



POSTFACE

Essay on the clarification of some key concepts and methodical problems

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The *World Report* offers, for the first time, the possibility of clarifying the meaning of words used to address the term "local". Via the different situations and developments analyzed, the words often seem closely related but not accurately synonymous. In addition, the choice of linguistic equivalents when translating may involve nuances of meaning or presuppose differences which, in fact, are merely differences in terminology. The interest of the *World Report* is that it puts key notions into context by comparing political and legal discourse from many countries on all continents. The definitions arrived at could then acquire legitimacy from the fact that they are not self-centered. The convergences we have found are not alien to the socio-political reality of each of the countries concerned, even though mimetic effects may still exist, and at times arise from prescriptions imposed by international organizations. These convergences can be considered as positive effects of globalization.

However, convergence at the level of ideas does not necessarily imply that the same occurs at institutional or practical levels. On the contrary, factors of differentiation remain, resulting from very diverse socio-political and economic realities, which should not be overlooked. The very notion of "local" varies considerably from one country and one continent to another and with it varies the definition of the territories constituting the framework of local self-government, and the concept of local-state relations. The sociology of local institutions is depen-

dent on the importance of the social structures. The role of local democracy in decentralization depends on the state's political system. The scope of decentralization depends on the political weight and human and financial resources available to local authorities. **Decentralization does not exist outside the state but it ceases to exist even within where local authorities are no more than the executors of policies determined by higher authorities.** These are the extreme positions that limit the space of local self-government; this is the space within which the equilibrium of decentralization must be created in each country depending on the conditions².

The *World Report* refers explicitly to two notions: decentralization and local democracy. These two terms should be clarified together with their status in the political and legal systems of states. A distinction should also be made between them and similar or correlated notions. This clarification must be contextual and comparative, i.e. based as much as possible on the accepted concepts used by states in the various regions of the world, depending on their history and institutions. But at the same time, these notions are part of global debates fostered by international organizations and a number of states, contributing to the convergence of ideas under discussion by providing terms of common reference.

Firstly, a distinction can be made between three separate semantic fields: decentralization, self-governance and democracy.

1. The text below is a part of the synthesis chapter submitted by the author to UCLG under the title: "Decentralization and local democracy at the age of globalization".
2. In what follows, the information quoted comes from chapters in the *World Report*, unless other sources are indicated by notes.

The first of these three terms refers to relations between the various levels of power, the second to the status of the authorities and the third to the way in which power is exercised. We will not address the expressions of these semantic fields relating to federalism or to regional autonomies. The comparison between these three fields shows a convergence at the level of political ideas and legal notions; even though some major states have remained outside this tendency.

I. Decentralization

The notion of decentralization is understood today in very different ways depending on the author and institution, which leads to misunderstanding and confusion. Sometimes, overly broad definitions of decentralization become confused with governance, a notion which in itself is already not very precise. This is the case in a report published by the UNDP on decentralized governance *à propos* the services which ought to be provided to poor populations: "Conceptually, decentralization relates to the roles of, and the relations between, central and sub-national institutions, whether they are public, private or civic. Improved governance will require not only strengthened central and local governments but also the involvement of other actors from civil society organizations and the private sector in partnerships with government at all levels"³. According to this definition, the relations between the state or local government and private companies or NGOs are part of the problem concerning decentralization.

The report then distinguishes four types of decentralization: administrative decentralization, in which local authorities are accountable to higher authorities; political decentralization, in which local authorities are theoretically independent of the state, invested with powers and elected; budgetary decentralization, which refers to the transfer of the resources necessary for the exercise of the transferred powers and responsibilities; and lastly, divestment or market decentralization, which entails a transfer of functions to the private sector (companies, NGOs...), including planning and administration, previously held by public institutions.

However, the argument slips from decentralization to governance. We recognize that improved governance might indeed call for the involvement of private actors, but this applies to all levels of government and not just to relations between local powers and higher authorities. This idea is also represented in a recent book with contributions from various United Nations experts. Globalization would necessitate an enlarged vision of decentralization within the framework of the new concept of governance. According to these authors, decentralization cannot be devised any longer as the devolution of powers within government, and rather embraces resource and power sharing in policy making in society as a whole. The enlarged concept of "governance decentralization" suggests a new decentralization category, in addition to the traditional ones: "economic decentralization", including "market liberalization, deregulation, privatization of public enterprises and public-private partnerships"⁴.

3. Work, R. (2002), *The Role of participation and partnership in decentralized governance: a brief synthesis of policy lessons and recommendations of nine countries on service delivery for the poor*, UNDP, New York, p.3.

4. G. Shabbir Cheema / Dennis A. Rondinelli (2007), "From government decentralization to decentralized governance", p.6 in: G. Shabbir Cheema / Dennis A. Rondinelli (eds), *Decentralizing governance*, Brookings Institution Press / Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation.



This approach is not really all that new. It comes from a critique of the "Welfare state", developed in particular in the 1980s. Such lines of thinking advocated market competition as an alternative for the provision of services that the public powers could no longer provide, as well as decentralization so that fiscal competition would exercise pressure to reduce public expenditure and so better satisfy the collective preferences of the electorate through competition between local authorities⁵. Hence, a distinction could be made between "economic", "administrative" and "political" decentralization. "Economic decentralization" refers to economic decisions (decentralized when they result diffusely from the play of market forces, centralized if they are decisions made by the government); "administrative decentralization" refers instead to the degree of dispersion or concentration of public decisions; and, finally, "political decentralization" which refers to the authorities with the capacity to make political choices⁶.

In this framework, it has been possible to propose a classification of all systems of decentralization based on two dimensions: the method of allocating resources (pure market and state controlled economies represent the two extremes) and the levels of political and administrative organization to which the resources are allocated (central, local or intermediate). Obviously, all real systems are mixed systems but they are situated somewhere between four extreme theoretical models as follows: the centralized public model, the centralized market model, the decentralized public model and the decentralized market model⁷. These models make it possible to assess the characteristics of real systems and to compare their relative positions.

Despite its heuristic value, this global theory of decentralization may be criticized for leading to a degree of confusion. Firstly, the relations between the public powers and the relations between the public powers and the economy are not the same; unlike the pu-

blic powers, the decisions of economic agents are not subject to democratic procedures. In addition, the fact of turning to the market to produce or supply a good or a service does not mean that the public authority, local or otherwise, is no longer competent. If the responsibility of the public authority is to ensure that a good or a service is offered to the population and it is allowed by law to choose the method or form of provision, it can then assess whether it is preferable to set up a public organization, to conclude public procurement contracts or to proceed to delegate the public service to the private. However, the public authority remains responsible in the eyes of the law and the citizens for the provision of the service under the conditions it has defined. The case would be different, of course, if privatization is decided on by the state and the consequences affect the local authorities, or if the law obliged them to resort to the private sector, even when the local authority continues to exercise powers of control and organization. It is then paradoxical to use the expression "decentralization" to characterize measures which result in a reduction of the role and responsibilities of the local authorities.

This is why it is preferable to reserve the notion of decentralization for the relations between the public powers, some of which are placed under the control of others, and not for the relations between the public powers and the economy or society in general. This is not to ignore, for all that, the importance of relations with the economy, and they may be addressed in an analysis of governance, but they do not come under what is normally called decentralization.

Even within these boundaries, the notion of decentralization is still likely to be understood in two different ways: a broad meaning, which relates to the public economy or to the sociology of organizations, or a narrow meaning, of a legal and political nature. The former has become the general or commonplace meaning; the lat-

5. See amongst basic texts on the subject: Tiebout, C.M. (1956), "A pure theory of local expenditure", *Journal of Political Economy*, vol.64, p.416; Buchanan, J.M. / Tullock, G. (1962), *The calculus of consent: Logical foundations of constitutional liberty*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Harbor.
6. Wolman, H. (1990), "Decentralization: What it is and why we should care", p.29-42 in: Bennett, R.J. (ed.), *Decentralization, local governments and markets. Towards a post-welfare agenda*, Oxford, Clarendon.
7. Bennett, R.J. (1990), "Decentralization, intergovernmental relations and markets: towards a post-welfare agenda?", pp.1-26 in: Bennett, R.J. (ed.), op. cit.; Bennett, R.J. (1994), "An overview of developments in decentralization", pp.11-37 in: Bennett, R.J. (ed.), *Local government and market decentralization. Experiences in industrialized, developing and former Eastern Bloc countries*, United Nations University Press.

ter, more exact, is the only one, as we will see, which has a normative scope. Decentralization should also be distinguished from related notions: *devolution*, originally an English concept, and *deconcentration*, which is of French origin and the notion of delegation.

In its broadest sense, decentralization expresses a quality of the relations between levels of authority one of which is under the control of the other. We say that these relations are more or less decentralized, depending on whether the inferior power benefits more or less from freedom of action in the exercise of its attributions under the control of the superior power. The notion of decentralization can thus apply both to the relations between the federal power and the member states (for example Austrian or Australian types of federalism are said to be more centralized than those in the USA or Canada) and to the relations between the state and local authorities in a unitary state, or between the federated entities and the local authorities which they comprise, or even to the internal relations in a company or a group of companies considered as an organization.

In the narrow sense, decentralization means that local authorities are established by the law, have a legal personality and are administered by bodies through which they exercise, with a degree of liberty, the powers and responsibilities they obtain from the law under the control of the state. This notion was first asserted in France. According to an English variant found in many countries influenced by British tradition, the law confers the legal personality and powers not on the communities but on the bodies; since the 90s, it is this concept which has been followed, with certain differences, by Russian legislation and that of other former Soviet Union countries. Decentralization understood in this way, depending on the variant, has resulted in quite different regimes from the point of view of local institutions and the self-governance left to local authorities.

But it still signifies, and this is the basis of its unity, an institutional and political differentiation between the state and the local authorities, and the legitimacy of representation at local level of public interests distinct from those for which the state is responsible.

From decentralization in its narrowest sense, we must compare and distinguish the English notion of *devolution*, which one hesitates to translate as “*dévolution*” in French. It is a relatively imprecise notion which appeared at the end of the 19th century as an attempt to respond to the Irish independence movement through an internal regime of extensive self-government (*Home Rule*). *Devolution* corresponds to the transfer of wide-ranging powers to a political assembly for the management of internal affairs. The word was used to designate the projects in the 70s and the reforms of 1998, which transferred important powers and means to regional bodies. But it is also used, today, in a broader sense, particularly outside the UK, to designate transfers of power to local or regional communities.

The meaning of the word *devolution* thus seems akin to a distinction commonly made today between political decentralization and administrative decentralization. But the criterion of the distinction is far from clear. In the typology of decentralization proposed in the UNDP report referred to above, administrative decentralization is characterized by the fact that the local authorities are accountable to the higher authority. This corresponds to what one could call de-concentration or delegation (depending on the cases - cf. *infra*). **This control relation (accountability) with the higher authority does not exist in political decentralization nor in devolution, which implies a total transfer of powers and responsibilities, decision-making power and resources, including the power to procure resources**⁸. However, *devolution* does not necessarily imply that the local authority results

8. *Op. cit.* p.4.

from election, just as decentralization also does not necessarily entail the election of local authorities.

However, the distinction between political and administrative decentralization is more currently based on other criteria. A few examples follow. Political decentralization corresponds to the exercise of political power, as in the case of federated governments in the framework of a federal state; whereas administrative decentralization only consists of the institutionalization of the legal entities responsible for managing local interests⁹. It is therefore the exercise of legislative power by sub-national territorial units which is considered as the expression of political decentralization, in contrast with the classical case of the unitary state in which the unity of legislation is the expression of the unity of power¹⁰. Or again, political decentralization presupposes the dispersion of political decision-making power, i.e., a degree of freedom of action as to the determination of policies, the capacity to mobilize resources and the freedom to use them¹¹. But some definitions of administrative decentralization do not differ greatly from this latter concept: according to Maurice Hauriou, it is the need for political freedom rather than administrative needs, which justifies decentralization¹²; according to Charles Eisenmann, administrative decentralization "consists of giving to locally competent authorities powers of action, therefore firstly of decision-making, independent of the central authorities"¹³.

But today, over and above these theoretical approaches, another criterion must be added, that of the election of local authorities. Although, from a theoretical point of view, the notions of decentralization and *devolution* do not necessarily imply the election of local authorities, the fact is that today territorial decentralization is inseparable from the democratic legitimacy of local authorities, and in all countries the institution of locally elected councils is the rule. Even in the Arab Gulf states, local

elections have been held over the last few years with the exception of the United Arab Emirates. **If the classical idea of decentralization accepts the autonomy of local authorities in the framework of the law, the modern view of decentralization is today inseparable from the democratic norm**, and no one disputes this even if its transposition and implementation are often criticised.

As soon as universal suffrage applies for the designation of local authorities, it becomes inevitable that decentralization will take on a political dimension, even though, in certain countries, political parties are not allowed to participate in local elections, and even though the official vocabulary continues to speak of "administrative" decentralization, or "administrative" elections à propos local elections. This is so, given that elections imply a form of responsibility of those elected vis-à-vis their electorate even if the higher authority exercises a form of supervision. This is the meaning (the direction) of *accountability* which makes the difference, as shown in the UNDP report: no longer towards the state but towards the electorate.

In this case, *devolution* is not distinguished from decentralization through its political dimension but by its possible scope. In point of fact, the idea of *devolution* has no limit on the transfers which may be carried out, other than the point at which the transfers would mean independence; on the contrary, the idea of decentralization is inseparable from the idea of the unity of power. Decentralized entities administer themselves without ceasing to be an integrated part of the state and without the state conceding to them part of its constitutional functions. Extended to the transfer of legislative powers, political decentralization corresponds in fact to a different notion of decentralization in its strictest sense. This results in the fact that, apart from this hypothesis, *devolution* and decentralization may be considered as synonymous particularly for local authori-

9. Bourjol, M. (1975), *La réforme municipale*, Paris, Berger-Levrault, pp.56-58.
10. Aja, E. (1999), *El Estado autonómico. Federalismo y hechos diferenciales*, Madrid, Alianza Editorial, pp.23 et suiv.
11. Wolman, H., *op. cit.* pp.29-30.
12. Hauriou, M. (1919), *Précis de droit administratif*, Paris, Sirey, preface.
13. Eisenmann, Ch. (1982), *Cours de droit administratif*, Paris, LGDJ, tome 1 p.278 (cours de 1966-1967).

ties at municipal level for which there is never a transfer of legislative powers.

On the other hand, a clear distinction must be made between *deconcentration* and decentralization and the former must not be assimilated to a restrictive application of the idea of decentralization as is proposed within a broad concept of decentralization. Deconcentration is originally a French notion which applies to the relations between the central administration and their local-level offices that depend on the delegation of powers to the latter. **Deconcentration is the opposite of decentralization in that it governs the relations within an administrative hierarchy, whereas decentralization excludes any hierarchical relations between the state and local authorities.** Deconcentration comprises two elements:

- i) the existence of territorially competent services within the state administration;
- ii) delegation of powers to these services.

But the term *delegation* may also be used to designate an intermediate situation: state powers and responsibilities are delegated to a decentralized authority (i.e., resulting from an election and not from nomination by a higher authority) and are exercised on behalf of the state and for which the decentralized authority is accountable to the state. This situation is most often designated by the expression: “delegated powers and responsibilities”. Depending on the case, it may be that elective legitimacy weakens the control of the higher authority or, on the contrary, that the weight of the delegated powers and responsibilities weakens decentralization because of the control exercised by the higher authority.

These distinctions lead to a preference for a strict definition of decentralization which marks the difference from related notions. **Decentralization is thus characterized by the existence of locally elected authorities, distinct from the state’s**

administrative authorities, and exercising, in the framework of the law, their own powers and responsibilities for which they have a degree of self-government, under the control of the state. As understood in this way, decentralization in its modern meaning is inseparable from the idea of local self-government and the democratic principle. But the volume of responsibilities exercised is not sufficient to assess the level of decentralization in a given country; that depends also on the regime under which the responsibilities are to be found and the control effectively exercised by the state.

In its broadest sense, decentralization exists in almost all countries although it has very different characteristics. But strictly defined, decentralization is lacking in very many countries. Hence, when article 96 of the constitution of the China states that “local congresses of the people at different levels are the organs of the state’s power”, this is a form of decentralization in its broadest, and not strictest, sense. This was the concept in the Soviet Union, abandoned today under article 12 of the constitution of the Russian Federation. But some states, formerly part of the Soviet Union, still adhere more or less explicitly to this concept (in general the states of Central Asia and Belarus). In Cuba, although assemblies of people’s power are characterized in the constitution as the “higher local bodies of state power”, it is however recognized that they fulfil specific functions other than the assistance they provide in realizing the ultimate goals of the state (art.102 and 103). Other political concepts may also lead to principles excluding decentralization of the local administration. This is the case in Saudi Arabia, in Oman and in Qatar; in other Arab countries and in Islamic Republic of Iran some moves have been made towards decentralization in recent laws and constitutions. Yet the Iranian constitution, which sets up locally elected councils, subjects them to the principles of the Islamic regime and



envisages their "subordination" to central government authority (article 100)¹⁴. Despite this, there is a tendency towards the diffusion of the model of decentralization and the recognition of a sphere of responsibility specific to local authorities, at least regarding the principles, even in countries which seem far removed from these principles.

II. Self-government (autonomy)

Autonomy literally means the power to set for oneself the rules by which one is governed. However, this notion may also be understood in at least two different ways. In the sense of political autonomy, it is a demand for sovereignty which stops at the limit of independence, from which it is distinct. Understood as administrative self-government, it expresses the possibility for the local authority to govern its own affairs and those which the law entrusts to it. It is in this second sense that it is generally understood as local self-government. The regional autonomy statutes in different European countries (e.g. in Spain or in the UK) and on other continents (for example the autonomy of Karakalpakstan in Uzbekistan, or that of Aceh in Indonesia) come under the first meaning. The French constitution today accepts both meanings but applies them to entities of a different nature: the first to "overseas countries" (New Caledonia, French Polynesia) (art.74), and the second to territorial communities (art.72). The European Charter for Local Self-government as well as the "Guidelines" recently adopted by the Governing Council of UN Habitat both refer to the second meaning. This self-government also has a political dimension but it results from elections not from the statute of the local authorities.

Local self-government, as understood above, is more and more widely recognized on the different continents. The exceptions are states which do not refer to decentralization in the

legal meaning of the word and also a few countries which attribute a political status to municipal self-government.

Local self-government is expressed in sometimes differently coined legal notions but which are, in general, similar in content. In certain European countries, reference is formally made to the notion of "autonomy" in the constitutions (Italy: art.5; Spain: art.140; Portugal: art.6; Romania: art.120; Greece: art.102.2; "administrative autonomy"). In all the other European countries, the term used corresponds literally to the German expression *Selbstverwaltung* (Fundamental Law: art.28.2), defined as "the right to govern, under one's own responsibility, all the affairs of the local authority", which corresponds to the notion of "*libre administration*" in the French constitution (art.72), and the English notion of *self-government*¹⁵. This latter expression could however be distinguished insofar as its material content derives only from the provisions of the law, but this limitation is receding both in the United Kingdom and in the USA and Australia (constitution of certain federated states in the latter two countries), and by the link with a degree of freedom of organization at local level (*home rule*).

This notion of "self-government" ("*libre administration*" in French) is to be found in the 1993 Russian constitution (*mes-tnoe samoupravlenie*, art.130 to 133), including the freedom of organization in law 131/2003), the Ukrainian constitution of 1996 (*mitzeve samovriaduvania*, art.140) or the Polish constitution of 1997 (*samorząd terytorialny*: art.163 et seq.). In Latin America, the word "autonomy" is usually preferred, both in unitary states (Colombia: art.287) and in federal states (Argentina: art.123, ensuring municipal autonomy is a duty of the provincial constitutions; see for example that of La Rioja: art.154). In Asia, countries which were under British colonial rule have retained the British concept of

14. Jalali, M. (2005), "Iran: une décentralisation en trompe l'œil? Les fondements essentiels de la décentralisation en Iran", *Revue iranienne de Droit constitutionnel*, summer 2005, n°4, pp.74-86.

15. In this sense: Breuillard, M. (2000), *L'administration locale en Grande-Bretagne, entre centralisation et régionalisation*, L'Harmattan, coll. « GRALE » Paris.

local government and of *local self-government*, including the restoration of traditional methods of local organization (not only Australia and New Zealand, but also India, Pakistan, Malaysia) but other countries refer rather to the wording “local autonomy” (Japan, Indonesia, Republic of Korea, Philippines).

One can see however that these differences in terminology and sometimes conceptualization have no impact on the real content of “autonomy” or “self-government”. There is nothing that allows us to assert that the reference to “local autonomy” corresponds to a degree of decentralization greater than the reference to the principle of “self-government”, if one compares institutions, powers and responsibilities. Municipalities in Germany or France do not benefit from less extensive decentralization than municipalities in Italy or Portugal; decentralization is no more advanced in the Republic of Korea than in India. But decentralization is essential as a reference standard for local government. This standard is being developed by the *European Charter for Local Self-government* and the UN Habitat *Guidelines for Decentralization*.

This general tendency has however a few nuances. In African countries, the concepts which the constitutions and national laws reflect follow those of the former colonial power. However, this conception has been dominated since independence by the wish to ensure the unity of the state, which has upheld a centralized system and an essentially instrumental vision of decentralization. However, for a number of years, the reforms undertaken in a certain number of states bring them closer to the general trend by giving to decentralization a more substantial content of local self-government (for example: South Africa, Uganda, Zambia, Burkina Faso, Niger, Senegal).

Lastly, a few countries stand out, conversely, by the affirmation of a concept of

municipality which makes it a component of the state or the framework of an expression of sovereignty. Sweden is the only European country whose constitution declares that “self-management of local communities” contributes to the realization of “national sovereignty” (1:1). The constitution of the Ukraine also states that the people’s sovereignty is exercised by the organs of power of the state and by the bodies of local self-government (art.5), but this formula recalls the former adherence of local bodies to the state power. In Brazil, the 1988 constitution, in principle, confers on the municipalities (*município*) political self-government: the *municípios*, as with federated states, are part of the components whose “indissoluble unity” forms the Federal Republic of Brazil (art.1), and the federal constitution defines the bases of their organization and their powers and responsibilities (art.29 to 31). The practical scope of this concept seems, however, limited¹⁶. In Indonesia, the introduction of the reference to “autonomy” in the laws of 1999 and later laws, corresponds on the other hand to a change of concept, with the transfer of wide-ranging powers, responsibilities and resources and the direct election of the local executive.

Local self-government is a constituent element of decentralization. The terms “local autonomy”, “libre administration” and “self-government” do indeed correspond to one and the same notion. It presupposes freedom of action and organization for the local authority in the context of the laws; this freedom may be more or less extensive but this does not affect the notion itself.

III. Democracy

The classical notion of decentralization does not necessarily imply democracy; an organization may be decentralized

16. Franck Moderne (2006), “Le *município* comme entité politique dans l’organisation territoriale fédérale du Brésil”, pp.347-363 in: *Mélanges en l’honneur de Jean-Claude Douence. La profondeur du droit local*, Paris, Dalloz.

without being based on democratic principles¹⁷. Conversely, an organization based on democratic principles may be centralized.

Now, the link between decentralization and democracy has become narrower and more direct, as in the past in Europe, the link between parliamentary government, arising out of the census system, and democracy. **Decentralization, understood in its strictest sense as a method of organization, today implies democracy. It presupposes the self-government of local authorities in the framework of the law, but it is democracy which is the basis for local self-government.** Democracy effectively allows citizens to express collective preferences which direct the exercise of power held by local authorities by law. This has not always been the case: property ownership as a requirement for voting or the recognized authority of the traditional elite have in the past constituted the basis, or the driving force, for decentralization.

This has not completely disappeared. On the contrary, in certain countries, the institutions give community leaders or religious chiefs a controlling role in civil society and the law sometimes gives them a place in the representative bodies exercising public powers (for example:

Ghana, Uganda, Niger, South Africa...). In certain Middle Eastern countries, the authority of members of the local aristocracy is influential even though there are elections (UAE, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain).

Despite these surviving customs, the general trend is towards the election of local government bodies and to the development of instituted forms of popular participation. Even if the election is not disputed, it is considered to be essential for the authority and the legitimacy of the local authorities and one can see that legislation tends to introduce a degree of possibility of choice or influence for electors (Vietnam, 2004 local elections; China at village or district committee level).

In conclusion, it is obvious that a system of reference for decentralization is being consolidated which includes recognizing local self-government and calls for representative elected institutions and participatory institutions by which the people may express their collective preferences and interests. We should underline that this system of reference is not found everywhere, but it is challenged by any other reference system and continues to spread. Without question, its strength lies in its ability to take form in a wide variety of institutional models.

17. A renowned French legal expert, Charles Eisenmann, wrote: "decentralization is a system without a given political colour; it can be equally undemocratic and democratic"; all that is required is that the designation of local authority be "independent of central authority" (op. cit. p.277).