection on two decades of practice*  
**Leonardo G. Romeo**, New York University

The paper is a personal reflection on the author's own practice. It summarizes the conceptual framework underlying two decades of advocacy, policy advice and programme design, in support of a "Local Development through Local Government" (LDLG) approach to national development and poverty reduction, and reflects upon the difficulties of its implementation.

Underlying the LDLG approach are (i) an understanding of 'local development' as endogenous development, one in which the word 'local' refers to the 'how', rather than the 'where' of development (ii) the recognition of the comparative advantage of autonomous local governments in leveraging the resources of a locality and bringing them to bear on the national development effort.

To adopt an LDLG approach as part of national development and poverty reduction efforts means (i) to make 'local development', the real driver of decentralization reforms and (ii) to recognize and addressing the complexity of relations that link decentralization reforms to local development outcomes, via improved local governance, local institutions and capacity development and local sector investment financing.

Yet, in contrast to other policies (e.g. the maintenance of macro-economic stability or the regulation of industrial relations), the promotion of local development is hardly recognized as a key component of national development policy in most developing (as well as many developed) countries. In developing countries in particular, decentralization reforms, when actually initiated, are therefore typically driven not by a national local development policy, but by the more immediate political objectives of legitimizing the State and consolidating the parties in power. These parties are eventually seeking to strengthen, rather than share, their control (and powers of diversion) of State resources, so critical for their systems of political dominance. What follow are incomplete decentralization reforms, which, at best, enable local governments, acting as State agents, to improve the efficiency of national policies and programmes, and, at worst, create local political assemblies with no policy making or administrative capacity of their own and whose only purpose is to lend a semblance of legitimacy to the State action in the locality. In all cases, it severely constrains local autonomous action and, with it, the prospect of mobilizing and leveraging local resources, which is the essence of local development, as define above, and should be the ultimate development rationale of the reforms.

The paper concludes that international aid agencies should strengthen their focus on 'local development' (beyond exclusive concerns with 'decentralization' and 'local governance') and lend more convinced and coordinated support to the LDLG approach, shifting towards it from the 'community development' approaches of the recent past, to become a positive agent of change under conditions of incomplete and contradictory decentralization reforms.

*Choice and Recognition: Democracy Effects of Sectoral Decentralization*  
**Jesse C. Ribot**, University of Illinois

What are the democracy effects of sectoral 'decentralization' activities and projects? Many democratic decentralization reforms are well-crafted. Ostensibly these reforms would transfer functions and powers to elected local governments. In implementation and related projects, however, governments, international development agencies and large non-governmental organizations are transferring sectoral powers to a wide range of local interlocutors, including deconcentrated agents, private bodies, customary authorities, and NGOs. Recognition (by being chosen) of these local institutions means that fledgling local governments are receiving few public powers and face competition for legitimacy. When do these choices foster local democratic consolidation? When do they result in fragmented forms of local authority and belonging? This article draws on cases from Benin, Brazil,

Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Malawi, Russia, Senegal, and South Africa to explore effects of institutional choices and recognition on three dimensions of democracy: 1) representation, 2) citizenship, and 3) the public domain.

*Entry points for decentralization in failed/fragile states and conflict countries*

**Joanne Morrison**, UNDP Somalia

This paper critically reviews the Somali decentralization process to date. The first section will reflect democratic definitions including ‘third wave democracies’ and discuss how such tenets have some resonance in what is defined generally as a failed state. The second section will provide an overview of Somalia and a description of the three ‘zones’ and their differences and similarities and how decentralization is embedded in all three Charters/Constitutions. The third section will discuss entry points for decentralization in this context (and will also draw on other conflict countries’ experience) - such as the importance of traditional and local leadership; the imperative to strengthen weak and fragile institutions which includes finances to provide services where the bulk of service delivery has been provided parallel to any semblance of local or central institutions for at least twenty years; and the importance of accountabilities when conflict and distrust between and across all levels of administration has been the modus operandi.

*Popular aspirations and representation in the context of local politics*

**Olle Törnquist**, University of Oslo

Unsurprisingly, popular aspirations in post-colonial societies have been held back by powerful opponents, but why has it remained so difficult for people themselves after independence and also after the introduction of democracy to improve their roadmaps and thus be more successful, and what can supporters do? This is a preliminary attempt to draw on previous studies to develop an argument about a possible focus for policy research.

Previous studies of the dilemmas of radical politics in Indonesia, India and the Philippines pointed to the neglect of democracy as the major problem in the fostering of pro-poor late development.<sup>1</sup> While many of the nationalist and old leftist movements held on to their priorities, however, the struggle for freedoms and human rights was often dominated instead by even neo-liberal agendas and related forms of decentralization, combined with both globalization and localization of politics. This in turn has undermined the building of democracy based on state capacity and popular movements with roots in basic social and economic cleavages (as in the most successful cases, like Scandinavia). The predominant practice has rather been the triangular combination of elitist institution building, the domination of these institutions by local strongmen and political bosses, and polycentric actions by civil society and communal organizations for separate groups’ and movements’ special ‘rights’, interests and identities.<sup>2</sup> Indonesia is a good illustration of this mix of neo-liberal privatization and institution building at the expense of state capacity and broad popular organization, thus being captured on different levels by economic and other strongmen who can provide the resources for political and communal bosses who can win the elections.<sup>3</sup>

Meanwhile, fortunately, some specific projects and broader processes also suggest that it is possible to foster popular

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1 Törnquist, O. Dilemmas of Third World Communism. The Destruction of the PKI in Indonesia, London: Zed Books 1984; What’s wrong with Marxism? Volume I: On Capitalists and State in India and Indonesia. Volume II: On peasants and workers in India and Indonesia. Manohar, New Delhi, 1989, 1991; “Communists and democracy in the Philippines”, in Economic and Political Weekly (Bombay) 26: 27-28 and 29, 1991; Kasarinlan (University of the Philippines) 6: 1-2, 1990.

2 Törnquist, O. with Stanley A.P. and Priyono, A.E. Indonesia’s post-Soeharto democracy movement. Jakarta and Copenhagen: Demos and NIAS Books, 2003; Harriss, J, Stokke, K, Törnquist, O. (eds) Politicising democracy: local politics and democratisation in developing countries, Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2004

3 Törnquist, O with Priyono, A.E, Samadhi W.P and the Demos team (eds) Making democracy meaningful. Problems and options in Indonesia. (2005 and 2007: Jakarta, Jogjakarta and Singapore: Demos, PCD Press, ISEAS publishing house; Samadhi, W.P and Warouw, N. (eds) Building democracy on the sand. PCD Press and Demos, 2009.

aspirations by making use of liberal freedoms, the undermining of central regimes, and the decentralization of politics to advance the aim of democracy in the generally accepted terms of popular control of public affairs on the basis of political equality. This speaks against the resurgence of the modernization perspectives (that democratization is 'too early') and Huntington's old thesis of 'politics of order', i.e. that the elite must build stable institutions ahead of democracy. The most well known cases relate of course to participatory local politics in Brazil. But we have also the two different Indian cases of, first, decentralization combined with land reform in West Bengal, and, second, late decentralization combined with participatory planning in Kerala. There are also, among others, scattered projects in the Philippines and Indonesia and most recently the remarkable democratic peace in Aceh.<sup>4</sup>

The major challenge is, however, that all the cases point to three major preconditions: first, the need for strong political organization to build co-ordinating politics and democratic institutions 'from above' – similar to the old experiences in Scandinavia; second that the positive cases have anyway faced serious problems, and third that these problems boil down to the deficit of (democratic) representation.<sup>5</sup>

Hence the million dollar question is whether it is simply 'too early' and idealistic to try to foster democratic representation, or whether institution building can be backed up by special support for the promotion of the most needed preconditions too.

If one specifies the specific problems in these cases and opens up for comparisons and well as for the revisiting of 'old' Scandinavian practices, it may be possible to suggest an argument for how to move ahead. First, the need to develop supplementary forms of democratic representation in addition to the liberal democratic freedoms, rule of law, human rights, elections and civil society. Second, the need to analyze critically the quality of democratic representation within the field of 'additional' and usually more direct forms of participation in public governance, civil society and social movements. Here one may use the same criteria for democratic representation as the 'ordinary democratic chain of popular sovereignty' from the voter to decisions and policy implementation.<sup>6</sup> Third, to not only identify the institutions that are needed to improve representation but also the specific conditions that must be at hand to make this possible. (Less fragmented citizen action and representation, for instance, may call for broader and more democratic popular organizations, which may not be possible, however, without incentives such as top-down created institutions for participation of such broader organizations, which in turn presupposes crucial support for organization and demands from below for such policies rather than for single issue groups, networking and lobbying. Similarly nodes for the promotion of crucial conditions can make strategic institutions real and effective within education, social security, rights based economic development.)<sup>7</sup>

From a small ICLD supported project entitled 'Mapping spaces of democracy in Aceh', we may be able to assess whether elements of this thinking work out. In short, democracy beyond elections, to also include more direct participation; and democracy building beyond the design of institutions to also include the promotion of the specific preconditions.

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4 Harriss, Stokke, Törnquist op.cit; Törnquist, O., *Popular development and democracy: Case Studies in the Philippines, Indonesia and Kerala*. Geneva and Oslo: UNRISD and SUM, 2002; Törnquist, O. with Prasetyo, S.A, and Birks, T. *Aceh the role of democracy for peace and reconstruction*. Yogyakarta: PCD Press, 2009; 2 ed. 2010

5 Törnquist, O. with Stokke, K. and Webster, N. (eds) *Rethinking popular representation*, New York: Palgrave 2009.

6 Ibid Ch 1 (Törnquist)

7 Ibid Ch 12 (Webster, Stokke, Törnquist)

### *Sanctions, Benefits, and Rights: Three Faces of Accountability*

**Merilee S. Grindle**, Harvard University

As countries throughout the world decentralize and become more democratic, advocates of these trends anticipate that citizen participation in public life will increase. They anticipate that citizens will find better opportunities to demand public attention for their needs, monitor government response to these demands, and hold local officials responsible for their performance. Increased accountability of government to citizens, then, is a much-anticipated consequence of political, fiscal, and administrative decentralization in countries that are also democratizing.

In this paper, I argue that government accountability to citizens is a multifaceted relationship that can be assessed in at least three ways: Can citizens use the vote effectively to reward and punish the general or specific performance of local public officials and/or the parties they represent (sanctions)? Can citizens generate response to their collective needs from local governments (benefits)? Can citizens be assured of fair and equitable treatment from public agencies at local levels (rights)? Sanctions, benefits, and rights, I argue, are three faces of accountability of governments to citizens.

The accountability of government to citizens, however, is not an automatic result of decentralization and democratization. The use of mechanisms of accountability can vary across countries and across time within countries. In the paper, I use the findings of a study of 30 randomly selected municipalities in Mexico to explore the evolution of sanctions, benefits, and rights at local levels as they are affected by decentralization and democratization. I find that over the course of a decade and a half, voters were able to enforce alternation in power and the circulation of elites, but not necessarily to transmit unambiguous messages to public officials or parties about performance concerns. More definitively, citizens were able to build successfully on prior political experiences to extract benefits from local governments. At the same time, the ability to demand good performance of local government as a right of citizenship lagged behind other forms of accountability. The experience of Mexico suggests that mechanisms to enforce the accountability of government to citizens evolve differentially in specific contexts.

### *Perspectives on Decentralization*

**James Manor**, University of London

This paper provides introductory commentaries on a large number of topics which are relevant to our understanding of decentralization (especially democratic decentralization) in less developed countries. The emphasis is thus on breadth rather than depth. It seeks to explain what happens within elected bodies at or near the local level, the interactions between elected representatives and bureaucrats at both local and higher levels, how the design of decentralized systems shapes events within them, the roles played by politicians, political parties, citizens, user committees, traditional leaders/elites, and much else – and how all of these things influence the performance of decentralized bodies. It is intended to be of use to people who study decentralization; and to practitioners in international development agencies, governments and civil society organizations who engage with decentralization.

### *Decentralisation in Latin America*

**Andrew Nickson**, University of Birmingham

Latin America underwent a major decentralization process from the 1980s. This article seeks to critically evaluate its scale and impact by examining three inter-related aspects – political, financial and administrative – of this process. It then addresses three emerging local governance issues – moves to promote citizen participation, the role of local government in poverty reduction programmes and in crime prevention. The article concludes that in spite of the deep-rooted centralist tradition in Latin America significant progress has been made on the decentralization front over recent decades.

*Globalization at the Grassroots: Recent Experiences with Community Development in Asia*  
**Scott Guggenheim**, AusAid/ Worldbank

The past decade has seen a significant increase in the rise of community development programmes that provide resources directly to urban and rural communities. Such programmes contrast with previous decades, when communities were largely seen as obstacles to development and community development as something suitable for NGOs but not for serious developers.

To some extent the pendulum has swung too far in the other direction. The benefits claimed for community development range from a more efficient use of development financing; to better mechanisms for holding local governments accountable to the poor; to a key means for post-conflict peacebuilding in war-torn societies.

The evidence to support all of these claims is scanty or at best equivocal. Communities are themselves often an administrative construct that does not reflect sociological reality. Nor do the participatory processes promoted by community developers automatically lead to positive outcomes for the poor: elite capture, gender bias and grassroots forms of social exclusion are as present in poor communities as they are in society at large.

And yet there are signs that not all is romantic illusion. This paper will review evidence from South and Southeast Asia, regions where large-scale community development programmes have emerged after decades of top-down development, to tease out the ways in which community development constitutes a useful strategy for thinking about poverty, accountability and social stability.

*Engaging Civil Society to Promote Democratic Local Governance: Emerging Trends and Issues in Asia*  
**G. Shabbir Cheema**, Director, Asia-Pacific Governance and Democracy Initiative, Hawaii

Along with the state and the private sector, civil society is instrumental in promoting democratic local governance. As an agent of change, civil society can actively engage in policy analysis and advocacy, monitor state performance including actions and behavior of public officials, and build social capital and enable citizens to identify and articulate their values and civic norms. Civil society can also mobilize particular constituencies such as vulnerable and marginalized groups and minorities to participate more fully in politics and public policy. Another important role of civil society is to undertake local development activities including the provision of shelter and basic social services to the poor in urban and rural areas.

While decentralization of functions and resources to local levels is necessary, it is not sufficient to deepen local democracy. Civil society plays an important role as the watch dog and the advocate for democratic change. Major democratic transitions in Asia have emanated from pressures from civil society including in South Korea, the Philippines and Pakistan. Once democratic governance institutions including elected local governments are introduced, civil society organizations continue to play an important role in ensuring the accountability of political leaders and public officials, and advocating the interests of poor and marginalized groups. They monitor elections, undertake public interest litigation, and provide paralegal services to the poor. They check abuse of government power by public officials at national and local level through their access to media and monitor the government mechanisms for service delivery and access. They also protect the human rights of minorities, women and marginalized groups. Where the government responds positively to the pressure from civil society organizations, citizen trust in government is likely to be enhanced.

Civil society organizations, however, face a series of challenges in effectively performing their tasks to promote democratic local governance. Among the challenges are the CSOs patterns of growth in the region, legal and regulatory frameworks, their accountability and legitimacy, their capacity, and their capture by the elite.

The paper attempts to bridge the gap between theory and practice in the role of civil society in local governance. The first part examines the shift from deconcentration and delegation to devolution and political decentralization over the past few decades. The second part discusses the emerging roles of civil society organizations in promoting democratic local governance. The third part undertakes a comparative assessment the experiences of Indonesia, Malaysia, Bangladesh, Pakistan, China, Republic of Korea and the Philippines in promoting local governance with the engagement of civil society. The concluding section describes emerging trends and issues in the region dealing with the civil society engagement.

*Post-conflict Reconstruction in Rural Cambodia? An Empirical Review of the Potential of a Decentralisation Reform*

**Joakim Öjendal and Kim Sedara**, Gothenburg University

This research enquires into what effect the recent decentralisation reform has had on attempts at post-conflict reconstruction in rural Cambodia. With initiation in 2001, the democratic decentralisation reform – emanating from an elaborated government-led local governance programme – has now evolved into one of the major reforms in the post-war era in Cambodia, experiencing two local elections and several cycles of funding of rural infrastructure. In addition to elections, the reform includes inter alia the creation of commune councils, template for bidding for local entrepreneurs, mandatory participatory commune development plans, training of commune councillors, and, a centrally distributed annual development fund. This research is based on quantitative and qualitative field-research in 6 villages in rural areas, interviewing 646 households representatives and 73 commune councillors. It is the second survey of the exactly same kind with an election in between, so data are compared longitudinally and assessed in relation to a qualitative baseline. Results are largely divided into three spheres, where the perceptions of citizens and commune councillors are measured and contrasted. Positive effects on local reconstruction and reconciliation are clear, the effect on local democratization is reasonably clear, and the effect on local development is tangible. Thus, the decentralisation reform with its democratic and funding features, at large, has had a positive impact in a phase of moving from a situation of civil war and harsh authoritarianism to one of normalization, but it has had a less clear impact in the subsequent context of ‘regular’ development.

*The role of local government in post conflict environments*

**David Jackson**, Head UNDCDF Asia Office, Bangkok

The paper will concentrate on the role of local governance in post-conflict reconstruction. Two methods will be used to address the issue. Firstly, we shall propose an analytical framework for the discussion, then we shall apply the framework to four case studies from Mozambique, Angola, East Timor and Indonesia. These have been chosen from the author’s direct experience in the subject matter over a 15-year period. The concluding section highlights some of the conclusions of the application of the analytical framework to the case studies and brings in other examples from Rwanda, Uganda, Liberia, Kosovo and elsewhere in addition to the four studies. The analytical framework itself is a contribution to the wider discussions to take place at the meeting.

*Decentralization and Discrimination in Indonesia: The Price of Local to National Disconnects*

**Kamala Chandrakirana**, Indonesian National Commission on Violence Against Women

This paper presents findings of the Indonesian National Commission on Violence Against Women regarding the institutionalization of discrimination through local government policies produced during the country’s first decade of political reform. The Commission identified 154 discriminatory local regulations, including ones which introduce public lashing as a form of punishment for “immoral” behaviour and others which restrict activities of

a minority sect within the country's majority religion, produced by district and provincial governments between 1999 and 2009. This trend is the outcome of a process of decentralization dominated by a politics of identity and procedural democracy that undermines Indonesia's own constitutional guarantees of non-discrimination and human rights. It also reflects the ineffectiveness of national mechanisms designed to ensure compliance of local policy making to national laws and betrays a weak sense of national and global citizenship at the local level.

*The Local Politics of State-Civil Society Relations in Uganda*  
**Anders Sjögren**, Stockholm University

*The rule of law, economic development, and modernization of the state in Brazil: lessons from existing experience for policy and practice" focusing on conflicts of various interests groups in decentralization*  
**Judith Tandler**, MIT

*Supporting decentralization and democratically accountable Sub-National Authorities in Cambodia*  
**Per Nordlund**, Sida

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