



LOCAL DEMOCRACY TODAY AND TOMORROW – LEARNING FROM GOOD PRACTICE

A background paper for a workshop on local democracy held at
International IDEA offices in Stockholm, November 2014

Paper prepared by City insight for the
International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) and
Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF)

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ACRONYMS

Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF)

Community Systems Foundation (CSF)

Department for International Development (DFID)

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)

Government and Social Development Research Centre (GSDRC)

International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA)

Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO's)

South African Cities Network (SACN)

Small, medium and micro enterprises (SMME's)

Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)

United Cities and Local Government (UCLG)

United Cities and Local Governments of Africa (ULCGA)

United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF)

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

United Nations (UN)

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Acknowledgements

International IDEA and CLGF would like to thank the authors Sue Bannister and Dr. Michael Sutcliffe of City insight for their extensive work towards this paper bringing in both academic insight and their extensive experience in city management to the discussion.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper provides an overview of key trends and developments impacting on local democracy and is intended to be a broad-ranging background paper to assist in discussions at a workshop organised by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), in partnership with the Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF), to be held in Stockholm in early November 2014, which will bring together academics and practitioners to explore current trends and developments in local democracy

It should be noted that there is no single world view on what local democracy is and globally there are many different systems of local governance and democracy both within and between countries. A number of key areas which have impacted on local democracy and as identified by the authors include the impact of the global financial crisis, the effects of urbanisation, rising conflicts and protests, ways in which engagements occur, ensuring inclusivity and the need for a developmental approach to local governance.

Lessons learnt and challenges include the effects of decentralisation, increased participation, building skills, ensuring openness and transparency and ensuring effective and efficient service delivery.

At the broadest level local governance is defined as “the formulation and execution of collective action at the local level” (Shah and Shah, 2006 p.1). **Local government**, on the other hand, refers to the specific institutions created, usually by national or sub-national organs of the state (through constitutions, legislation and the like) with a focus on creating the vehicle for the delivery of a set of services in a specific geographical jurisdiction. This means it is possible to have local government without local democracy, but not possible to have good local governance without both good local government and good local democracy.

The past few years have witnessed significant advances in at least democratic expression, if not the development of institutions promoting democracy at all levels of governance.

Emerging in the 1980’s as a major issue (although not a new concept in governance), the term ‘decentralisation’ is a broad topic and is generally used to refer to measures taken to transfer elements of power from central government to lower levels of government. Importantly, decentralisation has the potential to improve the depth of democracy and can also improve the quality of democracy by increasing civic engagement. Today, political, fiscal and/or administrative decentralisation is being pursued in over 80% of all countries (Scott and Rao 2011).

The increased roles and responsibilities that decentralisation has given local government have been implemented in different ways across the world, creating a wide variety of systems of local of governance. The 2014 State of Participatory Democracy Report provides a positive outlook for democracy at a local level, stating that whereas national level democracy is, in many areas, fragile, at lower levels, participatory democracy is expanding and deepening. This, the report notes, is seen in areas such as decentralisation, women in leadership positions, greater social accountability and collaboration between government and civil society as well as a general increased acknowledgement of the role of local government.

The global financial crisis meant that local government found itself with a wider set of challenges related to the financial crisis, including lower affordability levels and higher unemployment rates, placing pressure on the finances of local government and requiring increased levels of social service provision.

At the same time, a projected 2.5 billion people are expected to be added to the world's urban population by 2050 (UNDESA 2014). However, almost 90% of this is concentrated in Asia and Africa, and will require significant development to provide basic services.

A series of increasingly large protests in cities across the world have been an important factor over the past decade, bringing cities and their public spaces into the focus of political struggles. Inclusive governance is, today, much more of a reality than it was even ten years ago.

A significant body of literature focuses on the reality that local governance and democracy is not an end in itself, but must result in real improvements to people's lives. More empowering decentralisation, improvements in skills, openness and transparency, and a focus on service delivery become critical areas around which democratic local governments need to focus their attention.

1 INTRODUCTION

At the broadest level **local governance** is defined as “*the formulation and execution of collective action at the local level*” (Shah and Shah, 2006, page 1). Shah and Shah (2006) argue that good local governance is not just about providing a range of local services but also about “*preserving the life and liberty of residents, creating space for democratic participation and civic dialogue, supporting market-led and environmentally sustainable local development, and facilitating outcomes that enrich the quality of life of residents*” (ibid, page 2).

Local government, on the other hand, refers to the specific institutions created, usually by national or sub-national organs of the state (through constitutions, legislation and the like) with a focus on creating the vehicle for the delivery of a set of services in a specific geographical jurisdiction. This means it is possible to have local government without local democracy, but not possible to have good local governance without both good local government and good local democracy.

Increasingly the vehicle of local governments/authorities is being seen as an important focal area by national governments and international agencies. The United Nations (UN) Secretary-General’s High-Level Panel on the Post-2015 development agenda argues “*Local authorities form a vital bridge between national governments, communities and citizens and will have a critical role in a new global partnership... Local authorities have a critical role in setting priorities, executing plans, monitoring results and engaging with local firms and communities.*”¹ (United Nations 2013: 10)

Overall, then, the term local governance is used to describe a broader framework which, along with local government, encompasses civil society and its engagement – either individually as citizens, or in groupings such as civil society organisations, associations, neighbourhood committees and others. Between countries and even within countries there are huge differences in how democracy, governance and development are, or are not, practiced. At the same time, democracy is on the move. “An astonishing political transformation has taken place around the world over the past three decades. Today, a majority of countries are ‘electoral democracies’. Even the Middle East, a region that long seemed immune to democratisation, is in the midst of momentous change. In country after country, people have risked their lives to call for free elections, and elections have been held in all but 11 countries since 2000.” (Menocal, 2013)

This discussion paper reflects on some of the emerging trends in the practice of local governance, allowing for the identification of strategies and action plans for CLGF and International IDEA. Specifically, the paper provides an overview of recent developments and the current context within which local democracy and governance operates.

¹Report of the High-Level Panel on the Post-2015 development agenda
www.un.org/sg/management/pdf/HLP_P2015_Report.pdf

2 LOCAL DEMOCRACY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE

In order to better understand local democracy and good governance, we take as our starting point that decentralisation (both financial and administrative) is a necessary condition for good local governance and local democracy. The focus on administrative and financial decentralisation, development of local democracy and supporting an active citizenry is taken up in the work of numerous international organisations including the United Nations², World Bank³, European Union⁴, African Union⁵, CLGF⁶, and UCLG⁷, all of whom have supported the active promotion of decentralisation and local democracy. The analytic work done by some of these agencies has shown the benefits of creating more democratic institutions. For example, the World Bank's 2009 Moving out of Poverty study demonstrates that democracy is integral to eradicating poverty.

It must be understood, though, that fiscal and administrative decentralisation are not a sufficient condition for local democracy and good governance. Instead, an active citizenship and vibrant local democracy are critical to such processes.

Following an overview of four influential institutional definitions of local democracy in section 2.1, the substantive part of the paper begins with a brief description of the trend towards decentralisation. It suggests that for good local governance to work, structures of government, engagement processes, an active citizenry and development must combine and work together.

2.1 INSTITUTIONAL DEFINITIONS OF LOCAL DEMOCRACY

International IDEA (Kemp and Jiminez, 2013: 22) outline what they see as three fundamental pillars of local democracy in the **State of Local Democracy** framework⁸:

- **Citizenship, equal rights and justice** – including citizenship at the local level, civil and political rights, economic, social and cultural rights and the rule of law and access to justice.
- **Representative and accountable institutions and processes** - elections and mechanisms of direct democracy at the local level, local legislature, political parties, local executive bodies, customary and traditional institutions.
- **Citizen initiative and participation** – active citizen engagement and media.

² The 3rd conference on Housing & Sustainable Urban Development will take place in 2016 <http://unhabitat.org/habitat-iii> and UNDP e.g. http://web.undp.org/evaluation/documents/decentralization_working_report.PDF

³ e.g. www1.worldbank.org/publicsector/decentralization/what.htm

⁴ EC 2013 'Empowering Local Authorities in partner countries for enhanced governance & more effective development outcomes' <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2013:0280:FIN:EN:PDF>

⁵ e.g. The AU Ministerial Conferences on Decentralization and Local Development <http://pa.au.int/en/content/third-african-ministerial-conference-decentralization-and-local-development-amcod-ordinary-session>

⁶ See for example the CLGF's Commonwealth principles on good practice for local democracy and good governance: Aberdeen Agenda www.clgf.org.uk/aberdeen-agenda

⁷ See UCLG's 'The City of 2030 - Our Manifesto'

[www.cities-localgovernments.org/upload/doc_publications/9517579772_\(EN\)_encity2030manifesto.pdf](http://www.cities-localgovernments.org/upload/doc_publications/9517579772_(EN)_encity2030manifesto.pdf)

⁸ State of Local Democracy Assessment Framework, International IDEA www.idea.int/sod/sold.cfm

The Hunger Project (2013: 10) provides a similar framework, and includes two elements of decentralisation as what they see as critical dimensions of participatory local democracy⁹:

- **Active Citizenry** - Citizens must, firstly have the ability to elect local leaders in periodic free and fair elections & must have the right to participate in local governance.
- **Political Mandate** - A legal system must exist which provides for local government which has specific powers, roles and responsibilities and must create the framework for direct citizen participation.
- **Administrative decentralisation** - where government service personnel are moved closer to the people.
- **Fiscal decentralisation** - where local governments are equipped to fund the services they provide in an independent way;
- **Multi-stakeholder planning** - where citizens are involved in both the long and short term planning for their local area.

Good practice for local democracy and good governance, include elements that the CLGF outlined in its **Aberdeen Agenda**¹⁰ as a set of twelve key principles:

1. Constitutional and legal recognition for local democracy
2. The ability to elect local representatives
3. Partnerships between spheres of government
4. Defined legislative framework
5. Opportunity to participate in local decision-making
6. Open local government – accountability
7. Open local government – transparency
8. Openness to scrutiny
9. Inclusiveness
10. Adequate and equitable resource allocation
11. Equitable service delivery
12. Building strong local democracy and good governance

Overall, the practice of such local democracy and good governance should result in what the UCLG argued for in the “City of 2030 – a Manifesto”¹¹ (pages 2-4). Areas relating directly to local democracy here included:

- A democratic, self-governing city (cities which are governed by directly elected leaders and which has the ‘right’ powers, finances and human resources)
- An inclusive city of participation (where representative democracy is complemented by participatory democracy)
- A shared responsibility of governance (emphasising local, regional & national cooperation)

⁹ 2014 State of participatory democracy <http://stateofparticipatorydemocracy.files.wordpress.com/2013/09/spdr14.pdf>

¹⁰ Commonwealth principles on good practice for local democracy & good governance were agreed by the CLGF membership in 2005 and endured by the Commonwealth heads of government in 2005 and 2007 and enshrined in the Commonwealth Charter in 2013 www.clgf.org.uk/aberdeen-agenda

¹¹ City of 2030 Manifesto www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/manifestorecommendations_en.pdf

3 SETTING THE CONTEXT

The past few years have witnessed significant advances in democratic expression, and the development of institutions promoting democracy at all levels of governance. Important though, too, the institutionalisation of democracy where decentralisation becomes central in understanding the different systems and issues impacting on the quality of local democracy. Ivanyna and Shah (2013) term it the “*silent revolution*”, but its popularity in academic journals, government communication and the media have ensured that it is no longer silent (see annexure: Decentralisation as a concept).

If local government is “*where the rubber hits the road*” (The Hunger Project 2013: 7) and is the sphere of government which affects people’s lives on a daily basis through its provision of basic services, ensuring decent living environments and its impact on safety and health, then it is vital that this sphere of government is empowered to act and take decisions to do its work well. Decentralisation and its underlying principle of subsidiarity (taking decisions as closely as possible to the citizen) (e.g. EU 1992, treaty, article 5) have been a common theme in debates about governance, poverty reduction, democracy and development fields.

Emerging in the 1980’s as a major issue (although not a new concept in governance), the term ‘decentralisation’ is a broad topic and is generally used to refer to measures taken to transfer elements of power from central government to lower levels of government. (Scott& Rao, 2011). The UK Department for International Development (DFID) note that the traditional understanding of decentralisation is “*the assignment of public functions to subnational governments along with structures, systems, resources, and procedures that support implementing these functions to meet specific goals*”, an emerging view is that decentralisation should refer to the broader concept of “*empowering autonomous local governments to meet a general mandate to provide for the welfare of their constituencies, not just on their assumption of functions assigned by the centre.*” (LGI 2013).

There are numerous opinions on the motivation behind national government introducing decentralisation. Ivanyna and Shah (2013) summarise these as being the desire to move decision-making closer to citizens to establish “*fair, accountable, incorruptible and responsive (F.A.I.R.) governance*” (Ivanyna and Shah, 2013: 3). Oates (1972), cited by Ivanyna and Shah (2013), lists the following potential advantages of decentralisation:

- Local government have a better understanding of the needs and concerns of local residents
- Local decision making is more responsive to the people for whom the services are intended and therefore encourages fiscal responsibility and efficiency.
- Unnecessary layers of jurisdictions are eliminated
- Inter-jurisdictional competition and innovation are enhanced

Importantly, decentralisation has the potential to improve the depth of democracy by, as Miller (1992) notes, bringing government closer to the people. It can also improve the quality of democracy by increasing “*civil dialogue*” (Shah and Shah, 2006) by creating more conducive conditions for citizens to participate and interact with local government, as well as through increasing levels of transparency and accountability (UNDEF, 2013). Because decentralisation can bring government closer to citizens, it can result in greater levels of empowerment for women and marginalised groups.

Estimates suggest that in the period since its initial emphasis in the 1980's, political, fiscal and/or administrative decentralisation is being pursued in over 80% of all countries (Scott and Rao, 2011). This is not surprising, given the trend towards multi-party democracy over the last 30 years (ODI, 2013) as well as internal pressures – including citizens' demands and the range of multi-lateral, development¹², international and local organisations of local governance¹³ promoting decentralisation of the powers of the state to as local a level as possible.¹⁴ Mendoza (2008) examines the conditions under which democracy emerges or authoritarianism persists at the subnational level. Where historically there had been more local autonomy, greater local democracy is found.

Research into the impact that decentralisation has had gives varied conclusion and Moncada and Snyder (2012) provide an excellent overview of key themes emerging from the literature on subnational democracy. The table below classifies the research into five themes: during the earlier and then later periods of research, they indicate how the research areas have changed, including also broad findings of the research in these areas.

Table: Key themes emerging from the literature on subnational democracy

First Generation Research (1990's)		Second Generation Research (2000's)	
Area of Research	Key Findings	Area of Research	Findings
Subnational Authoritarian Regime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The reach of the central state is territorially uneven. Subnational authoritarian regimes can thrive in countries with national-level democracy. 	Clientelism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The incentives politicians face to engage in clientelism are a function of local socioeconomic and political conditions.
Social Capital, Governance and the Quality of Democracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social capital and democracy are mutually reinforcing. Public-private collaboration at the local level facilitates economic development. 	Participatory Policy Reforms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local political institutions have a crucial impact on the intensity and quality of political participation.
Decentralization and Neoliberalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decentralization and neoliberal economic reforms are territorially uneven processes. The effects of decentralization and neoliberal economic reforms on the quality of representation, public policy and service delivery depend on subnational variation in the power of political elites and societal actors. 	Recentralization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subnational financial distress can jeopardize national economic stability and, in turn, catalyse recentralization efforts. The political fortunes of recentralization depend on the incentives and power subnational actors have to oppose or support it.
Federalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subnational political units are potentially autonomous policy jurisdictions. 	Intergovernmental Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vertical relations between governments at distinct levels of the political system, as well as horizontal relations across governments at the same level, have a powerful effect on citizen security, democracy, and development.
Violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cities, not just rural areas, can breed political and ethnic violence. Associational networks at the local level strongly affect the likelihood of violence. 	Micro-dynamics of Violence and Conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local violence is often driven by cleavages and rivalries that are quite distinct from the "master cleavages" that divide national actors.

Source: Moncada and Snyder (2012), page 5

¹² Multi-lateral and development agencies dealing with decentralisation -- UN, World Bank, Cities Alliance, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), UK Department for International Development (DFID), etc

¹³ Such as UCLG (including GOLD reports), CLGF (including the "Deepening local democracy in the Commonwealth" report and the Aberdeen Agenda), the UN agencies, and others

¹⁴ So too did the many NGOs and civil society-led initiatives such as International IDEA, Decentralisation and Local Government; the Local Public Sector Initiative, Local Development International, Association of Local Democracy Agencies, Community Systems Foundation (CSF)¹⁴, etc.

The work of Ivanyna and Shah (2013) provides an analysis of the various dimensions of decentralisation. In their work entitled: *“How Close Is Your Government to Its People? Worldwide Indicators on Localisation and Decentralisation”*, government decision making at a local level is measured across 182 countries, evaluating the institutional dimensions of political, fiscal and administrative autonomy under a variety of government regimes. These are then ranked into a decentralisation index and a government closeness index.

The variables used by Ivanyna and Shah correlate closely to those outlined by IDEA (2001) as central to local democratic governance, being: *“self-government and administration close to the people”* (p11) and the principles enshrined in CLGF Aberdeen Agenda (relevant principle indicated by AAno.). The variables are as follows:

The significance of local government:

- Relative importance of local governments measured by their share of total government expenditure. This is an indicator of local government’s ability to function effectively and deliver infrastructure and other services. (AA10)
- Security of existence of local governments, measured by the constitutional and legal restraints on the “arbitrary dismissal” of local governments. With security of existence, local governments have a greater degree of stability and autonomy. (AA1)

The empowerment of local government:

- Fiscal decentralisation measuring local government’s fiscal autonomy, measured firstly by the “vertical fiscal gap”, which measures the difference between the expenditure needs and revenue means of local government and secondly by the ability of local governments to raise taxes to finance their own expenditure. Third, this measures unconditional transfers to local government; fourth, expenditure autonomy, measuring local governments’ ability to spend as it deems fit; and finally, freedom to borrow. As noted above, local government needs funding to function effectively. Own funding provides local government with greater autonomy in spending and a greater degree of self government. (AA10)

Political decentralisation:

- Legislative election – measuring whether legislative bodies at a local level are elected or appointed (or a mix thereof). Here, appointed bodies are less likely to reflect the choice of local communities, hence, will decrease the quality of local democracy. (AA2)
- Executive election – whether mayors or other similar heads are elected or appointed. (AA2)
- Direct democracy provisions, measuring whether there is a legislative requirement for local referenda on issues such as major spending, taxing etc. These will create enhanced conditions for local determination on important issues. (AA4)

Administrative decentralisation

- HR policies – can local government hire and fire who it wants and set conditions of employment, which will allow local government greater self autonomy. (AA10)
- Employment – local government’s share of total government employment. (AA10)

3.1 LOCAL GOVERNMENT AROUND THE GLOBE

The increased roles and responsibilities that decentralisation has given local government have been implemented in different ways across the world, creating a wide variety of systems of local governance. The following overviews draw extensively on the regional analysis provided in by the third report of the Global Observatory of Local Democracy¹⁵.

In **Africa**, for example, has a very variable set of decentralised contexts, but in general there has been a significant increase in attention in giving local government greater powers and responsibility. More than two thirds of the Sub-Saharan countries have implemented one or more decentralisation reforms (Awortwi, 2011). Of the 18 Commonwealth African countries, 14¹⁶ have constitutional recognition of, or protection for, local government. All six East African countries have a decentralisation policy or strategy in place (with the exception of the Union of Comoros where the strategy is in its initial phases), financing of local development from central government is in place in Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda, and institutional arrangements are in place in all six countries (UNDP 2012a). In 2010, Kenya implemented a new constitution allowing for significant decentralisation, with only two tiers of government: national and county (UNDEF 2013). The constitution devolved political, fiscal and administrative powers from the national government to local counties. Despite the shift, many Sub-Saharan African governments have not devolved *significant* powers to local government. Helmsing (2005) shows that in 19 out of 27 countries in the region, central government had the power to close down local government. Ivanyna and Shah (2013) show 18 Sub-Saharan African countries in the bottom third in their ranking of 182 countries (p 35). In 18 countries, local governments do not have the power to set their own local taxes. There are many instances of central government interventions in local government and Awortwi (2011) suggests that recentralisation and a weakening of local government is likely to occur in many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Many **Asia Pacific** countries have adopted decentralisation to ensure greater local democratisation. The majority of countries there now have local elections (Laquain in Gold III, 2013). However, as in Africa, the amount of power that has been delegated does not always give local government the powers and funding it requires. In **Eurasia**, most countries in the region have centralisation processes underway (Laquain in Gold III 2013). Gel'man (2011) shows that after the multiple political and economic transformations in the 1990s and the 2000s in Russia, new patterns of subnational politics and governance emerged across Russia's regions and large cities in the form of local regimes, which interestingly were co-opted into a "*hierarchy of the 'power vertical' during the wave of re-centralisation of politics and governance in the 2000s*" (p1). Laws do provide for community participation in transport service provision, but very few people get involved in the process. **Europe** proper though is quite different with, in many countries, local communities having a form of self-government with either general or specific limited responsibilities (Bauby and Similie in Gold III 2013). The Commission on Local Democracy in Scotland in the lead up to the recent independence referendum is a good example of the continued re-negotiation of local democracy in Europe.¹⁷

¹⁵ UCLG (2013) GOLD III www.uclg.org/en/issues/access-basic-services-gold-iii-report

¹⁶ In SS Africa the following Commonwealth countries have some constitutional recognition or protection for local government Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Uganda, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania and Zambia – see www.clgf.org.uk/constitutional-provision-for-local-government

¹⁷ Commission on Local Democracy in Scotland www.localdemocracy.info

In **Latin America**, despite a strong centralist tradition, beginning in the 1980's, significant progress was made in decentralisation, with local government gaining increasing amounts of powers and responsibilities. Ocon (2013) shows that as citizens have become better informed, they are making increasing demands on local government which is their "*first point of contact*" (Ocon 2013: 133). Giraudy (2012: 23) notes that "*subnational level elections are still severely manipulated*". However, recentralisation programmes have begun in both Venezuela and Ecuador (Eaton, 2013).

The **Middle East and West Asia** region provides something of a special case in that expatriate workers account for nearly 40% of the total Gulf Co-operation Council Area, and in some cases constitute the majority of the population residing in these states (Serageldin, 2013). There are also significant numbers of displaced persons. Local governance is generally weakly developed in these countries.

Whilst the very brief regional summaries outlined above clearly do not have the scope to capture the nuances of the intra-regional and even intra-country variation in local government, this macro-level analysis provides a useful snapshot of the global state of local democracy and regional contexts in which national and sub-national systems of local government can be compared and contrasted. The remainder of this paper reviews some key issues of local democracy and decentralisation, understanding what the **changes and trends** have been in this regard and given these, looking at the challenges that local government throughout the world is facing. Finally, the paper looks at what the **opportunities, lessons learned and future challenges** are.

4 TRENDS AND DEVELOPMENTS IN LOCAL DEMOCRACY

Democracy at a local level must first be seen in the context of national democracy. The Economist 2013 Democracy Report, notes that "*in 2013 global democracy was in limbo, in the sense that, as has been the pattern in recent years, there was little overall change – there was neither significant progress nor regression over the course of the year*" (Economist, 2013: 1). The report notes that 15% of countries, accommodating 11% of the world's population are full democracies. Most countries are either flawed democracies or hybrid regimes (54%) and 31% of countries, accommodating 37% of the world's populations, are authoritarian regimes. (ibid, see also ODI, 2013)

The report notes that an important factor impacting on democracy has been the economic and financial crisis (ibid). This has been evidenced in a decline in some governance aspects, participation in political processes and media freedoms and a deterioration in attitude to democracy. Although the 2013 Economist report relates these issues to national democracy, all are just as relevant to local democracy. It is then relevant to understand what the broader trends and influencing factors have been in local government and how these have impacted on local democracy. The 2014 State of Participatory Democracy Report (The Hunger Project 2014) provides a positive outlook for democracy at a local level, stating that whereas national level democracy is, in many areas, fragile, at lower levels participatory democracy is expanding and deepening. This, the report notes, is seen in areas such as decentralisation, women in leadership positions, greater social accountability and collaboration between government and civil society as well as a general increased acknowledgement of the role of local government. Using the above, as well as other trends, the sections below outline the broader context and factors that have impacted on local government and local democracy over the past decade.

4.1 Global financial crisis

The global financial crisis from 2007 onwards impacted greatly on the world's economies (Taylor, 2009) and on local democracy (Economist, 2013), highlighting the close inter-linkages between national and local issues. In many countries, local governments were faced with major austerity cuts. A recent UCLG report¹⁸ found that *'Cities and local economies have been severely impacted by the crisis which has interrupted the business of local government in all corners of the world. The challenges of collapsed tax revenues, unemployment, disinvestment, disruption to municipal services, and the climate of uncertainty have challenged local leaders like few previous crises.'* (UCLG 2009: 31)

In the impact in the global south, whilst there was some cushioning of effect of the global financial crisis, especially in the BRICs countries where investment is driven more by domestic finance¹⁹, both FDI²⁰ and overseas development assistance²¹ (ODA) were significantly negatively effected. In the Asia Pacific region, a report by Inclusive Cities shows that recession has triggered not only growth of the informal sector in developing Asian cities²² but also an increasing inequality as those with less skills are push to the bottom of the employment pile (Inclusive cities, 2009)

The UCLG report notes that the scale of development across 24 European cities slowed down following the financial crisis. *"cities with strong public sector presence were initially insulated from the recession as the private sector suffered from a all of in credit and consumer demand...and disadvantaged areas have been hit the hardest"* (UCLG, 2009: 27). Stimulus packages from national governments were common (UCLG, 2009). Lowndes and Pratchett (2014) note that in the UK, Local Government faced the greatest proportion of austerity budgets cuts which were likely to undermine the sustainability of all but the wealthiest of councils. Similar examples are evident in other European countries such as Greece, Portugal, Spain and Cyprus and to a lesser extent across the rest of the EU and North America. In the USA, local governments dealt with the austerity cuts by "leaving vacant positions unfilled (66%), deferring implementation of capital projects (60%), implemented targeted cuts in expenditure (52%) and increasing existing fees for services (46%)" (Grossman, D, undated: 3). In both the USA and Europe, the global financial crisis caused instability in major cities (e.g. London, New York, Frankfurt etc.), where there was a "disproportionate reliance on the sector for tax and employment generation. As a result, they suffered badly from job losses and reputational damage" (UCLG: 25).

Perhaps most importantly however, local government in both the north and the south found itself with a wider set of challenges related to the financial crisis, including lower affordability levels and higher unemployment rates, placing pressure on the finances of local government and requiring increased levels of social service provision.

¹⁸ UCLG, 2009, The impact of the global crisis on local governments
[www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/9225580315_\(FN\)_uclgcrisis\(eng\).pdf](http://www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/9225580315_(FN)_uclgcrisis(eng).pdf)

¹⁹ 'South Asian cities has been conserved as investments into these cities are largely driven by domestic savings. These cities have avoided a dependence on foreign investment and currency and have built their investment strategy on the attraction of less volatile capita' World Bank, (2009)

²⁰ The African Development Bank states that in 2009 FDI is projected to decline by about 18%. This represents a fall from USD 62 billion to USD 50.8 billion. African Development Bank, (2009):

²¹ DFIDs support to Indian states is a case in point www.odi.org/news/656-odi-media-comment-dfid-decision-end-aid-india

²² Inclusive cities, (2009): Global Economic Crisis& the Informal Economy, www.inclusivocities.org/global_economic_crisis.html

4.2 Urbanisation and increasing city size

In 2014, the proportion of the world that was urban was 54%, with an expected increase to 66% by 2050 (UN, 2014). A projected 2.5 billion people are expected to be added to the world's urban population by 2050 – bringing the global urban population to 6+ billion. However, up to 90% of this growth will be concentrated in Asia and Africa, with the former projected to become 56% urban, and the latter 64% urban, by 2050 (ibid). Africa is “expected to be the fastest urbanising region from 2020 to 2050” (ibid: 9), although by 2050 “Asia will continue to host nearly half the world's urban population” (ibid: 11). This pace of this urban growth is unprecedented in history. Whilst in some developed contexts the transition to a prominently urban society took around 150 years (five generations in western Europe), in Africa, many parts of Asia and elsewhere in the developing world, this transition will take only two generations.

Whilst many of these urban dwellers have good basic education, accommodating and providing basic services for these growing population levels is a challenge for urban local government – both due to the rate of growth as well as high levels of poverty. Local governments need to deliver faster with less locally raised funding, in many cases eroding local democratic practices with lower levels or rushed participatory processes. Less locally raised funding also means a higher reliance on funding from national government which is more conditional than locally raised funding. All of these factors serve to decrease the quality of local democracy.

Globalisation also presents opportunities, with cities, in the main, being the greatest beneficiaries of globalisation (UNFPA, 2007, p:8) As world economies become more interconnected, cities become the focus of these connections. The Globalisation and World Cities (GaWC) research network has produced an index of connectedness intended to reflect the relative economic power of different cities, showing the importance of cities and city-regions in the economic development of countries. This work re-emphasises that we live increasingly in a global world.

The importance of cities and city regions to a country's economic competitiveness has been noted by Weiss (2001) who states that cities can play a vital role in contributing towards regional and national prosperity. A city's ability to do this, however, is highly dependent on it attracting sufficient and skilled people. An engaging local government, which allows for greater participation and acknowledges civil, political, economic and environmental rights (IDEA, 2001) - a better quality local democracy - is more likely to be attractive. This benefits not just the city itself, but the nation as a whole.

Globalisation brings with it, an expansion of ideas, approaches, cultures and values. This is both due to greater levels of connectivity and interactions as well as growing levels of migrants. Migrants are attracted to urban areas, due to the opportunities they hold, many bringing with them skills and capacity. However, very rarely are they welcomed.

4.3 Rising conflicts and protests

A series of increasingly large protests in cities across the world (such as those in Cairo, Sao Paulo, Barcelona, Hong Kong and Turkey) have been a significant factor over the past decade. These have brought cities and their public spaces into the focus of political struggles. The notable feature of many of these protests is that they take place in urban public locations and are dominated by young, well-educated middle class protesters (Sassen, S, 2013, in an interview with The Guardian, 22 June 2013).

The “right to the city” movement is an example of how urban movements are gaining momentum to claim the right to urban space. David Harvey in 2008 wrote: “*The right to the city is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city. It is, moreover, a common rather than an individual right since this transformation inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanisation. The freedom to make&remake our cities and ourselves is, I want to argue, one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights*” (Harvey 2008: 1). The freedoms Harvey raises, are freedoms that reflect local democracy.

The focus of the protests and their allied social movements like the “right to the city” bring together a variety of demands (Mayer 2011). These range from protests against National government issues, such as government bail-outs, in European cities, to the USA’s more local needs-oriented movement protesting home foreclosures and homelessness. (ibid) A protest may focus on a local government issue, but quickly move to a national issue as local and national politics become more intertwined.

Turkey’s Taksim protests in 2013 are a good example. Beginning as a protest against plans to build a shopping centre on a historic public park (Kuymulu, 2013), the protests quickly broadened to include protests against the policies of the Prime Minister and government. Turkey’s protests took place in the context of a representative democracy with what had been a relatively popular leader. However Gokay and Shain (2013) note that “*participatory democracy was forcefully undermined by an orgy of neoliberal mega-projects, generating dubious profits for a small elite in their respective countries. This also created an inflated sense of self-image around these mega structures for the respective leaders*” (2013: 1). Here the strong growth created in previous decades had increased citizens’ expectations of what their government could or would provide. (Gokay and Shain, 2013: 1). Participatory processes, for many local governments are therefore no longer a choice, but a necessity, if it is to stay in power. Similarly, a lack of participation at a local government level can have significant impacts on national government.

Whilst protests in most cases are disruptive, there is evidence to show that they are also effective ways for people to make their voices heard where they feel the government is not listening. Agone (2007) shows, from a time series analysis of protests in the USA, where protests have raised the profile of issues and have increased the likelihood of public policy changes. Goodfellow (2013) provides a set of East African examples of the importance of cities, in spite of high levels of violence.

The rise in protests and conflict - beyond their immediate causes – has been related to the growth and accessibility of communication technologies (Mason, 2013). This exposure to wider and easier sources of information gives people a better understanding of the broader political system and information on how it may be being abused. More people are aware of their rights. Where their rights are limited, people are exposed to examples of countries where greater rights exist. This impacts on both national and local democracy, where government institutions are subject to greater surveillance, and local rights are subject to greater national and international comparisons.

4.4 Engaging in governance

Twenty years ago, inclusive governance was a mere aspiration and where it was practiced, local democracy was simply about holding regular local elections and electing representatives. Notions of participatory democracy, inclusiveness (particularly in gender terms) and having a more representative form of government were weakly developed. Participatory budgeting²³ and planning, ensuring women were equally represented administratively and politically, and finding ways to give the poor greater voice, were seen as the exceptions rather than the norm. Today, though, these and others have, in many contexts, been institutionalised²⁴.

Since the 1980's, together with the shift towards decentralisation came a focus on the need for community participation in development processes²⁵. The focus was on how representative forms of local democracy could embrace more participatory and inclusive systems of local governance. Questions of leadership and the shortage of skills and human resource capability increasingly took centre stage. Programmes focusing on encouraging the participation of women and less powerful members of the community have been initiated and recently, the inclusion of youth has become an important focus area.

Across the world, participatory processes range from ones where there are almost none to areas where there are significant, legislated and institutionalised processes. As the *"Moving Out of Poverty"* study (World Bank, 2009) demonstrates, participatory grassroots democracy is integral in the eradication of poverty. Representative local government empowers people to participate in setting priorities and holding their representatives accountable for results — actions that can help lift communities out of poverty (UNDEF, 2013). Decision-making is no longer the single responsibility of government. Effective participation though requires more than structures and guidelines (ALAT, 2011). Whilst the evidence is not conclusive, it is clear that transparency, participation and accountability can be improved through open budgeting processes (Khagram et al 2013, Cabannes 2014). Michels and De Graaf (2010) show that although the role of citizens in many policy making initiatives is very limited, participation has a positive impact on democracy with people feeling more responsible for public matters, increases engagement and encourages tolerance in diversity.

Overall, two challenges confront citizen participation in planning or any other local governance initiative: first, *"Whose voices are heard within participatory processes, and how can less articulate voices be supported?;"* and secondly, *"Who controls participatory processes and to what extent, and in what ways can power be devolved to public participants?"* (Silva 2014: iv-vi). Although the examples below show much progress and good practice in participation, allowing the voices of the "less articulate" to be heard is still a major challenge. Similarly, few if any local governments have devolved significant power to participants in these processes.

²³Cabannes 2014 Contribution of Participatory Budgeting to provision & management of basic services analysis 20 city cases from across the world <http://pubs.iied.org/pdfs/10713IIED.pdf>

²⁴ See for example www.idea.int/publications/atlas-of-electoral-gender-quotas/

²⁵ The work of John Drydek and Jane Mansbridge has challenged participatory democracy and proposed considering either deliberative or discursive democracy www.deliberative-democracy.net

The opportunities for using social media²⁶ as a mechanism to increase the quality and quantity of participation are significant in their ability to enhance interactions between local government and citizens. However authors such as Ellison and Hardey (2013) and Shewell (2011) have found that these have not been fully explored nor taken advantage of. Ellison and Hardey (2013) note that social media could be used to increase communication between citizens and local government, whereby citizens could voice their opinions on various issues, resulting in more responsive policies and programmes and enhancing the deliberative processes between citizens and government. It can also create a more educated and informed citizenry if information about the functioning of the council, the various work areas being conducted and reasons for policy choices is disseminated.

4.4.1 Community participation around the globe

Kerala State, India, provides an example of good practice in decentralised, bottom-up planning (The Hunger Project 2013, see also Isaac & Franke 2002). Here, the government pursued large-scale fiscal devolution, along with a campaign for local level planning: the People's Plan Campaign. All rural local governments now prepare development reports and annual plans, and implement them, with strong mobilisation, ownership and involvement of the people. In **Tanzania**, local government legislation provides for establishment of councils and committees where people's representatives get involved in participatory planning and budgeting (ALAT 2011). In the **Philippines**, participation is legislated into the governance system, and local development councils are required to have citizen participation at all levels. This is aided by providing citizen representatives with training in effective participation.

In **Latin America**, participation at the local level mainly takes place in neighbourhood organisation and mobilisation to improve public services – especially in poor neighbourhoods, although the relation between citizens and local government seems to primarily revolve around complaint handling (Ocon, GOLD III, 2013). Similarly there is participation in the provision of services in the informal or SMME sector (ibid 149-150). The concept of Ombudsmen as watchdogs or overseers, has also gained ground in many municipalities. In **Bolivia**, the 1994 Law of Popular Participation recognised the importance of existing local organisations, like indigenous communities, and gave citizens oversight over fiscal policy with budget-freezing powers (Gaventa, 2004). **Colombian** law now provides for civil society participation through “*oversight spokespeople*” who sit on the board of companies providing public services, providing oversight and participating in tariff setting and service planning. The Mayor of Cali, Colombia has created a Territories of Inclusion and Opportunity (TIOS) project, designed as a series of place-based interventions in 11 of the super high-risk and marginalised communities of Cali. The programme focuses on social investments on behalf of the most vulnerable populations, using a model of participatory planning and citizen engagement to identify community concerns and target public funding towards addressing these priorities. Similar initiatives exist in **Chile and Peru** (Ocon in GOLD III, 2013). In **Brazil**, Porto Alegre's 20 year history of participatory budgeting has also brought in groups who were traditionally not included in urban management power bases. Benefits of this are notable and have included increased waste collection, better street lighting, street paving, student enrolment and sewerage coverage (ibid, see also Cabannes, 2014).

²⁶ Social media broadly refers to Web platforms built around user-generated content that can be shared publicly & instantaneously

Christchurch City Council (New Zealand) launched a 'Share an Idea' initiative in 2011 at a community expo for residents to contribute their vision towards a city plan. The response was overwhelming. 58,000 people posted ideas, with 10,000 attending the community expo events. Public involvement was encouraged through 160,000 letter box drops, YouTube and media participation (KPMG, 2014). The establishment of a single, unified **eThekweni** Municipality in South Africa in 2000 presented a unique window of opportunity to ensure a consistent and progressive approach to citizen participation across the metropolitan area. What was found was that the quality of service delivery was greatly improved when ideas were consciously integrated with citizen involvement (Moodley, undated).

4.4.2 Challenges to effective citizen participation

There are many challenges facing local governance in trying to ensure an effective balance between participatory and representative forms of governance. At one level, there are institutional barriers, at another level the interests of elected representatives can often reduce the effectiveness of participatory engagements as these public representatives feel threatened by such engagements. Political partisanship and interference is commonly cited as a problem, where, in many contexts the overriding will of political parties dictates decision-making processes and affects the ability for participative processes to work. In many municipalities, the fairly rapid turnover of elected representatives means the quality of such representatives is not very good, with low levels of institutional memory and poorly capacitated leadership.

On most continents a major theme emerging in the literature revolves around the way in which local elites (private businesses, political parties, etc.) control the local elections and developmental processes through patronage and other manipulative means. Montero (2011), for example, shows how for an initial period, conservative political machines controlled governments in the Brazilian northeast by distributing patronage through clientele networks. A lack of active citizenry and voter apathy is a constraint to local governance. This can be a result of citizens feeling powerless and unable to see the impact of their participation. In Eurasia, for example, almost no country in the region has high levels of citizen participation for social reasons, and due to economic, political and legal barriers. Here, there is "*incredulity at (being unwilling or unable to believe) the possibility of influencing decisions taken at the local level*" (Sivaev in Gold III 2013: 84). In the Middle East and Western Asia, too, there is a notable absence of clear, sound and powerful frameworks for empowering community members to effectively partner the local and national elected elite in the management of public affairs (Ayoub, 2010). Here political parties are generally weak and there are very few instances of open or public meetings in which citizens could partake. Women's participation is low (ibid).

A glaring challenge repeatedly cited by local government stakeholders and government officials, is the lack of critical capacity to develop and coordinate local stakeholder engagement mechanisms (UNDP/CLGF/UNCDF 2012b). Besides, the cost of participation is rarely factored in decentralisation implementation plans, making this one of the most under-funded and under-invested processes in development. This lack of capacity is evidenced well in France, where, although legislation allows for opportunities to participate, communities have expressed difficulties, including the need to work on a voluntary basis and, if to be effective, the need to be knowledgeable on a wide range of topics (Bauby and Similie in GOLD III 2013).

4.5 Inclusivity and Active citizens

Finding ways in which residents of municipalities are able to take charge of their own municipality's future is an important focus of attention. Here, the degree to which there is social cohesion, with all sectors of society having a voice that is engaging and engages with the local government's developmental vision, is required.

At a local level there are a huge range of types and interests of local stakeholders in governance. These often have competing interests and priorities and include on one hand the private sector, from large corporations, right down to the smaller SMME's involved in, for example, selling water in informal settlements. On the other is civil society which is also very diverse and includes trade unions, NGO's (local and international), grassroots organisations (small to very large), residents associations, and professional and business associations. A significant challenge in democracy is managing this diversity. An important theme here is that of social cohesion, defined as the bonds and social networks bringing people together - particularly in the context of high cultural diversity. Scott (2009) states that social cohesion reduces conflict and ethnic tension and is both the absence of latent conflict and the presence of strong social bonds. Some of the key factors impacting negatively on social cohesion are immigration, disparities in income or access to resources and differences in basic rights.

Many programmes have been implemented to increase the role of women, through for example, increasing their participation in governance processes. Research by Beall (2005) on Southern African local government, has however found that results from such initiatives have been generally disappointing. Reasons for this included poor educational levels amongst many women, cultural values which discriminate against women and lower levels of trust due to conflicts and war. Similar findings were made by Johnson, Kabuchu and Vuyisya in Uganda (2003). The impact of these factors however are not always uniform, Beall cites women's role in the Mozambique civil war as being empowering and leading to their greater influence in politics.

Social cohesion also focuses attention on other marginalised groups including Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual and Intersex (LGBTI) citizens, those with physical and/or mental disabilities, religious diversity and immigrants. In the case of the former, social exclusion within countries is proving a very difficult challenge to overcome, whilst in the case of the latter, the costs attached to creating new living and working environments is often used as an excuse to explain away poor progress. Very little research has been done on the impacts of decentralisation on social cohesion. (Scott 2009). However, there has been a significant growth in studies on the effects of decentralisation and conflict (conflict in many instances being a total breakdown of social cohesion) (see for example Jackson and Scott 2008, and Jackson 2014).

Authors are divided on whether decentralisation mitigates or exacerbates social cohesion, or can do either depending on the context (Jackson 2014). Scott (2009) finds that decentralisation has the potential to either mitigate or exacerbate conflict – depending on local conditions and how the decentralisation is implemented. Diprose and Ukiwo (2008) who found that “*particular forms of implementation rather than decentralisation per se ... triggers violent conflicts*” (cited in Scott and Rao, 2009: 18). Diprose and Ukiwo state that greater degrees of self-autonomy can reduce conflict by providing for an institutional framework for addressing local level tensions. The authors also note that where there are large groups with strong perceptions of unequal access and opportunity, conflict tends to become more prevalent. This is also the case where large groups have coinciding rather than cross cutting identities.

Siegle and O’Mahony (2006) note that in situations with highly inequitable resource allocation and a lack of central government control over provincial security, decentralisation can contribute to higher levels of conflict. However the authors also note that “*Civil conflict has few stable explanatory factors, suggesting a greater degree of case specificity*” (Siegle and O’Mahony cited by Scott and Rao, 2011).

4.6 Development

A significant body of literature focuses on how local governance can address infrastructural backlogs and maintenance, covering – amongst other issues - how such basic networks, facilities and systems are sustainably financed and ways in which services can be extended to particularly the poor and marginalised. At a broader level, infrastructure, basic and social services play a vital role in human development. Here, Satterwaite (2013: 2) notes: “*progress in local democracy must be measured in terms of improvements to the quality of life. Ultimately local governments are judged on their ability to ensure that the needs of their citizens are met*”²⁷.

The role of local governments in human development is key – especially in instrumental sectors such as health, water, sanitation, solid waste removal, etc., education and local economic development. Indeed in work City Insight did for GOLD III (2013) it was clear that the countries that were meeting Millennium Development Goals were largely those which had strong and institutionalised local governance and democracy, where municipalities played a role in infrastructure delivery.

The GSDRC (2011) overview of how decentralisation (positively and negatively) affects service delivery – water, health, sanitation, power, etc. – provides further analysis of this. A number of examples are provided in each of these infrastructural areas. Others studying the impact of decentralisation on development (inc. DFID, 2013), note that the evidence to support decentralisation as a means to achieve greater levels of development is inconclusive, despite a substantial research that has been conducted in this area. Ahmad and Devarajan (2005) note that decentralisation to improve service delivery will be resisted by those who have previously benefited from a previously centralised service.

²⁷See CLGF 2014 Local Economic Development in Southern Africa www.clgf.org.uk/userfiles/1/file/Resources/research-reports/Local-Economic-Development-in-Southern-Africa-March2014-FINAL-DRAFT.pdf

It is clear that involving the community improves the quality of service delivery and development. There are many ways in which this can happen. Togo and Benin's 'quadrilogue' talks, for example, led to the adoption of a charter for basic services (Satterwaite in GOLD III 2013). In Chennai, (South India), through a local NGO Exnora community 'city beautifiers' are hired to collect, sort, recover, recycle and compost waste, leaving the city with less solid waste to dispose of (Laquain in GOLD III 2013).

In Metro Manila, there is a community-based management of water services: a public-private partnership including a community run water association. The association buys the water in bulk and supplies improved quality water to local communities at a reduced cost (Laquain in GOLD III 2013, citing ADB, 2012: 53). Similarly, in 2010, Italian citizens, through a referendum facilitated through the Italian Forum of the Water Movements, ensured that 95% of voters secured the right to repeal the rules allowing the management of local public services to be entrusted to the private sector as well as regulations governing tariffs and capital returns (Bauby and Similie in Gold III 2013).

There are many challenges associated with the development process and which impact on local democracy. These range from a lack of resources, questions of who gets access to development opportunities, ways in which other spheres of government destabilise community development, the structural barriers to planning, etc (Lowndes and Pratchett, 2014). Often very well meaning initiatives can undermine local governance systems and local democracy. Examples of this include the creation of parallel processes involving NGO's or communities which by-pass local government.

As indicated above, too, many cities are increasing in size at such a rapid rate that they are unable to meet the challenges of providing basic urban network services. This leads to a growth in informal settlements at an alarming rate with particular problems attached to how best to provide services to these communities. Conflict invariably increases and in many municipalities the engagements between municipalities and informal settlers are conflictual rather than developmental.

Across the world, vulnerable communities are becoming ever more vulnerable as the growing risks associated with climate change become clear. The impacts of climate change, current and long-term, include changes in rainfall patterns, resulting in both droughts and unusually intense rain, rising sea level affecting low-lying coastal areas, and rising temperatures in many places. The international scientific panels and the work of ICLEI²⁸ in promoting mitigation and adaptation at a local level are important initiatives in this regard. Effects are being felt in food production and food security, water stress and water security, shifting vector-borne diseases and the need in many places to cope with repeated flooding (IPCC, 2007). All of these place communities in an increasing vulnerable position with local governance processes becoming more difficult to manage and more pressured as resources become more scarce.

²⁸ Local Governments for Sustainability www.iclei.org

5 LESSONS LEARNED AND FUTURE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Experience shows that best practice examples are very context driven, hence there is no one system that is more effective than others and good practice examples from one area cannot simply be copied to another. Each context usually defines good governance in slightly different ways. Most however do include core good governance and practice principles such as openness, inclusiveness, rule of law, accountability, equity etc.

5.1 Decentralisation

Decentralisation (both financial and administrative) cannot be considered the solution to all economic development and service delivery problems (Scott, 2009). In general, the success of any decentralisation implementation effort is dependent on continually building and sustaining adequate levels of local government capacities. There is a common imbalance in the design and implementation of decentralisation measures, undermining the quality of local democracy.

Ahmad and Brosio (2009) warn against partial decentralisation, arising from situations where for example, local governments lack the ability to raise their own funding through taxes, forcing them to be dependent on national government and therefore less accountable to their electorate. Despite being a necessary condition for good governance and local democracy, decentralisation is not a sufficient condition for good governance. Without an active citizenship and vibrant local democracy, its aims of good local governance will not be realized

Decentralisation should be phased in and continually monitored and importantly, it must be country specific (UNDP/CLGF/UNCDF, 2012)²⁹.

Reducing the risk of elite capture can be mitigated through ensuring the **free flow of information** and including NGO's and civil society in the process. In addition careful analysis and ongoing assessment of the impact of decentralisation is critical. Despite the multi-faceted landscape of decentralisation there is a need for practical guidance for ways to increase the benefits of decentralisation (Scott 2009 and Schou and Haug).

Local democracy programmes must look at both causes and relief processes around conflict as well as the impacts that these are having on democracy (Diprose and Ukiwo, 2008). Fritz and Menocal (2007) notes that many donor interventions in developing countries fail to recognise or stress the importance of promoting **stronger institutions**.

Size matters: Bergh and Rose (2013), for example, have found larger municipalities are generally more accountable whilst smaller ones are more responsive. Smaller local governments are however faced with more limited choice in candidates (Rysavy and Bernard, 2012).

²⁹ See also Local Development International, The Role of Decentralisation/Devolution in Improving Development Outcomes at the Local Level: Review of the Literature and Selected Cases, 2013, UK Department for International Development, South Asia Research Hub

5.2 Participation

The key to effective participation is strengthening the voice of the less powerful and marginalised, often referred to as the subaltern³⁰.

Training in leadership skills; building democratic, accountable community organisations; and establishing information-sharing processes plays an important role in addressing power imbalances. Training for government officials can also increase their receptiveness to become more engaged with local communities (Gaventa, 2004). *There is a need to build flexible, consultative, transparent policy processes to increase participation.*

Scaling up - Local governance practitioners, including community-based activists, find it very difficult to take existing innovative solutions and scale them up so that they become integrated into formal municipal services and programmes. There is a need to establish rules of engagement: allocating rights and responsibilities between government and citizen groups are needed to avoid the re-emergence of old power structures (Gaventa, 2004). This should also include simplifying legislation (Satterthwaite and Ocon in Gold III, 2013). Ombudsmen with investigative and other powers can play an important role in facilitating and simplifying the demands of citizens (ibid). *There is a need to monitor citizens' opinion and satisfaction with services through systems run jointly by community organisations and civil society.*

5.3 Skills

Councillor and administrative leadership must have the requisite leadership skills and capabilities to enhance local democracy. A key challenge to decentralisation is being able to access sufficient skills at a local level. This is especially true in less developed countries. There is a need to educate and inform to develop a strong demand amongst citizens for more accountable governance. Support from national governments to improving local level skills is critical. Ways should be explored to build skills through on-the-job means, whilst also improving the tertiary educational outputs of local governance expertise (including the built environment and other professionals).

Training should be provided to women and other marginalised groups in areas such as technical issues and council procedures. In addition, practical issues hindering the participation of women and marginalised groups, such as inadequate finances and time constraints should be considered when designing systems to increase participation.

5.4 Openness, Transparency and Information

Increased openness and transparency have important roles to play in building local democracy. As David Satterthwaite argues, *"Genuine participation is sometimes constrained by asymmetries of knowledge and resources between service users, private providers and public authorities"* (Satterthwaite in GOLD III 2013: 217). Providing information on development, including the rate of basic services provided, can increase citizen activity and participation and reducing corruption, thereby enhancing local democracy (Ocon in GOLD III 2013).

³⁰ Subalterns is a politically-left term using in social science to refer to those who are outside of the hegemonic power.

The lack of systems of accountability and transparency result in increased levels of fraud, corruption and maladministration at a local government level. ICT can open up new channels for increasing openness and information and can build public participation by removing barriers to citizen participation. ICT should not however be considered a panacea for communication challenges. There are also a huge opportunities to engage young people in meaningful dialogue, especially with those with whom there has been limited previous interaction. (Ali and Davids 2009). There are significant opportunities for localising and deepening democracy using online tools and social media, from voting on projects to providing government information. These should be further explored by local government. Key learnings in the use of social media in building good governance and a more active citizenship should be shared across local governments and civil society to ensure that they contribute to building more effective, efficient and economic systems whilst also promoting transparency and openness. Sharing of experiences in how to improve accountability and transparency and how to deal with corruption are required. Mechanisms need to be shared and/or developed for civil society to hold government to account for inadequacies in local service provision and governance, through increasing their capacity to monitor service, express their views and register complaints.

5.5 Development and Service Delivery

Decentralisation can lead to benefits in service delivery through processes such as improved decision making, greater efficiency in allocation, increased revenue collection and better administrative efficiency, although these are likely to be less successful in places with high levels of inequality (Ahmed and Brosio (2009). There is a potential for the decentralisation process – if unmonitored or implemented without proper participatory processes – to allow elites to divert funds and overwrite community preferences in service delivery (Scott and Rao, 2011).

Although the general relationship between decentralisation and service delivery is not yet clear, in Sub-Saharan Africa, Conyers, (2007) finds that decentralisation has not yet had a significant positive impact on the quality of public services. Although there is a lack of empirical data on the links between economic development and decentralisation, (Scott, 2009) better provision of basic infrastructure, water, waste, transport and electricity can promote increased economic growth (ibid). There is a need for legal systems providing clear boundaries, roles and responsibilities of different levels of government for development and service delivery (Ahmed and Brosio (2009).

Decentralisation programmes must be realistic as to what they can achieve given the skills and capacity available, otherwise development programmes will suffer. The increasing gap between the rich and poor and growing unemployment suggests more innovations are required, such as ensuring local government developments should be employment intensive and promote the use of local labour. It should be noted though, that there are many examples of technological initiatives which are improving good local governance and local democracy. The use of technology as a means of mobilisation has been limited, many, particularly major cities use social media and apps to improve communication with the public. Many aspects where service delivery is required can now often get logged electronically and have improved response times enormously³¹.

³¹There are many examples of the use of technology to improve good local governance. eg Matthews, 2013, Durban and

5.6 Additional Challenges

There is insufficient *comparable* quantitative and qualitative information on municipalities across the world. Data and information systems remain fragmented and there is a need to integrate these systems wherever possible making them easier to access for comparative analysis. Here, even definitional issues are critical. DFID (2013) note that *“The diversity of decentralisation creates challenges for comparative analysis that are as daunting as those created by its complexity”* (2013:11). Where possible, information should be both qualitative and quantitative.

Additional research required - There is a need for a more nuanced and contextualised understanding on the impact of decentralisation on local government and local democracy. Development agencies encouraging decentralisation and local government reform need to carefully design their decentralisation support programmes to match local needs and conditions. There is a need to critically reflect on successes and failures.

The DFID (2013) research notes that *“context clearly needs much more careful treatment than it generally receives. Some aspects of context help to explain why decentralisation has been or is likely to be approached in a certain way. Other aspects can inform analysts about specific features, sequencing, and other important dimensions of reform that need to be considered if decentralisation is to be successful”* (2013: 45). Research, they note, needs to recognise the interdependencies in decentralisation.

Here too the issue of how to monitor local democracy is a challenge and warrants further research and analysis. These should include both objective and subjective indicators of decentralisation.

Building stronger partnerships - stronger networks and partnerships within the various sectors of local governance and across the world must be a priority. This will encourage sharing of experiences and information and will enrich the various debates on issues such as participatory democracy and good governance.

Johannesburg’s (S. Africa) “Find and Fix” apps, the ‘Love Lewisham’ case (<http://data.gov.uk/library/love-clean-streets>).

6 CONCLUSION

There is no single world view on the functions, forms and operations of local democracy. Many different systems of local governance and democracy occur both within and between countries. The quality of local democracy undoubtedly is affected by some key trends: from the global financial crisis, the effects of urbanisation, rising conflicts and protests, ways in which engagements occur, ensuring inclusivity and the need for a developmental approach to local governance. Local governments and elected leaders are faced with many challenges to ensure good governance and service delivery. Poor skills, corruption and a lack of engagement with communities, amongst many other issues, often lead to the incapacitation of local governments. Building a capable and developmental local state therefore becomes a priority.

There is no evidence that any one model of local governance works any more than another. Generally speaking, the greater the political, financial and administrative decentralisation, the greater is the ability of the local state to deliver on the needs of their communities. But even in cases where, for example, participatory budgeting is institutionalised, it does not necessarily follow that communities are content with the outcomes and such “participation” sometimes becomes a one-way information flow from local government with very little listening to community needs taking place. Whilst not the subject of this paper, decentralisation should not be seen as a panacea for good governance and local democracy. Indeed, quite often intergovernmental tensions impact severely on good governance.

There is no doubt that local governments have become more inclusive. In countries such as South Africa, legislation and policy requires that, for example, political parties should strive to ensure that there is greater gender balance politically and administratively. However, improved gender balance does not automatically mean that culturally embedded sexism – which is much more institutionalised – disappears. Overall, discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, nationality and the like, is often entrenched in the institutional forms of governance and unless those systems are overhauled to be more inclusive, very little change can occur.

Finally, we now live in a world in which the forms of local politics and administrations are undergoing rapid change. In part, this is due to rapid technological change which now allows for far more transparency and real-time community engagements than ever before. Whilst the jury is still out on how this will ultimately affect the systems of democracy and governance, they have already affected the way in which administrations respond, set priorities and deliver the services required by the communities they serve.

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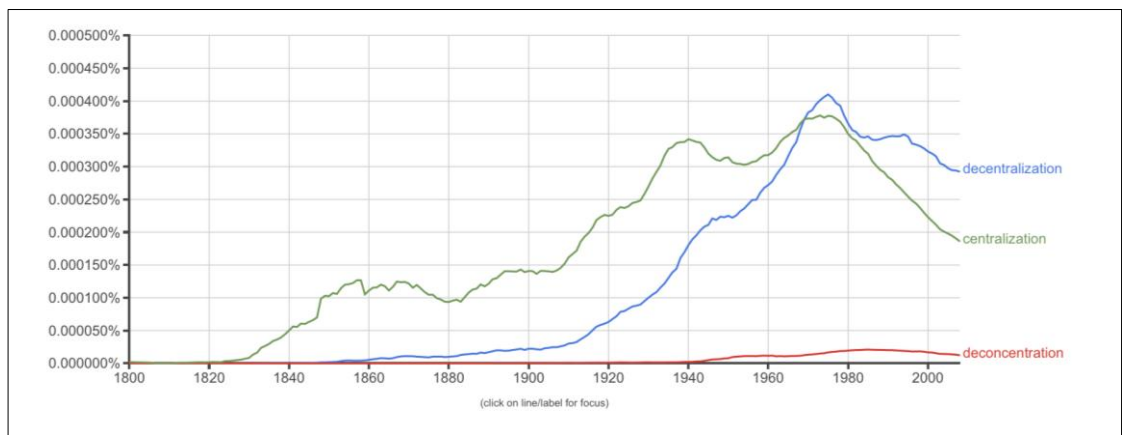
ANNEXURE 1: SUMMARY TABLE OF AREA MENTIONED IN CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISION FOR LOCAL GOVT. – COMMONWEALTH COUNTRIES

Region	Country	Constitutional provision	Women's representation	Elections	Revenue raising powers	Proportion of central funds	Specific Responsibilities	Geographical boundaries	Intergovernmental relations	Organised LG
Africa - East	Kenya	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
Africa - East	Malawi	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N
Africa - East	Mauritius	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N	N
Africa - East	Mozambique	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y
Africa - East	Rwanda	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
Africa - East	Seychelles	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Africa - East	Uganda	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N
Africa - East	Zambia	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N
Africa - Southern	Botswana	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Africa - Southern	Lesotho	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Africa - Southern	Namibia	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N	N
Africa - Southern	South Africa- <i>quasi-Federal</i>	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y
Africa - Southern	Swaziland	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Africa Southern/ East	Tanzania	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N
Africa - West	Cameroon	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N	N
Africa - West	Ghana	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
Africa - West	Nigeria - <i>Federal</i>	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N
Africa - West	Sierra Leone	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Americas - Caribbean	Antigua and Barbuda	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Americas - Caribbean	Bahamas	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Americas - Caribbean	Barbados	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Americas - Caribbean	Belize	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Americas - Caribbean	Canada - <i>Federal</i>	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	N
Americas - Caribbean	Dominica	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Americas - Caribbean	Grenada	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Americas - Caribbean	Guyana	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
Americas - Caribbean	Jamaica	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Americas - Caribbean	St Kitts and Nevis	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	N
Americas - Caribbean	St Lucia	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Americas - Caribbean	St Vincent & the Grenadines	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Americas - Caribbean	Trinidad and Tobago	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Europe	Cyprus	N	N	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	N
Europe	Malta	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N
Europe	UK	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Pacific	Australia - <i>Federal</i>	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Pacific	Fiji (till recently suspended)	tbc	tbc	tbc	tbc	tbc	tbc	tbc	tbc	tbc
Pacific	Kiribati	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Pacific	Nauru	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Pacific	New Zealand	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Pacific	Papua New Guinea	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Pacific	Samoa	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Pacific	Solomon Islands	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N
Pacific	Tonga	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Pacific	Tuvalu	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Pacific	Vanuatu	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
South Asia	Bangladesh	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	N
South Asia	Brunei Darussalam	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
South Asia	India - <i>Federal</i>	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N
South Asia	Malaysia	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N
South Asia	Maldives	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N
South Asia	Pakistan - <i>Federal</i>	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	N
South Asia	Singapore	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
South Asia	Sri Lanka	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N

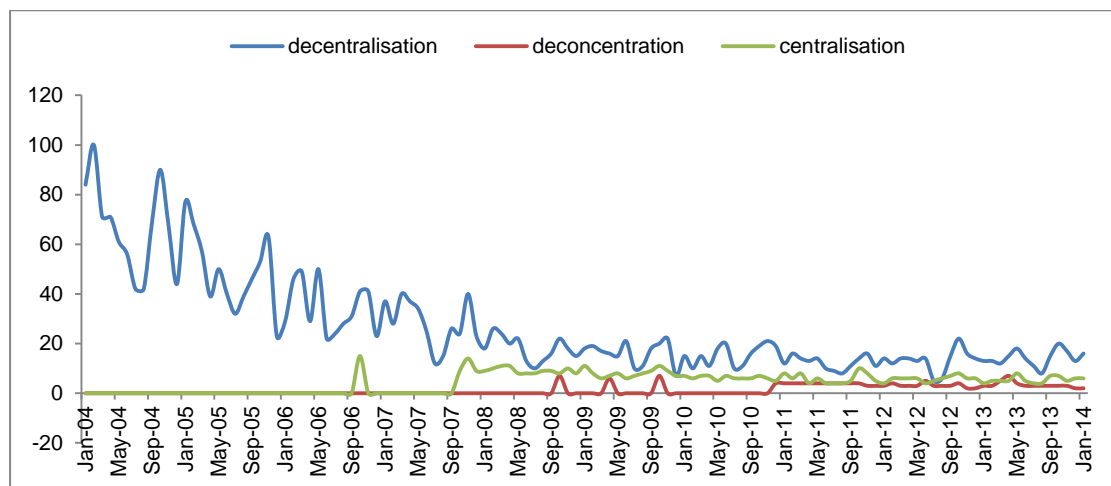
ANNEXURE 2: DECENTRALISATION AS A CONCEPT

The issue of decentralisation is relatively recent and its popularity as a current topic appears to be declining. Although not without its flaws, Google has two measures of the popularity of word trends – Google Trends and Ngram web tools. Google Trends³² shows how a particular search term is entered relative to the total search volume across the world. Google Ngram³³ searches through the 5.2 million books Google have scanned from books going back to 1800. A search on Google Ngram Viewer (relevant for books) and Google trends (which is relevant for internet searches) for the search terms ‘decentralisation’ ‘deconcentration’ and ‘centralisation’ are shown in the diagrams below.

Google Ngram Viewer: Analysis of the popularity of the words: ‘decentralisation’, ‘deconcentration’ and ‘centralisation’ 1800 to 2014



Google Trends Analysis of the popularity of word searches: decentralisation, deconcentration and centralisation 2004 - 2014



Both charts show the falling levels of printed and online media interest in decentralisation. Importantly, however, the interest in decentralisation has not been replaced with an online or printed interest in ‘centralisation’ which has also fallen in interest.

³² <http://www.google.com/trends/>

³³ <https://books.google.com/ngrams>