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Sustainable Development**

The Need for Policy Coherence
and New Partnerships



Policy Incoherence in the 'Good Governance' Agenda

**The Case of Decentralization and Community-Based
Development in Morocco**

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Abstract

This paper examines the unintended consequences that result from the interaction of democratic decentralization and community-based development, with special reference to the case of Morocco. While both these policies are being promoted by multilateral institutions such as the World Bank and the EU as part of the 'good governance' agenda, their interaction effects have not been widely studied.

This is because until very recently, discussions of decentralization and of community-based development have proceeded separately from each other. The decentralization agenda has been concerned mostly with exploring the question of what effective local governments look like. It has focused almost exclusively on structural factors – such as financial autonomy and administrative competence – that relate to the technical capacity of local governments. Relatively less attention has been given to the parallel question of how effective local governments interact with their constituents and other local organizations.

Similarly, the community-based and participatory development agenda has been preoccupied mostly with the internal dynamics of community organizations; how they are constituted, how they are managed, how they can implement programs effectively, etc. It has been relatively little concerned with issues of networking and scaling up, and with how community organizations can improve the environment for development initiatives over a wider terrain, including cooperation with local governments.

This paper argues that the technocratic approach to development has blinded policy-makers to the unintended consequences of donor interventions in these two areas. While these are mostly felt at the local level - and therefore at a considerable distance from the capitals of donor countries, headquarters of international financial institutions, as well as their country offices - they are nevertheless determining for the emergence of effective local governance, and ultimately, poverty reduction.

Drawing on my doctoral fieldwork in two rural municipalities in Morocco, I argue that the main effect of this unintended policy incoherence is an increase in local elite capture and clientelist networks that exclude those supposed to benefit most from decentralization reforms and community-based programs. In particular, the effects on the constitution and relationships between 'political' and 'civil' societies require greater attention. The paper ends with a discussion of how this incoherence could be addressed by linking social and political forms of participation, and outlines some policy measures that would encourage productive partnerships between local communities and local governments.

This paper thus contributes to two themes mentioned in this workshop's call for papers. First, it offers a methodological discussion based on an empirical study of the internal incoherence of the 'good governance' agenda promoted by international and bilateral donors. Second, by drawing on the fields of public administration, political sociology, and anthropology, it highlights the 'importance of multidisciplinary knowledge for the identification of mechanisms to reach compatible objectives between different policy sectors.' I also hope that my paper will stimulate a debate on how discourses developed at the global governance level can have unintended impacts at the local level.

Introduction

The topic of policy coherence has only recently gained prominence in both political science and development studies more broadly. Policy coherence provides a valuable framework to examine how various government policies interact and produce unintended consequences. These interactions and consequences are mostly negative in nature: certain intended results of policy may be partially or completely frustrated by other, contradictory, policies, and 'government authorities might lose their legitimacy and credibility if they frustrate or hamper the attainment of objectives in a particular field by means of activities in a different field' (Hoebink 2001: 2). However, we should bear in mind that policy incoherence can never be entirely avoided, at least not in democratic societies. As Hoebink (*ibid.*) points out, incoherence may in some cases be seen as a result of clashes and conflicts of interest, i.e. as a compromise in which the relative importance of the actions and actors has been duly weighed.

Within the EU, policy coherence for development was first enshrined as a principle in the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 (KEHYS 2006: 3, see also Smith 2001 and Hoebink 2007). The United Nations' agreement on a set of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000 promoted the idea at an international level. Subsequently, the Doha Development Agenda for trade (November 2001), the Monterrey Consensus on development financing (March 2002), the World Summit on Sustainable Development (August 2002), as well as the Paris Declaration (March 2005) - with its focus on aid harmonisation and policy alignment - provided renewed impetus to achieve policy coherence for development (PCD). The OECD has been especially concerned with PCD by holding donor countries responsible for ensuring a systematic promotion of mutually-reinforcing policy actions across government departments and agencies (Schaik et al 2006: 3-4).

With regard to the EU, the May 2005 Council Conclusions on policy coherence for development concentrates on 12 thematic areas: trade, environment, climate change, security, agriculture, fisheries, social dimension of globalization, employment and decent work, migration, research and innovation, information society, transport and energy (Schaik et al 2006: 2).

Indeed, most studies have so far focused on policy (in)coherence to do with these and related topics such as HIV/AIDS, TRIPS and medicines, illegal logging, security policies, the Economic Partnership Agreements, and fisheries (see e.g. KEHYS 2006 and Boonstra et al 2007). Among the most obvious examples of policy incoherence is trade: providing development aid to improve a country's ability to engage in trade is ineffective if the donor countries then maintain trade barriers that keep the developing country's goods out (OECD 2003:1). However, we should also pay close attention to the explicit and implicit objectives of promoting coherence. For example, Gabrel (2007) argues that policy coherence (in the form of IMF-World Bank support for the WTO's efforts to promote trade liberalization in the developing world) has been taken to imply little more than policy conformance around neo-liberalism.

In short, while there is an important research agenda on PCD emerging among both national policy-makers, donor institutions as well as academics, less attention seems to have been given to policy (in)coherence in the good governance agenda, particularly as it impacts on local governance.

Similarly, the literature on policy coherence within the Morocco context is very limited. First, the study by Hoebink et al (2005) identifies several policy incoherencies with regard to EU

policy towards Morocco. These include: restrictive migration policies hamper knowledge-transfers between professional associations that could help Moroccan companies comply with international standards; the overarching concern with political stability impedes land and agricultural reforms that are necessary for economic growth; the EU's toleration of intense smuggling around the Spanish enclaves goes against its official policy to strengthen the competitiveness of the Moroccan economy; and EU security policies in the maritime sector disadvantage Moroccan shipping. There are also several incoherencies in the field of migration (the most obvious being the official intention to create a common Euro-Mediterranean space but excluding population mobility from it). Lastly, the emphasis on human rights in EU official policies receives little attention in practice. Second, the OECD's survey on harmonization and alignment (OECD-DAC 2005) notes that there is no clear harmonization agenda in Morocco, and no regular co-ordination meetings on rural development in particular.

Before considering policy (in)coherence in the good governance agenda with regard to Morocco in more detail, it is necessary to clarify what is meant by policy (in)coherence.

Policy (in)coherence – some definitions

According to Hoebink (2001: 2), policy coherence could be defined as 'the non-occurrence of effects of policy that are contrary to the intended results or aims of policy.' He distinguishes between a narrow definition, where objectives of policy in a particular field may not be undermined or obstructed by actions or activities in this *same* field; and a broad definition, in which objectives of policy in a particular field may not be undermined or obstructed by actions or activities of government in that field *or in other policy fields* (emphasis added).

Perhaps the most useful definition is that put forward by Fukusaku and Hirata (1995, cited in Picciotto 2004: 7-8).¹ They define PCD as 'the consistency of policy objectives and instruments applied by OECD countries individually or collectively in the light of their combined effects on developing countries.' If we disregard the undue limitation to OECD countries, this definition is useful as it combines four dimensions which are analytically helpful. First, internal coherence refers to the consistency between goals and objectives, modalities and protocols of an aid policy or program.² Second, intra-country coherence points to the consistency among aid and non-aid policies of bilateral donors and developing country governments in terms of their contribution to development ("whole of government" approach).³ Third, inter-donor coherence refers to the consistency of aid and non-aid policies across donor countries and multilateral institutions in terms of their contribution to development (i.e. coordination and harmonization).⁴ Fourth, donor-recipient coherence indicates the consistency of policies adopted by rich and poor countries to achieve shared development objectives (i.e. the degree of "ownership" of development policies).

As Picciotto (2004: 8) points out, the traditional focus of development evaluation has been on the first type of coherence, i.e. the alignment of means with goals in development assistance,

¹ See Hoebink (2001) for a much more elaborate typology of policy incoherence.

² This type corresponds to Hoebink's *restricted (1)* type of incoherence (Hoebink 2001:5).

³ This type overlaps with Hoebink's *restricted (2)* type of incoherence (Hoebink 2001:5). The OECD's definition of PCD seems to emphasize the second dimension. PCD 'involves the systematic promotion of mutually reinforcing policy actions across government departments and agencies creating synergies towards achieving the agreed objectives.' (OECD 2003: 2).

⁴ This type corresponds to Hoebink's *broad* type of incoherence (Hoebink 2001:5).

but attention to the other three dimensions is growing. However, there seems to be an unresolved ambiguity in the literature on PCD between avoiding policy incoherence and actively promoting coherence (also referred to as “alignment”; see KEHYS 2006: 2-3).

The focus of this paper is on the second dimension of coherence, i.e. assessing the level of intra-country coherence among aid and non-aid policies of bilateral donors and developing country governments. In particular, the paper highlights the importance of unintended incoherencies, i.e. how policies in a particular field frustrate the objectives or results of other policies due to ignorance, incompetence, corruption or capture by vested interests. This is often not noticed because the results of the different policies are never compared, or they materialize at a great distance from the (donor) governments and are therefore not visible (Hoebink 2001: 9 -10 and Picciotto 2004: 6-7). This is especially the case in the area of good governance.

Policy coherence in the area of good governance

Following Bossuyt et al (2006: 11), governance can be defined as ‘the structure, functioning and performance of public authorities/institutions at all levels. Governance is about the way public functions are carried out (including public service delivery), public resources (human, natural, economic and financial) are managed, and public regulatory powers are exercised (including enforcement) in the management of a country’s affairs.’

Good governance is considered as both a process and an aspiration towards governance systems adhering to a set of key values.⁵ These values include first, efficient, open, transparent (non-corrupt) and accountable public institutions at all levels, including clear decision-making procedures; second, sound, efficient and effective management of human, natural, economic and financial resources for the purpose of equitable and sustainable development; third, a democratic society managed with respect for human rights and democratic principles; fourth, civil society participation in decision-making procedures; and fifth, the existence of, respect for and enforcement of the rule of law and the ability to enforce rights and obligations through legal mechanism (ibid. p. 11).⁶

In operationalizing these values, donor programs focus on support to public administration reform, including public finances, decentralization and local government reform, the rule of law, human rights, democracy, and the empowerment of civil society.

The effectiveness of such interventions clearly depends on the existing governance structures in any given country. Yet a recent evaluation of EU support to Good Governance (Bossuyt et al 2006: 3) found that, although the local environment constitutes a determinant factor for effective support, it is not always properly assessed (e.g. in terms of incentives for change, such as public accountability mechanisms). This tends to dilute the potential effects of capacity building initiatives and budget support. This is especially the case at the local level:

⁵ There is no space here to discuss in detail the historical context in which the Good Governance agenda emerged; suffice it to say that it was influenced first, by a fundamental re-thinking about the role of the state for development (moving away from the state as direct provider of growth towards a partner, catalyst, and facilitator; see World Bank 1997: 1-3), and second, by theories linking democracy and economic growth. The presumption is that democracy is the only regime type that affords voice and accountability to citizens on a regular basis, and that democracy should therefore promote economic development (Keefer 2004; Blair 2000; Andrews and Shah 2004; Bryld 2000).

⁶ See also Barrett et al (2003) for the principles of good governance as defined in key EC documents.

the evaluation concluded that there is a need for more policy development and learning on how best to use budget support at decentralized level in support of local governance processes. Furthermore, the EU's policies on the various components of the Good Governance Agenda are unevenly developed: while the legal and policy framework to support non-state actors is quite sophisticated, the status, roles, responsibilities and funding opportunities for local governments has long remained unclear. In addition, the EU's dominant administrative culture (with a heavy emphasis placed on procedures and risk-avoidance) seems increasingly at odds with the requirements of delivering multi-actor and multi-level governance support (Bossuyt et al 2006: 3-8, 77). Nevertheless, among individual EU member states, there is broad agreement on more participatory, inclusive and negotiated as well as sector-wide, integrated and country wide approaches to governance strategies and programs rather than disconnected projects (Barrett et al 2003: 63).

In summary, the good governance agenda thus encourages institutional reforms that should "bring the state closer to the people" and increase its accountability and transparency. The reforms include administrative, fiscal, and political decentralization with the aim of strengthening local government capacities, and involving the participation of local communities and other local "stakeholders" in development activities (Meynen and Doornbos 2003; Keefer 2004; Klinken 2003). Indeed, support to non-state actors/civil society and decentralization are two components in the good governance agenda with most donors. Similarly, in addition to formal political participation issues, good governance also implies wider processes of public participation, consultation and partnership (Barrett et al 2003: 53-54). At least in theory therefore, the decentralization and participation components of the good governance agenda seem to ensure policy coherence. We now turn to a more detailed discussion of decentralization and participation policies, before examining their unintended negative interaction effects at the local level in Morocco.

Policies for Decentralization and Participation

Devolution, which is also referred to as "democratic decentralization", is the most advanced form of decentralization. It usually transfers responsibilities for services to municipalities that elect their own mayors and councils, raise their own revenues, and have independent authority to make investment decisions. This paper is concerned with devolution, or "democratic decentralization" (Rondinelli 1999: 2; Parker 1995:19ff.; Litvack et al. 1998: 4-6).

The term "democratic decentralization" is strongly linked to notions of democracy, popular participation, and empowerment.⁷ It emphasizes the linkages between the state and people, and hence between decentralization and (political) participation. Indeed, participation and decentralization have a symbiotic relationship. On the one hand, successful decentralization requires some degree of local participation to ensure the responsiveness of local government to local needs. On the other hand, the process of decentralization can itself enhance the opportunities for participation by placing more power and resources at closer, more easily influenced level of government. Hence, participation is seen both as a means to and as a goal of (successful) decentralization (Vedeld 2003: 160; Wong and Guggenheim 2005; Seddon 1999: 17; Bergh 2004).

⁷ Empowerment is the process of enhancing the real possibility that an individual or a group can make and express choices, and transform their choices into desired actions and outcomes (Hellings et al 2005: iii).

In terms of participatory development approaches, it is useful to distinguish between two distinct approaches to participatory rural development that have evolved over time. The instrumental or functional view holds that participation is a means to an end, a methodology, which will result in more effective projects. Indeed, the critical literature on participation (e.g. Cooke and Kothari 2001) argues that mainstreaming participation has made it an instrument for promoting pragmatic policy interests, such as cost-effective delivery or low-cost maintenance, rather than a vehicle for radical social transformation. Such a transformative view, in contrast, holds that strengthening people's ability to determine how to improve the economic and social conditions of their lives is the true essence of development (Long 2001: 5; Nelson and Wright 1995:1; Cleaver 2001: 37).

When applied on the ground, participatory methodologies frequently promote the creation of more formal "community" organizations so as to transform the "participants" into institutionalized "partners" or "stakeholders" in the project. Such organizations are commonly referred to as Community Based Organizations (CBOs). Where they did not evolve internally, i.e. independently of the arrival of a development project, the formation of such CBOs has either been induced (as part of the conditions that communities must fulfil in order to participate in projects, without any form of assistance) or constructed by outside actors (such as project staff; Krishna 2004: 15-16).

Despite their symbiotic relationship in theory, the literature on the practical interaction effects between decentralization and participatory approaches is still very limited. As Krishna (2004: 22) points out, discussions of decentralization and of community-based development have proceeded separately from each other.

The decentralization agenda has been concerned mostly with exploring the question of what effective local governments look like. It has focused almost exclusively on structural factors – such as financial autonomy and administrative competence – that relate to the technical capacity of local governments. Relatively less attention has been given to the parallel question of how effective local governments interact with their constituents and other local organizations.

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This explains why studies on partnerships between local government and CBOs have, until recently, not been prominent (see Fiszbein 2000 for mostly urban examples; and Helmsing 2003; Batley 2006; Joshi and Moore 2004; Uphoff and Krishna 2004). Some researchers have examined negative interactions, i.e. exploring whether participatory methods obstruct or enhance the potential benefits of democratic decentralization when they are used to establish a plethora of local institutions (such as CBOs, village development or user committees).⁸ A well-known example in this literature is World Bank support to CBOs in the form of Social Funds and other programs that frequently result in the creation of structures outside of local government. These then have limited (or negative) influence on the capacity of local government to support sustainable service delivery in the future (Kuper 2004: 2; Romeo 2003:

⁸ See for example, Baviskar 2004; Manor 2004; Larson and Ribot 2004; Wassenich and Whiteside 2004; Meynen and Dornboos 2003; Porter and Onyach-Olaa 1999; Lange undated.

93). The empirical evidence from rural Morocco indicates that this is indeed a serious problem, but also points to a further, and probably more structural and lasting, policy incoherence.

Evidence from Morocco

In Morocco, as in most developing countries, donors as well as government have promoted decentralization reforms and participatory approaches separately from each other. This is reflected in their policy documents, organizational structures (i.e. separate desk officers responsible for decentralization/public sector reform, and rural development), as well as in the government structures (in the case of Morocco, the Ministry of the Interior v.s. the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development). Only recently has attention been drawn to the fact that local governments are sidelined in much of the decision-making process in rural development projects, thus undermining their authority for local planning. In practice, the “participatory” nature of such projects means that the Ministry of Agriculture staff work directly with the newly created village associations or village committees rather than the local government council or staff. Although the 2020 Rural Development Strategy (launched in 1999) recognized the lack of linkage with local authorities, a recent evaluation of the strategy’s implementation concluded that participatory approaches have created the illusion of local democracy by putting mechanisms in place that replace institutional solutions such as support to local planning under the regular Five Year Plan, or partnerships between local government and the administration (MADRPM 1999; MADR et al 2005: 73).

The evaluation states further that while some Provincial Delegations of the Agriculture Ministry (DPAs) have taken promising initiatives to adapt their programming to the territories of rural municipalities, these approaches are not mainstreamed yet. This means that some projects continue to produce community development plans, mostly focused on a village or hamlet (*douar* – hence the plans are called *plan de développement de douar*, or PDD), while others produce Municipal Development Plans (*plan de développement communal* - PDC), and yet others, such as the World Bank, Municipal Investment Plans (*plan d’investissement communal*- PIC), or Socio-Economic Municipal Development Plans (*plan de développement économique et social de commune* - PDESC). Most importantly, these plans are in most cases drawn up by project consultants with minimal input from the local councilors and civil servants. This can lead to unwise planning decisions and erodes local accountability (MADR et al 2005: 73ff.; Zirari 2006: 4-5).

A further, and perhaps more important, manifestation of policy incoherence in this particular case can be found in the area of local governance, i.e. the relationship between local governments and newly created community-based organizations.

“Participatory” rural development projects promoted by donors such as the EU and the World Bank have led to the creation of several thousand “Village Development Associations”, or CBOs. For example, in the province of Al Haouz (South of Marrakech) which counts less than 500,000 inhabitants, there are now officially 1,400 associations. In terms of the functioning of these associations, the 50 local village associations in the study sample⁹ work in basic infrastructure and services (mainly drinking water, irrigation networks, environmental conservation), the social services (health and schooling, adult literacy, and cultural activities), and in a range of income-generating projects (such as female cooperatives for embroidery and

⁹ The associations were all located in two rural municipalities in Al Haouz province.

weaving, planting of fruit trees, bee-keeping, and tourism – most of which however suffer from instances of fraud, deception, and mistrust among members that lead to a halt in activities). The overwhelming priority given to basic infrastructure and service provision indicates that local governments in rural Morocco are not able to fulfill their mandates for basic service provision under the Municipal Charter. There is thus considerable scope for partnerships between CBOs and local government. However, the empirical findings indicate that the associations' capacities are limited to engage in such partnerships.

The associations' record of implementing projects shows that a considerable proportion of associations are not active, and only exist on paper. It seems that this finding can be generalized for the whole province, if not most rural areas in Morocco.¹⁰ According to the former president of the Provincial *Espace Associatif* (a structure that aims to federate all the associations in the province), it seems likely that only two or three associations in each of the 39 communes in Al Haouz province are active in a continuous fashion, and therefore sustainable in the long-term. In particular, those associations that were "imposed" by outside projects are generally seen as inactive and not sustainable.

This state of affairs is partly due to the weak human resource profile of most of the associations (58 percent of the association committee members interviewed did not receive any formal education). This also explains their limited ability to negotiate effectively with government administrations in the context of rural development programs. These programs also do not place very much emphasis on training the associations, even though the latter are in many cases expected to manage and maintain vital basic infrastructure such as drinking water. Similarly, most associations have limited financial resources in the form of incomes from membership fees, although some are receiving revenues from drinking water provision (61 percent of 46 associations in the sample dispose of no funds or less than 100 Euros). An underlying reason here is that the concept of "membership" in an association is not well-anchored in local practice – almost 40 percent of the associations in the sample do not have any ordinary members, and women are absent almost completely both as committee and ordinary members. A strategic approach to fund-raising would also require a certain level of education and training.

However, the most important factor in explaining the low level of activity is the fact that many leaders of local associations are in fact using them as a base to build popular support for getting (re-) elected as local councilor. Indeed, as Bourgeois and El Kam (2000: 13) put it, 'creating an association is a means to buy (political) "virginity" for oneself, and to conquer the political field.' Thus, many village associations are only engaged in development projects before local elections, as part of the personal election campaigns of their presidents. This practice has contributed to discrediting the concept of "associations" in the eyes of the population.

Indeed, the decentralization process and the establishment of local councils with increasing powers (a new Municipal Charter was promulgated in 2002) have meant that a new type of

¹⁰ This finding corresponds to the field observations of several other researchers who note that there are many associations on paper but very few that are active (other than participating in cultural activities such as festivals or national holidays). See Damamme (2005: 163 footnote); Abbadi (2003: 53); Chadli (2001: 63); RTI (2002: 4); Ibourk and Sahli (2003: 266ff.); Gebrati (2004).

“political society” emerged in the form of councillors and political party members.¹¹ I suggest that this “political society” dominates and in many cases mixes with “civil society”.

In short, many associations are created for purely political purposes, rather than developmental ones. This explains the low levels of CBO activity (almost half of all CBOs in the sample are inactive). The empirical data shows that the boundary between membership in the local government council and CBOs is very much blurred. On average, only one fourth of the 46 associations for which data is available do not have any connections with party members, councillors or civil servants. In other words, the vast majority of associations are run by politicians and civil servants. This high level of CBO political affiliation was confirmed in the interviews with the councillors.

Interestingly, only very few councillors openly acknowledged that wearing the two “hats” simultaneously (association member and councillor) creates a conflict of interest, which can only be resolved by putting one of them down. As one councillor explained: ‘I was VP in an association but given that there are two lines of work: politics and associative work, I committed to take just the political line so as not to confound it with the associative work; it’s like I tried to draw up a line of neutrality. [...] That’s what pushed me to tell the citizens that are affiliated with the association that I’m in the commune [local government] and I’ll stay there and I won’t confound the two lines. [*So last year you decided to step down because you saw that there are problems if you confuse the two?*] The only problem is that you cannot keep your neutrality; the principle of an association is not to do politics; and I would certainly find myself doing politics inside the association, if you understand what I mean.’

Similarly, a councillor and president of an inactive association argued that ‘in my opinion if you find the president of the commune also as president of the association it’s just to make [the population] vote in the next election. I think that if someone is in the association he should not be allowed to be councillor. Then you will know if he really wants to work [for the public interest] or just to defend his personal interests.’

The association members are aware of this high degree of politicization. One of them argued that the number of associations increased due to the state’s failure to develop the area, and that the state directed the population towards the associations to take charge of development in its place. In his words, ‘when the authorities felt that the people lost trust in them, they tried to get the associations to work. [...] But then] the political parties and authorities felt they could not control what is happening on the ground, so they interfered and supervised the associations. [...] If an association wants to work well and independently without being of one political party or another it won’t get any financing.’ He concluded that ‘there is no civil society.’

This political instrumentalization of CBOs that were created as part of participatory development projects does not seem to have received much attention among donors. Yet it undermines the coherence of both decentralization and participation policies. As for the first, decentralization was not found to strengthen civil society (defined here as organized interests with a degree of autonomy from the state; Manor 1999: 47) by stimulating associational activity and the development of organizational capacity among groups at the grass roots. As

¹¹ “Political society” is understood here as ‘that loose community of recognized political parties and their operatives, local political brokers and councillors, and perhaps even lower-level public servants who depend upon the grace and favour of politicians’ (Corbridge et al 2005: 189).

for the second, participation did not lead to the empowerment of the poor, as the CBOs are dominated by the local (political) elites.

This challenges the common assumption that mutually enabling relations between decentralized state institutions and civil associations will generate good governance and ultimately poverty alleviation (Harriss et al 2004: 3, 6). It also questions the belief that decentralization and participation are necessarily in symbiosis: 'Other forms of local governance (associations, unions, etc.) can contribute greatly to converting decentralization reforms into effective local governance. They can fulfil the critical role of a civil-society partner for local governance, extend the legitimacy and reach of local governments, mobilize individuals into political affairs, and themselves model participatory decisionmaking [sic] processes.' (Olowu and Wunsch 2004: 22). The data on which this paper is based shows that this assumption does not necessarily hold true, and that close attention needs to be paid to the nature and identity of local associations/CBOs.

This research thus represents a critical analysis of how the neo-liberal good governance agenda and its "localization" effects transform the local political process. It challenges the agenda's assumptions that citizen involvement in NGOs and local associations leads to the emergence of a "civil society", that it can exert organized pressure on autocratic and unresponsive states, and that this is enough to bring about a democracy with substance and depth (Stokke and Mohan 2001: 14).¹²

Addressing policy incoherence at the theoretical and practical levels

How can this policy incoherence be addressed? I suggest that there are two levels at which further reflection should take place. First, at the level of theory, more work is needed on the linkages between the political forms of participation promoted by decentralization and the social forms of participation stimulated in "participatory" projects. A body of literature is now emerging that is considering the political relevance of these so-called "social" forms of participation by asking, 'to what extent can social participation enhance peoples' political participation?' This includes inquiring about the extent to which participatory development programs contribute to processes of political learning among the poor. Political learning includes knowledge of formal political rights and increased awareness of the de facto local rules of the game. This is closely related to the concept of political capabilities (Williams 2004: 568). According to Williams (2004: 567), political capabilities 'provide the set of navigational skills needed to move through political space, and the tools to re-shape these spaces where this is possible'. This literature is thus helpful in thinking about the linkages between "social" and "political" forms of participation, as promoted by participatory approaches and decentralization reforms respectively.

As Moore and Putzel (1999; cited in Williams 2004: 567) argue, important criteria for the success of development projects are the degree to which they contribute to the mobilisation and sustained political action of the poor. In practice, this would require that donors view participation as aimed at social transformation, and not just as a "cheap" way of implementing development projects. Second, donors and governments would have to invest in training CBOs that have been created as part of participatory projects. This training should not only be

¹² Such a conception also negates the role of political competition or conflict between social groups and classes, and represents an increasingly unconstitutional, de-institutionalised and de-politicised form of democracy (Harriss et al 2004: 8). See also Mohan and Stokke (2007 forthcoming: 1, 15); Abrahamsen (2000: 52ff.); Gaventa (2006); Hickey (2006); Törnquist (1999); Houtzager (2005).

of a technical nature (e.g. how to manage the project infrastructure such as water supply), but should also develop the CBO members' political capabilities to hold local governments accountable for their end of the bargain within a given development project, as well as in other areas of public service delivery.

In more practical terms then, the coherence between decentralization reforms and participatory approaches could be brought about by encouraging (formal) partnerships between local governments and associations, such as co-production in public service delivery, which could then extend to co-governance mechanisms.¹³ However, some groundwork needs to be done first in terms of clearly separating the actors' identities. I would agree with this councilor (whom I interviewed in Morocco), who suggested that 'what is needed is that the associations understand their role; why do they exist? Is it really to participate in local development or is it for other reasons? If it's for other reasons, why then have partnerships? So first we need a sort of self-critique; also on the part of the commune [local government]; the commune needs to understand that to let the associations participate can only be beneficial. [...] There are associations and they need to be given responsibilities. They are there and have a legal status. We talk about participation and integrated, sustainable development; we need to give them responsibilities, give them a minimum of tasks and take the necessary time for that. So the two parties are responsible for seeing the point in and need for cooperation.'

Once such groundwork has been done (and perhaps also institutionalized by passing a law that would prohibit councilors from becoming association presidents), the administrative policies and procedures would need to be clarified and relaxed. For example, local government subsidies to CBOs for service provision are currently impeded by legal and administrative problems. A related constraint is the difficulty for local governments to establish and apply fair and transparent partnership (and eligibility) criteria for such subsidies. The more substantial and formal partnership agreements that have been concluded in Al Haouz province (concerning drinking water provision, the management of boarding facilities for pupils, and the upgrading of school buildings) were all "imposed" in the context of donor-funded projects or at the request of the provincial authorities, and did not evolve out of any local initiative.

These technical constraints could arguably be resolved easily, e.g. by devolving more funds earmarked for partnerships to the local governments (accompanied by clear rules on how they are to be disbursed, and regular audits), and informing the associations on funding criteria and procedures by issuing calls for project proposals. Of course, the CBO members, councilors and local government civil servants would need to be made aware of and trained in the new procedures, and the philosophy behind partnerships more generally.

Donors could also support intermediary NGOs that could facilitate interactions between local CBOs and both local governments and outside donors and agencies. Osborne et al. (2002: 26) stress the importance of such intermediary bodies¹⁴ in fostering community involvement in

¹³ "Co-production" refers to the process through which inputs used to produce a good or service are contributed by individuals who are not "in" the same organization. It implies that with encouragement from public officials, citizens can play an active role in producing public goods and services (Ostrom 1996: 1073-1074; see also McLean et al 2005: 2, Footnote 1). Co-governance arrangements aim at linking civil society to local government decision-making, establishing mechanisms for increased information-flow, and ultimately at strengthening accountability and local government responsiveness (Helling et al 2005: 68; see also Ackerman 2004; Cornwall and Coelho 2007; Fung and Wright 2003).

¹⁴ Osborne et al (2002: 24, 40) use the broader term 'local voluntary and community sector infrastructure organizations.'

rural regeneration partnerships in the UK. Such bodies link the strategic level to the community levels in order to allow an efficient and smooth flow of funds to communities, facilitate accountability for decisions made at the strategic level, and establish routes for community members to develop and operate at the strategic level. They also support key individuals to develop local capacity, provide training, and build skills by direct involvement in projects.¹⁵

Conclusions

This paper focused on the issue of policy incoherencies in the area of good governance, with special reference to decentralization reforms and participatory approaches. It briefly reviewed the literature on policy (in)coherence, the good governance agenda, and theories on decentralization and participation. Drawing on empirical observations from rural Morocco, the paper argued that donors have given inadequate attention to the unintended consequences of interventions in these two areas. In particular, participatory projects often result in the creation of Community Based Organizations (CBOs) which are then considered part of local “civil society”. Although their organizational capacities are often very weak (due to the instrumental view of participation that is promoted in such projects), it is assumed that these “civil society” organizations will be able to hold local governments account and thus strengthen the decentralization process from below. The evidence from Morocco points to a high degree of capture of these CBOs by local political actors, who instrumentalize them for purely political ends that will benefit themselves and their clients, rather than the community at large. This challenges several of the assumptions in the good governance agenda. The paper outlined some measures that could be taken to address these issues, and actively promote policy coherence in the form of partnerships between CBOs and local governments. These measures would enable more effective local governance mechanisms that could ultimately contribute to poverty reduction.

¹⁵ See also the Dutch development cooperation thinking on this issue (DMV/VG 2002: 10).

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