Citizen Engagement, Deliberative Spaces and the Consolidation of a Post-Authoritarian Democracy: The Case of Indonesia

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WORKING PAPER NO 8

ICLD Swedish International Centre for Local Democracy

ABSTRACT

Based on the debate about the relationship between civil society and decentralization, this paper argues that support for citizen participation and accountability among civil society actors can consolidate local deliberative spaces and improve the performance of local government. Presenting different ways through which local citizen groups in post-authoritarian Indonesia engage with government, the paper shows evidence of a shift in the methods and magnitude of citizen engagement with the state. Local-level power structures are beginning to move away from patronage networks to on-going interactions between citizens and the state, creating space for civil society to engage government and re-politicizing communities. How much these changes contribute to improved outcomes, however, depends on whether they challenge existing power structures and put civil society organizations on a more equal footing with state officials.

ACRONYMS

Bappeda	Regional Planning Agency
CRC	Citizen report card
CSO	Civil society organizations
DPRD	Local legislative councils
Jaker-P3G	Gowa's CSO network for Pubic Services Monitoring
KUA-PPAS	General budget policy and temporary budget ceiling
LAKPESDAM	NU's research and development institute
LGSP	Local Governance Support Programme
Musrenbang	Development planning meetings
NGO	non-governmental organization
NU	Nahdlatul Ulama, Indonesia's largest Muslim organization
Puskesmas	Community health centres
RKA	Budget work plan
Simranda	Budget analysis software
SKPD	Local government technical agencies
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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.

In this paper Antlöv and Wetterberg argue that a strong civil society is just as important as solid local goverment for a sustainable democratic development. The performance of the elected bodies, local governments, will improve by engaging different groups in decision making and advocacy. These are important lessons learned from a vibrant development in Indonesia which gives hope for the future.

Visby, Sweden, April, 2011

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INTRODUCTION

This article will focus on the debate over the capacity and role of civil society and citizen participation to deepen democracy and improve the performance of local governments and decentralization, through the lens of developments at the local level in Indonesia, a newly democratized and decentralized country. We will argue that grassroots experiences demonstrate in Indonesia that a focus on citizen participation and accountability among state and civil society actors can consolidate decentralization and democratization to produce positive development outcomes. We show evidence of a shift in the methods and magnitude of citizen engagement with the state and argue that these changes point to new deliberative spaces in Indonesia that are consolidating decentralized democracy. The extent to which these shifts contribute to improved policies and development outcomes, however, depends on the degree to which they are able to challenge existing power structures, such as an entrenched bureaucracy, the culture of entitlement among officials and patronage networks. In particular, we note the mutually reinforcing roles of civil society organizations (CSOs) and innovative/pro-reform government officials in challenging existing power structures, and the use of more mature civil society strategies which puts these organizations on a more equal footing with state representatives.

The article proceeds as follows. We first introduce the debate on civil society and decentralization, arguing for a greater role for civil society organizations to complement that of progressive local leaders and institutional designs. We support these claims with data from a local governance project in Indonesia, to assess the extent to which state-society relations are shifting. Case studies demonstrate 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 (CSOs). We conclude with the broader implications of our findings from Indonesia.

Civil Society, Decentralization and the Consolidation of Democracy

In recent decades, development debates over the links between democracy and good governance have ebbed and flowed.[1] One view that was dominant in the donor community until the 1990s and was channeled to many developing countries is that the civil service is the key to change. Training and new tools for local administrators are therefore needed to make government more modern, efficient and responsive, as a means to consolidating decentralized democracy (see, for example, Barzelay, 2001). If technically sound decentralized structures were put in place, democracy follows, as citizens take advantage of new opportunities to engage in the political process. In this view, development policy is the domain of economists, technocrats and bureaucrats capable of designing technically and administratively sound policies. The result is technical and administrative policies that might be well-designed but nevertheless can be difficult to implement and are often subject to criticism from citizens for not being responsive to their needs. Another criticism is that the support to reshape state institutions is disconnected from the society in which the institutions are rooted - the structures of power, authority, interest, hierarchies, loyalties, patronage and traditions that make up the political weave (Evans, 2004) - and are thus unable to create systemic change.

Since the technical template approach to democratization and good governance generally has not worked, decentralization proponents began to focus on democracy-building outcomes and the 'how' question: under what conditions could improved public polices be institutionalized? At the same time, experiences with decentralization have accumulated across a swath of low and middle-income countries in the Global South, often pushed forward by international financial institutions and, in some cases, local populations' demands for greater influence over public affairs. As these empirical realities of globalization, decentralization, privatization and democratization have taken shape and yielded a range of outcomes, reform sequencing and process interaction have become more

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1 For a review of governance paradigms, see Carothers 1999, Brinkerhoff and Crosby 2002, Kettl 2002, Fischer 2003, and Denhardt and Denhardt 2007.

important: policy reforms have become a 'dynamic combination of purposes, rules, actions, resources, incentives, and behaviours leading to outcomes that can only imperfectly be predicted or controlled' (Brinkerhoff and Crosby 2002:5).

This has led over to the present prevalent view, an emphasis on the interaction between the 'supply side' of government and 'demand side' of civil society. Differences in democratic outcomes and quality of governance after decentralization could be explained by civil society's ability to engage with the state (Fox 1996; Putnam 2002, Cleary 2007). Whereas the technocratic approach had assumed that civil society would automatically rise to participate in decentralized structures as spaces were opened, it was argued that rather than empowering the most disadvantaged sections of civil society, as in the rhetoric, decentralization has largely taken off without them. The dissatisfaction with procedural democracy and technocratic approaches to solving society's problems has given rise to a substantial literature and set of practices with deliberative democracy and citizen participation.[2] This new concept of 'citizen politics' broadens the role of citizens beyond that of being objects of state policy or passive recipients of government funding. In this paradigm, citizens and their organizations are called upon to assume greater responsibility in addressing the needs of the community. When citizens and their elected officials work together for better public governance, it is argued, the outcomes will be a visible improvement in the quality of democracy, both at the local and national levels. In the Global North, this has taken the form of revitalization of deliberative democracy, and in the South, various attempts at deepening democracy through citizen participation. These new forms of substantive democracy include citizen juries, '21st Century Town Hall meetings', citizen forums, consensus conferences, focus group discussions, issue forums, deliberative polls, planning cells and participatory budgeting.

Even though the civil society approach is a departure from the technocratic approach, it has also been criticized for ignoring larger patterns of dominance and marginalization (Cooke and Kothari 2001, Harriss 2001, Harriss, Stokke & Törnquist 2005). 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. Work on civil society is criticized for taking place in a non-threatening and apolitical language of building trust, establishing pacts, promoting social cohesion and creating spaces, producing 'hybrid' democracies and failing to substantially involve broad segments of civil society. A development focus organized around civic engagement in the technical processes of planning and public service delivery may restrict citizen input to the task of petitioning, making connections and lobbying, rather than creating a culture of accountability or a sense that citizens have a right to demand effective government (cf. Grindle 2007).

In this view, a development approach focusing on citizen participation, deliberative democracy and social capital serves to reinforce existing power relations - part of an agenda of depoliticizing society by weakening the state politically, promoting self-help and citizen choice in society through bypassing interest-based groups such as labourers and farmers, and cheapening the cost of aid (see Mohan & Stokke, 2008, p. 11 and Crook & Manor 1998). In the name of democratic decentralization, resources and power are being transferred to local institutions, which results in the fragmentation of public powers (Ribot 2007) and thus the reinforcement of existing dominant state structures, including (in developing countries) patrimonial ties and patronage politics. These critics instead emphasize the need for analysis of 'political practices and actors involved in making, using and changing local political space and practices' (Mohan & Stokke, 2008, p. 27; see also Goldfrank, 2002).

The present case of Indonesia seems to confirm this pattern. One prevalent view among observers of Indonesian politics holds that civil society continues to operate within an environment in which 'predatory interests nurtured under the Suharto regime's formerly vast, centralized system of patronage have largely survived and remain intact' (Hadiz 2004: 711) and therefore has not had any real impact on basic political structures. After three decades of depoliticizing local organizations and citizens priorities, the groups most capable of operating in the decentralized

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2 Recent books include Frantzich 1999, Boyte 2004, Fung 2004, Gastil & Levine 2005, Stoker 2006 , Fishkin 2009 and Smith 2009.

context are not citizens' initiatives but patronage-type interest groups that flourished under the New Order. Civil society activists in Indonesia have been characterized as 'floating democrats' that hover above but are not connected to Indonesian society and thus they are unable to gain popular legitimacy and are incapable of mustering a broad base sufficient to mobilize political support or influence (Priyono, Samadhi, Törnquist et. al. 2007; see also Manning & Van Dierman 2000). The compromised democracy that emerges as a result does not empower ordinary people, since the spaces opened up through this form of democratic decentralization are captured by various forms of 'predatory interests' (Hadiz 2004) or 'bad guys' (Törnquist 2002).

We agree that technical support for the bare minimal democratic cornerstones of national-level state institutions - elections - or an open public sphere does not by itself create social justice or a substantive democracy. To support democracy and make government responsive to citizen needs, it is not enough to simply bring government closer through decentralization or open up spaces for civil society through democratization. It is also necessary to deepen and improve the nature of civil society engagement with decentralized state structures. The present article will provide evidence that support to democracy-making through civil society need not depoliticize or undermine social justice. In Indonesia, there are practices that allow new voices to be heard and citizens to gain power in governing their communities; these are leading to social change.

Indonesia - Change and Continuity

Indonesia is typical of a country in the South under the third wave of democratization. It experienced more than three decades of centralized and authoritarian rule, dominated by a single party that concentrated power in the president and an entrenched bureaucracy (referred to as 'the New Order'). Since 1998, Indonesia has introduced wide-sweeping decentralization reforms, shifting resources and decision-making power to more local levels of government with the intent of buttressing democratic rule. The country has seen radical changes in the relationship between government and citizens in two main respects. First, the country has moved from a repressive authoritarian regime to a democracy. Competitive general elections have been held three times. Mayors are directly elected. Freedom of speech and assembly has been established, creating a vibrant public sphere. As a result of more open local elections, some impressive local reformers have been elected and they have brought real changes to their communities (Widianingsih & Morrell, 2007). Indonesia is now labelled by Freedom House as a free and democratic country.

Secondly, the country has gone from a highly centralized government to one characterized by decentralized governance. Around 500 subnational governments have been empowered to deliver public services and local legislative councils (DPRD) control budgets and regulations, taking regional differences and needs into account. Among citizens, there has also been enormous social change and entrepreneurship by newly-established CSOs. The passing of national laws on legislative drafting, local governance and participatory planning in 2004 provided the legal framework for citizen engagement. Many international organizations and donors launched development programmes on civil society engagement in local governance. In the words of Larry Diamond,

> Looking in historical terms, and in comparative terms, what Indonesia has achieved in the last 10 years (in terms of the development and improvement of democratic institutions, a critical and substantial base of public support for democracy, of trust in public institutions, and, surprisingly perhaps, robust support for liberal values relative to elsewhere in the region) is quite remarkable and is deserving of admiration.[3]

As far as the institutions go, then, considerable gains have been made in the past decade. However, in terms of

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3 'How is Indonesia's Democracy Doing?', 26 October 2009, accessed on 16 March 2010 at
http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2009/10/26/how-is-indonesias-democracy-doing/.

substantive democracy and governance, Indonesia still has some way to go to fundamentally reform undemocratic institutions and practices.

Historically, administrative structures in Indonesia were constructed as inherently anti-political. In the 1970s, the New Order regime instituted a hierarchical structure of local administration - province, district, sub-district and village - the heads of which were appointed by and were accountable to the President. This administrative machine was marshalled in the service of development, with government leaders at all levels on the front lines responsible for ensuring grassroots support for government policies and programmes (Evers 1999; Ito 2007). Local governance structures were further de-politicized by prioritizing growth and stability. This resulted in a technocratic approach that emphasized efficiency by ensuring that all decisions were made and implemented by government officials. Local governments channeled programmes designed by the central government, which made them dependent on central planning and actively hampered local creativity and innovation (Widianingsih & Morrell 2007: 2). The central government also actively undermined local efforts to organize outside the state-sanctioned structure and this further weakened local structures to the benefit of central ones.

With this army of government officials and civil servants comes an organizational culture characterized by upward accountability, technocratic decision making, entrenched patron-client relationships and widespread corruption (Choi 2007). National political cultures are historically contingent and therefore resistant to change (Dobbin 1994). The Indonesian civil service might be particularly ill-suited to consolidating democratic decentralization as it is oriented towards higher levels of authority rather than input from citizens - the civil service has an inherent distrust of citizens' abilities and demands (Kristiansen, Dwiyanto, Pramusinto, & Putranto, 2009).

A major challenge to consolidating democracy in Indonesia thus lies in the strong state and entrenched government processes. The bureaucracy remains dominated by people trained under the authoritarian regime, which, as we have seen, was oriented away from serving the public interest. Many officials continue to use their positions to further their own vested interests rather than those of citizens. They further see it as their right to define public policy and provide services as they see fit, considering citizens 'as end users, not as stakeholders or customers to be consulted or served' (Antlöv, Brinkerhoff, & Rapp, 2010).

However, if we shift our perspective away from the broader political economy and towards the local level where people live and operate, there are factors that paint a variable, but encouraging picture of local politics and governance patterns. The picture painted by Törnquist, Hadiz and others of elite capture is not necessarily in contradiction to this - it is more a case of the glass being half full. There is plenty of evidence that ingrained political relations are being challenged at the local level.

The potentials embedded in electoral accountability, freedom of assembly and citizen engagement are taking root, with new leaders challenging old power structures to enlarge and deepen local democracy. Even though it is easy to be pessimistic when looking at Indonesia through a Jakarta-prism, if we look from the bottom-up, we can see changes occurring that might eventually lead to more radical changes at the national level. Local governance is at the forefront of social and political change in Indonesia today because this is where the density of social forces is to be found, where political recruitment and the building of constituencies are taking place, and where people are translating national policies into local programmes and local issues into national ideology. These innovations are being spearheaded by civil society activists, by newly-emerging social movements and by community-based social action groups. Some are even pushed by brave government officials who support local-level reform and democracy. There is a lot of energy in Indonesia today, a lot of experimentation and trying out of new governance forms, such as citizen forums, town hall meetings and budget hearings. Local politics is being reinvigorated.

In the following pages, we will demonstrate this point. We will present cases showing how civil society organizations (CSOs) in Indonesia are changing the nature of their engagement with the state in ways that bring Indonesia

closer to consolidating decentralized democracy. After presenting some numerical trends and changes, we explore examples of how shifts in CSO engagement interact with innovative local leaders and existing power structures, such as the entrenched bureaucratic culture and patterns of patronage - and how they sometimes fail. Finally, we present evidence of emerging shifts in power structures, increased standards of accountability, and changes in policy and state practices. We will also briefly touch upon the role of a donor project in promoting these local governance processes.

Empirical data for the article were collected through the Local Governance Support Program (LGSP), a USAID-funded effort to support the expansion of participatory, effective and accountable governance through engagement with local governments, legislative councils and civil society organizations.[4] The figures are based on governance assessments using data collected in December 2005 and January–February 2009 in 45 partner jurisdictions across six provinces in Indonesia; two independent evaluations of the civil society programme in 13 jurisdictions conducted in 2008 and 2009; and overall insights from LGSP's civil society strengthening team (led by Hans Antlöv, one of the present writers). Statistical data draw on diagnostic assessments in 2005 and the results obtained from 371 questionnaires administered to civil society activists in 2009. The respondents are from LGSP partner jurisdictions and most are local NGO activists themselves actively pursuing transparency and greater citizen participation in public policy making and monitoring. Thus, this was not random sampling. Since there is no control group and the respondents are primary actors in local governance (thus, not those activists who choose to stand outside), the results are only used to highlight achievements in LGSP-supported districts by partner organizations and may be seen as partial and subjective. Nevertheless, they do reflect the situation in each jurisdiction as perceived by the civic activists and government officials who are most active there.

Changes in Citizen Engagement

Let us begin the exploration with how the nature of CSO engagement has changed over the past five years in Indonesia. In the past, many CSOs used a standard method of advocacy, a legacy of the *reformasi* period: organize a public advocacy campaign and take to the streets to mount rallies and demonstrations outside government offices (Antlöv et al., 2010, p. 10). This 'engagement from a distance' is typical of societies with distrust and a distance between state and society.[5] The data gathered from LGSP activists show that in recent years, however, there have been both an overall increase and a change in the type of CSO engagement (Fig. 1). This reflects the increasing democratization and diversification of local politics.
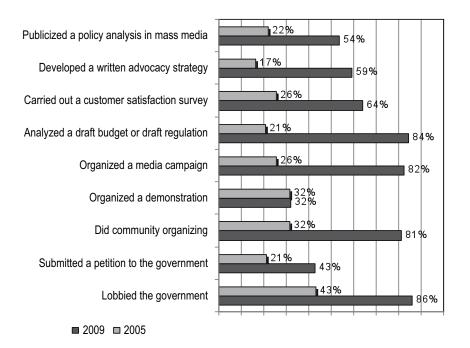
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4 The Local Governance Support Program (April 2005-September 2009) was an integrated set of assistance activities designed to support both sides of the good governance equation—supply of and demand for good governance. Its objectives were twofold. First, it supported local government to become more democratic, more competent at the core task of governance and more capable of supporting improved service delivery and management of resources. Second, it aimed to strengthen the capacity of local legislatures and civil society to perform their legitimate roles of legislative representation and monitoring and citizen participation in the decision-making process. See LGSP 2009 for more details.

5 We are writing this as the demonstration on Liberation Square in Cairo is taking place - having no other means to express their grievances, people take to the streets. The same happened in Indonesia in 1998 when Suharto fell.

Figure 1

Forms of CSO engagement, 2005–2009

Question: Has your organization carried out any of the following activities?
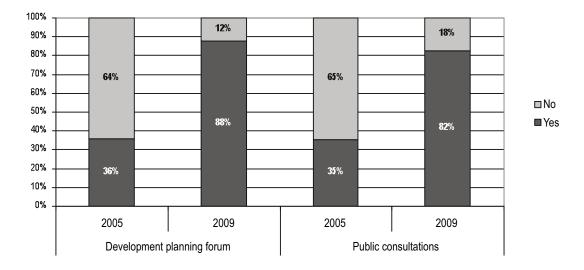Figures show percentage answering 'Yes'

Almost all types of activities show a dramatic increase, with the notable exception of demonstrations, which have remained the same at 32 percent. However, if demonstrating was the second most common activity reported in 2005 it was the least common in 2009. CSOs have thus clearly added on methods to their repertoire, aiming to communicate more nuanced information to government officials. Of these, budget and regulatory analysis show the largest relative increase. Civic engagement in the participatory planning and budgeting processes is a critical step in ensuring government responsiveness to citizen needs: it makes budgets more responsive to citizen priorities and ensures that funds are used efficiently and transparently, it also builds the capacity of civil society to advocate for more responsive budget allocations and to promote budget transparency in drafting and implementation.

Overall, as can be seen from Figure 2 below, there are encouraging signs that civil society engagement in government planning and decision-making processes is becoming more common. Whereas only around 35 percent of CSOs said they had been involved in public consultations and planning meetings (*Musrenbang*) in 2005, more than 80 percent had done so by 2009.

Figure 2

CSO involvement in Public Consultation, 2005-2009

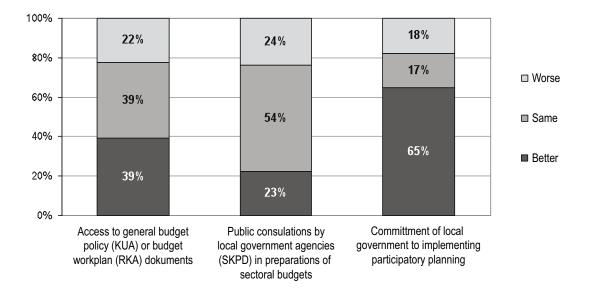*Question:* Has your organization participated in ...?

Given that there is evidence of greater involvement of civil society organizations in the operation of local government processes, what does this mean for relations between citizens and government? How do they perceive each other? As seen in Figure 3 below, CSOs have a generally positive perception of the changes in local government commitment and of their access to official documents.

Figure 3

Changes perceived by CSOs in local government commitment to citizen participation, 2005–2009

Question: In these fields, has the government become better, worse or remained at the same level during the past 3 years?

Many CSOs reported great achievements and an improved governance climate. CSOs now have greater trust in the
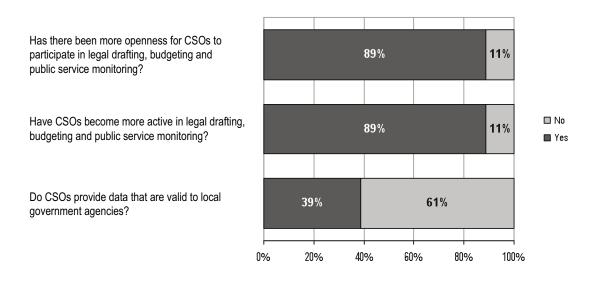
commitment and openness of the government and they can access key documents. Many have been invited by the local government to design and facilitate Development Planning Forum meetings or public consultations.

However, civil society activists had a less favourable view of sector department practices. This appears to relate to a more general phenomenon where the political commitment of local government leaders is not always shared by their staff. Government heads sometimes say how difficult it is for them to implement good governance in practice since they may be undermined when sector department staff continue with old habits of keeping documents tightly controlled and excluding citizens from policy decisions, a theme we will return to in the case studies below.

Figure 4 turns this around and shows how government officials (mostly finance and planning staff) perceive CSO capacity.

Figure 4
Local government perceptions of changes in openness and CSO capacity, 2005-2009

The results of the first two questions—on perceived changes in government openness and CSO involvement during the past five years—are positive. Government officials felt quite strongly that CSOs had become more engaged. Eighty-nine percent of government staff felt that more opportunities had been provided to CSOs and that civil society was more willing to engage with the government (a significant increase in trust).

Despite these achievements, one issue that CSOs still need to address is the perceived quality of their input (the last question). Sixty-one percent of government officials felt that CSOs did not provide accurate data. Government officials thus remained reluctant to fully embrace the input provided by CSOs, many of which were still inexperienced and had enthusiasm that might have run ahead of analytical capacity. Even after ten years of civil society strengthening, this still seemed to be a general weakness among civil society groups in Indonesia. Along these lines, a recent brief on budget transparency in Indonesia noted that 'the budget work in Indonesia is, for the most part, not as technically sophisticated as that done by civil society organizations in some other countries.' (International Budget Partnership 2009, page 3).

The data presented in this section shed light on the direction of change in Indonesian local governance. CSO reports of greater openness to both citizen participation in planning processes and improved monitoring mechanisms indicate increased willingness from elected officials to be held to account. Rather than excluding

CSOs and individual citizens from state processes, the evidence suggests that officials are inclined to show more responsiveness to citizens and are willing to let citizens hold them accountable, a greater opportunity for citizens to monitor officials and provide feedback than has been available in the past.

This points to a shift in the strategies that CSOs use to engage with the state and also indicates that CSOs and local governments are, to a degree, developing some mutual trust and respect. These patterns do not, however, help us understand the substance of this engagement and changing relations. Below, we outline a set of cases that are chosen to illustrate variation in experiences with increased citizen engagement. These examples also demonstrate how CSOs are able to use new strategies to create opportunities for engagement that can shift existing local power structures. We also show how CSOs interact with decentralized structures and, in particular, innovative leaders to produce changes in local policy and provision of services.

Case Studies of Citizen Engagement in Local Governance

Budget analysis and transparency regulation (Madiun, East Java)

This first case takes place in Madiun, a rural town just on the border of East and Central Java. This is the story of how a coalition of civil society organizations began to collaborate with the municipal government and local council. This led to improved local budgets as well as greater trust and mutual respect among the parties. It started in 2006 when a group of reform-minded members of the local legislative council (DPRD) launched an effort to increase budget transparency in their district. To this end, they initiated a series of monthly meetings with the village leadership to discuss needs and current expenditures. These discussions ended after three months because the mayor banned the village headman from working with DPRD members.

In 2007, the reformers tried to publish the city budget but were again blocked by the mayor. They then used their own funds to copy the budget document and distributed it to all wards in the city. Although the pro-reform DPRD members were able to change some internal council regulations to require public consultations on some issues, budget breakdowns from sectoral agencies and more background documentation on the need for new legislation, they were frustrated by the mayor's persistent success in preventing budget transparency.

Up to this point, there had been little productive collaboration between the DPRD and CSOs in Madiun. Local elected representatives perceived CSOs as interested mainly in patronage or outright extortion, based on past experiences. Activists, for their part, viewed the DPRD as incompetent and focused on personal gain.

In the same year, a group of activists, eventually formalized as the *Alliansi CSO Kota Madiun*, came together under LGSP facilitation to conduct an analysis of the city budget. Their request for the budget document was initially blocked; they eventually obtained it in secret from the head of one of the line agencies. [6] The alliance produced a comparison between planning documents and the budget, as well as an analysis of a series of annual budgets. This investigation uncovered disparate goals and inconsistencies in allocations, as well as discrepancies in expenditures claimed.

The CSO alliance submitted the findings to the DPRD, which organized a hearing to discuss the next step. Impressed with the thoughtfulness of the analysis, DPRD members forwarded the paper to the finance department of the Madiun government, which eventually rectified all but one of the noted discrepancies. The hearing also broadened into discussion of transparency and budgets, which dovetailed with reformist DPRD members' frustrations.

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6 Other CSOs that obtained the budget tried to use it to extort money from DPRD members around the same time, and this further reinforced the dominant view of CSOs.

DPRD reformers were sufficiently impressed with the alliance's work to reach out to this group of activists and initiate collaboration. The collaboration focused on two substantive areas. First, the alliance was asked to assist DPRD members in analyzing the 2008 budget during the short period that it was available for review. While final budget allocations were not greatly affected, the coalition's endeavours helped to reduce the number of grey areas in the budgeting documents (which provided potential for leakage), and also alerted the implementing agencies that they were being scrutinized. Second, the alliance was entrusted with drafting a background document for a regional regulation on transparency and participation that was eventually approved in 2009. The alliance devoted considerable time and effort to this assignment, also working to expand the regulation to ensure greater civil society engagement in Madiun's decision-making processes.

In order to ensure that the problems of budget transparency would not happen again, one of the leading NGOs behind the *Aliansi CSO Kota Madiun* developed in 2008 at their own initiative an open-source software application for analyzing local budget information called *Simranda* (an abbreviation for 'Local Budget Analysis Software). First, a database was compiled of core budget figures taken from past budget documents (the data can be entered by local civil society partners in a few days). The software then allows for analysis of these figures to measure the consistency of the planning and budgeting documents, and to track the expenditures of particular local agencies, overall spending trends, and fund allocations for pro-poor or gender-responsive programmes. This software allowed activists in Madiun to do quite an advanced analysis of the budget document with just a few clicks of a mouse button. The programme also allowed users to compare several years of local budget figures. It rapidly became an effective advocacy tool to strengthen the ongoing transparency and accountability campaign in Madiun and it was picked up by DPRD members.

This case points to the greater leverage for reforms that can result from collaboration between citizen groups and innovative elected leaders. Reformist DPRD members had been thwarted in their efforts to increase transparency by a recalcitrant executive, but were able to take this initiative in a new direction because of new information and impetus provided by CSOs. Notably, reformers had been blocked by a mayor favoring the status quo, which highlights the range of attitudes towards reform among officials as well as the possibilities for overcoming such blocks through allegiances between reformers inside and outside the state.

The CSO use of budget analysis, and later development of computer software and background information for local legislation, also point to the shift in the nature of CSO engagement with the state, with CSO becoming better at providing important data to local governments. Further, because these efforts provided novel and useful information to elected representatives, they opened up space for deliberation that led to greater accountability (of agencies for their budgets) and a discovery of common interests in budget reforms. These, in turn, produced trust in activists (in an environment where they had not previously had much legitimacy) and further collaboration.

We also see a change in the entrenched bureaucratic culture of entitlement and impunity in this case. The CSO alliance's original analysis was a new form of scrutiny, to which pressured line agencies had to respond. This higher level of accountability represents a reduction in the previously uncontested control over budget allocations and actual expenditures. Finally, this example demonstrates actual reforms and changes in state practices, in the form of a local transparency regulation and the repeated use of budget analysis by the DPRD.

Citizen forum & CSO alliance (Jepara, Central Java)

Jepara is a rural town in Central Java, best known for its wood-carving industry. It is also a stronghold for *Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU), Indonesia's largest Islamic organization. Since *reformasi*, NU's research and development institute LAKPESDAM has provided support to deliberative democracy in Jepara, supporting the establishment of a citizen forum in 2001, consisting of a group of concerned citizens who mobilized around a common cause in order to make

a difference[7]. A citizen forum is outside of formal political institutions but can feed into the representative system, often by building on experiences of traditional associations such as rotating saving schemes, mutual assistance groups or religious classes, and by using these traditional forms to discuss issues of democracy and governance. Rallying around pro-poor and gender-sensitive budget allocations and improved public services for the poor, the Jepara Citizen Forum has organized two large town hall meetings - in 2005 and 2008, the latter supported by LGSP.

Organized by the local branch of LAKPESDAM, the January 2008 meeting gathered together over 400 people. Farmers, fisherfolk and street vendors met with government agency officials and local councillors to evaluate the 2008 budget and prepare for the 2009 budget. Discussions took the form of deliberations using participatory techniques, and everybody was encouraged to express their view - many for the first time. The result was a series of recommendations to the local government for reallocating the budget for the development of farms and fisheries. An analysis of the budget had found that development programme allocations at the fishery and agricultural agencies were mainly for the procurement of laptops, projectors, and staff motorbikes, while what was needed was machinery, fertilizer, fishing nets and traps in order to increase agricultural and fish production. Some of the recommendations were accommodated in the revised 2008 budget and others were accommodated in the 2009 budget.

The Jepara Citizen Forum also spawned a CSO alliance called *Jaran* (Network for Budget Advocacy). The members used the Madiun-developed *Simranda* software and took the result on 'budget road shows' to village government officers, religious schools and university campuses. They also publicized the *Simranda* budget analysis through community radio. In early 2009, they made presentations to the Regional Development Agency and the local council on the findings of the *Simranda* analysis of the 2007–2009 budgets. The Regional Planning Agency was so impressed with the results that it planned to use the *Simranda* software in upcoming public hearings on the 2010 local budget. Jaran made plans to train the newly-elected councillors in using the software.[8]

In Jepara, there were clear shifts in budget allocations based on the 2008 citizen forum towards poor constituents' priorities. In addition, the *Simranda* software has also encouraged civil society groups to be much more pro-active in their budget analysis and government agencies to be more appreciative of CSOs. CSO strategies to introduce new information and provide useful analysis have thus had both concrete policy impact and made local government more accountable for how funds are allocated - remember Figure 4 that highlighted government lack of validity in CSO data. 60 percent of local government officials in jurisdictions which have adopted *Simranda* trusted NGO data, compared to 39 percent in those not using the *Simranda* (LGSP 2009, Figure 6.16, page 6-29). Insofar as the budget allocations actually removed resources from state agencies, they also chipped away at the bureaucracy's feeling of entitlement to prioritize local funds for their own benefit.

However, the budgeting process is also an example of the resilience and remains of the technocratic and patrimonial state - and how pro-active supporters for democratic governance need to ensure that promised shifts in allocations actually take place. There is a well-documented disconnect between the participatory planning results and actual budget allocations in Indonesia.[9] Plans developed during Development Planning Forum (*Musrenbang*) meetings are not always taken into full account—instead, the local councils and executive budget teams often use their own figures based on the previous year's allocations. Budgeting staff look more at the internal needs of government agencies and the vested interests of council factions than the results of the Development Planning Forum. Planning and budgeting at the district level proceeds largely on a separate tracks and the strong planning focus at the local level often fails to connect procedurally with the budget requests made by local government agencies and service

7 See Husna 2009 and Nierras and Husna n.d. for more background on civil society in Jepara, including the deliberative town hall meetings.
8 The extent of these changes in CSO budget engagement has been recognized internationally. Indonesian's experience in budget advocacy and transparency has been termed a 'civil society budget movement ' (International Budget Partnership 2009), in light of the sheer number of groups active in the field and their success in advocating for higher budget allocations.
9 See for instance Dixon & Hakim 2009, DRSP 2006, DRSP 2009, Ahmad & Weiser 2008.

units. Specifically, this involves drafting of the budget - when figures from the Development Planning Forum are put onto activity lists and tentative figures are attached to produce a General Budget Policy and Temporary Budget Ceiling (KUA-PPAS). Although citizens are legally entitled to participate, only some of the more innovative jurisdictions are beginning to involve citizens in General Budget Policy meetings; as we saw in from Figure 3, the scores for citizen involvement in General Budget Policy meetings show relatively low participation compared to other forms of public consultations.

It is thus an ongoing challenge to open up budget discussions for citizens. On the other hand, this is not something that is typical for Indonesia - budget decisions around the world are highly political and prone to intense negotiations between various government and legislative stakeholders. The fact that even some civil society groups are involved in Indonesia is an achievement - almost forty percent report that they perceive positive changes (Figure 3).

Monitoring quality of public services (Gowa, South Sulawesi)

Gowa is a suburb of Makassar, the metropolitan capital of South Sulawesi. In 2007, a local NGO coalition, Jaker-P3G ('Gowa's CSO network for Pubic Services Monitoring') was supported by LGSP to carry out a citizen report card survey (CRC[10]) for education and health, sectors in which the Gowa government was committed to providing free services. A total of 278 questionnaires were distributed (using a stratified random sample). For education, the survey found that levels of citizen satisfaction with primary education services were higher than they were for secondary education. In the health sector, citizen satisfaction levels with community health centres (*Puskesmas*) and outpatient care in public hospitals were higher than they were for dental care and mobile units. The survey also revealed low satisfaction with doctors' treatments, with the delays in responding to complaints, the excessive time spent in clinic visits and a general lack of efficiency in healthcare officers' assistance.

After a public hearing with government officials, the Gowa mayor became interested in the results. Newly-elected and reform-minded, he saw the CRC as an opportunity to shake up poorly performing government agencies. After a number of informal meetings between the mayor and the citizen coalition, the mayor agreed to discuss the CRC on a television talk show with two civic activists from Jaker-P3G. The government responded positively and constructively to the findings and promised to follow up. A week later, the mayor invited Jaker-3PG to sit down with the local education and healthcare agencies to review the findings and suggest improvements. As an example, the CRC found that many citizens had difficulty meeting a doctor at the health centre, despite this being regulated in national legislation. When the health agency investigated, it found that doctors claimed to be too busy with administrative matters to meet patients. In response, the health agency hired health service administrators to manage the red tape, freeing up the doctors to meet patients.

As a result of the CRC exercise, the mayor also expressed interest in further collaboration with citizens' groups, and in November 2008, the government of Gowa and Jaker-3PG organized a town hall meeting on government plans for education and healthcare services in 2009, similar to the one in Jepara. At the request of the mayor, the citizen report card survey was also repeated in 2009. With a commitment to continuing to hold such surveys in the future, citizens of Gowa can now focus on providing substantive input to local government agencies on public service standards, and they have a means to question government agencies about their performance.

The Gowa experience reinforces the use of innovative CSO strategies to open up new space for deliberation and it shows that the effective collaboration can result between CSOs and pro-reform leaders. In this case, the mayor

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10 The Citizen Report Card is an international best practice to improve public services and promote government accountability. It is based on the premise that feedback on service delivery collected from actual users through sample surveys provides a reliable way for citizens and communities to engage in dialogue and partnership action to improve public services (see http://www.citizenreportcard.com/crc/ index.html).

was explicitly interested in improving bureaucratic performance and was able to leverage CSO data to achieve this outcome. There was clear policy impact, both in the restructuring of clinic management and in the repeated use of CRC methodology. By increasing the accountability of health service providers and ensuring continued citizen input, this example had a demonstrated effect on entrenched bureaucratic practices.

Long-term development plan (Kediri, East Java)

In the past, long-term development plans have generally been prepared by the government without any public feedback. In 2006, the city government of Kediri, East Java decided to open up the preparation of the long-term plan for input from the public. A multi-stakeholder Working Group was established, led by the head of the Regional Planning Agency (*Bappeda*) which at the behest of LGSP also included a couple of NGO activists. The Regional Planning Agency, as well as some other local officials were generally considered to be open and supportive of public involvement in government activities, after positive experiences with citizen input in shaping outcomes in prior development programmes.

The Working Group's identified priorities were carried forward into a set of public consultations to flesh out the content in each of the seven mission areas. Each mission area was addressed by a multi-stakeholder group appropriate for the topic. Based on these discussions, comments on content were gathered in each of the seven areas. Following the public consultations, a larger, multi-stakeholder 'Regional Team' was established with the goal of reviewing the initial vision and mission statements and adding information from the mission consultations to develop a complete draft document for broader public discussion. It was composed of representatives from non-governmental organizations, religious leaders, academics, media representatives and government staff.

Despite the involvement of the multi-stakeholder team, the Regional Planning Agency continued to have trouble finalizing the vision and mission statements. Part of the problem seemed to be an inability to prioritize between the issues that emerged during the public consultations. To complement this, then, the Regional Planning Agency decided to field a questionnaire to allow for general public comment on the basic components of the plan (with LGSP support). A simple two-page questionnaire was developed to allow ranking of priorities and space for comment on the mission statements. One thousand five hundred questionnaires were distributed, of which 518 came back and 418 were useable. The results were interesting: according to respondents the top two priority areas for the city were education and small business development. Based on the analysis of the survey, the top inhibiting factors were the need for better law enforcement (41 percent), the need for improved professionalism of civil servants (38 percent) and the lack of public participation (28 percent).

In addition to the survey, a number of radio discussions and one television discussion were funded by the Regional Planning Agency. The call-in radio shows were moderated by a number of individuals, both within government and from civil society. While the radio shows seem to be publicized as a way for citizens to provide feedback on the plan, none of the respondents had a clear answer as to how those comments were compiled and fed into the planning process.

The Kediri long-term plan was approved in 2009, after a long process of negotiation between the Regional Planning Board and the local legislative council (DPRD). Surprisingly, after the numerous ways that the local government sought citizen input, there seems to be little evidence that any aspect of this information was incorporated into the long-term planning document.

The Kediri case highlights the variations in what citizen engagement may entail and shows an ambiguous outcome of this type of CSO engagement on democracy. Although citizens report satisfaction about being involved, the case looks much like the traditional planning exercises, with a few consultative embellishments. The process does seem to have built new relationships between citizens and local government or increased constituents' trust in the state. Although the consultations had no evident impact on power structures, because officials retained complete control over content, they could become a stepping stone to further collaboration. However, there is also a risk that

if citizens eventually discover that their input has had no effect, they may become apathetic again and refuse to participate in other opportunities for engagement.

Further, this example also shows that innovative leaders, even if they are open to more citizen engagement, are often not powerful enough to push through substantive reform. It is unclear whether the Regional Planning Agency was thwarted by a recalcitrant DPRD or whether line agencies were disinclined to give real weight to citizen input. The head of the Regional Planning Agency may also have viewed consultation as an end in itself, rather than a means to consolidating democracy.

Is Democracy Consolidated in Indonesia?

There are thousands of citizen-based social action groups around Indonesia in which concerned citizens come together to solve the problems affecting their immediate neighbourhoods. There is no single pattern: some work closely with the government, while other are more advocacy-oriented and remain outside the formal political sphere. These groups have in common a desire to affect policy making and see public funds reallocated for the benefit of their constituencies. Even if their members do not wish to become formally involved with political parties, there can be no doubt that they are nevertheless engaging in local politics.

The data presented above reflect this high level of citizen engagement. There were considerable improvements in both the quantity and quality of citizen engagement in partner jurisdictions. From 32 questions asked of CSO activists in 45 jurisdictions about the changes since 2006 (a total of 11,520 individual answers), 46 percent of responses noted improvements in commitment and reform among government officials and local councils, another 46 percent indicated that there had been no change, and only 8 percent indicated that the particular governance indicator had worsened since 2006. This positive attitude from civil society toward local governments shows that trust has emerged and that local governments are well on the road toward building sustainable governance partnerships. Local government is more accountable to the people, and local governance reforms are becoming the main source of public innovation and social change in Indonesia. The increased esteem in which officials hold CSOs (Figure 4) translated into the use of information from citizens' groups to reallocate budgets, change bureaucratic practices, hold agencies accountable for expenditures and draft local legislation.

The question remains, however, whether all this activity is having real impact on public policies and political structures or whether this is all donor-driven. As our case studies illustrate, there are some very encouraging achievements, but also significant variation in outcomes from citizen involvements. The more diverse strategies used by CSOs have, in these examples, opened up new space for deliberation and, in some cases, collaboration. Importantly, because citizens' groups acted as information providers, they were on a more equal footing with officials than if they had simply been petitioning their representatives. Backed by facts and numbers, civil society groups could sit down with government agencies and discuss public service improvements—no longer the passive clients of services provided by a beneficial patron. Acknowledging the utility of outside information and analysis, instead of only relying on internal data, represents a departure from the inward (and upward) looking norm within Indonesian local government.

Hard data on staff performance, pricing and service quality gave organized citizens groups the kind of information that they needed to hold public agencies accountable for their actions. This is in itself a shift in power relations, as citizens become sources of valuable resources and thus political actors in their own right rather than mere subjects. Participation theorist Robert Chambers (2007) argues that the past 10 years have seen a 'quiet tide of innovation …by which local people themselves produce numbers.' Around the world, improved data gathering has become a powerful tool of community empowerment that can lead to changes in government policy and practices. The citizen report card and *Simranda* experiences in Indonesia highlight the dual processes of empowerment and

impact on policy.

As was evident in Madiun and Gowa, these efforts were particularly effective when innovative CSO strategies were taken up by reformist state officials. While pro-reform leaders have occasionally been quite effective on their own, our cases show innovative officials may also easily be blocked by conservative forces, or may not fully implement constituent input unless there is clear and consistent citizen pressure (as was the case in Kediri). In contrast to other countries, where progressive officials are key to consolidating decentralized democracy (Grindle 2007), the established power structures can hamper these actors in the Indonesian context. Working in concert with innovative CSOs can at times produce a synergy that destabilizes entrenched practices to a point where reforms succeed. There is encouraging evidence that a more active and re-politicized citizenry can reinforce the positive changes introduced by reformist governments. Eckardt (2008: 15) finds that 'better performing governments were consistently more open to pressure of informed, organized and politically active communities, which strengthened their incentives to be responsive and manage and deliver services more efficiently.'

The changes described in our examples are far from the wholesale shifts in political relations and class structures envisioned by critics of the civil society perspective (Mohan & Stokke, 2008). As discussed in Section 3, many long-term observers of Indonesian politics have been quite critical of what they saw as a wholesale adoption of the neo-liberal tenets of civil society and administrative decentralization. They warned against elite capture, patronage politics and the emergence of local warlordism. However, a few years later, it seems that Indonesia has been able to manoeuver away from these pitfalls. Not all is rosy and successful, but the processes described in these pages are excellent training grounds for wider political involvement: through them people learn to argue a case, compromise, relate to a constituency and take decisions more openly and with greater participation. Meanwhile, the decision-making process has become a bit more democratic and the deliberations have produced better-informed citizens who have often learned important political skills and built relations that can be applied in other arenas. As argued by Sandercock (1997), transformative political action often begins with a 'thousand tiny empowerments', not grand designs. In this sense, shifts in CSO strategy and the political space they open up for collaboration with (innovative) state officials may eventually produce broader impact.

At the same time, challenges clearly remain. Not all citizen groups are producing the effective research and engagement strategies described above. As in the Madiun case, some CSOs prefer to focus on extracting short-term benefits and perpetuating patrimonial relations to local government instead of representing citizens and creating new space for political engagement (see footnote 6). Other groups may be trying to engage more creatively but are unable to put continuous pressure on officials and demand responsiveness and accountability for policy changes (as we saw in Kediri). This can restrict citizen input to petitioning, making connections and lobbying - i.e. strengthening existing patterns of patronage - rather than creating a culture of accountability where citizens have a right to demand effective government. In such situations, power relations remain unchanged and the community is no more democratic than previously.

Even when CSOs are able to effectively open up political space, there is a risk of falling into established patrimonial relations with government officials in the longer term. In Madiun, the CSO alliance developed a very close relationship with a particular set of DPRD representatives and performed work at their request, sometimes in secret. In environments with established political competition, such ties to officials may increase civil engagement (Lavalle, Acharya, & Houtzager 2005, p. 960). In spite of improvements, effective political competition is still not a full reality in Indonesia (Choi 2007). Thus, while the Madiun collaboration was initially effective in changing state practices, more transparency is needed in the longer term to avoid backsliding into more traditional relations.

Other challenges include the risk of innovative leaders promoting change that ultimately turns out to be only cosmetic. Kediri provided the most egregious demonstration of this type of 'citizen empowerment' but other, more substantive CSO achievements may also fail to persist unless budget negotiations are opened up to citizens for

scrutiny and input. As is evident in both Figure 3 and some of the cases, these processes remain closed. Continued effort is thus needed, building on the successes with budget analysis, to increase accountability at this level.

Finally, because our focus has been on CSO interactions with local officials, we have bracketed a range of other interactions that must be taken into account to consolidate decentralized democracy in Indonesia. Perhaps most importantly, our cases have not traced the reactions to changes in power structures that result from citizen engagement. The empowerment of previously marginalized groups is an inherently conflictual process of shifting interactions with more or less powerful groups (Gibson & Woolcock 2008, p. 154). Further work needs to address how the 'losers' in these outcomes react and attempt to recapture their lost privileges.

CONCLUSIONS

In her study on local governance reforms in Mexico, Merilee Grindle (2007) identifies four factors that might influence the divergent outcomes of governance reforms at the local level: political competition, state entrepreneurship, public sector modernization and civil society activism. For the Mexican case, Grindle (2007, p. 170) concludes that state entrepreneurship is the most important factor - 'mayors and other elected and appointed officials are the most important source of change in local governments'. In Indonesia, many observers would agree. In the past ten years, innovative local leaders have been the shining lights of local reforms. However, ten years down the road, it is also becoming clear that we cannot expect good governance reforms to happen only though government initiatives. Without constructive citizen engagement, state officials will not be held to account for their practices and the culture of entitlement and upward orientation cultivated during the New Order will persist, jeopardizing improvements in local governance and democratic decentralization. Power structures must also be shifted away from patronage networks to on-going engagements between citizens and the state to debate priorities and incorporate feedback, thus strengthening the capacity of civil society to engage government; in short, to re-politicize communities. The results from LGSP show that relations can be improved when reform-minded government officials begin to appreciate and listen to activists and civil society organizations. Moving forward, citizen demands and pressures will play increasingly important roles for the success of local governance reforms in Indonesia. This is a move away from the 'free-market politics' of the managerial democracy and administrative decentralization towards a participatory democracy that involves the disenfranchised and empowers them to be part of the collective decision-making process.

One challenge is to ensure that the trickle of local-level leaders taking over political positions at the national level can become more powerful. As citizens and the reform-minded become empowered, the powerful must be disempowered to break down the old system of patronage. This involves reforms of the centralized political parties and powerful civil service in Indonesia. But it also involves political organizing on behalf of the disadvantaged and under-represented to improve their collective bargaining power.

The cases in this article point to the importance of being sensitive to power relationships in support of state-citizen interactions, whether in public consultations, citizen report cards, or citizen engagement in development planning. Acknowledging the critics of the civil society paradigm, we believe that local governance reforms must be subject to changing power relations – empowerment and disempowerment -- in support of state-citizen interactions. These are important steps toward creating a local governance system that is more responsive to citizens, transparent in its handling of public funds, and accountable to the public for its actions – which is what we want out of a consolidated democracy.

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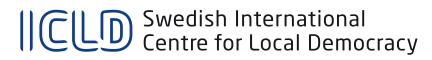NO 6, *Where Is Local Government Going in Latin America? A Comparative Perspective*, Andrew Nickson

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