LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES: WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES FOR TERRITORIES?

ROUNDTABLE

[CP3]
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MAIN FINDINGS

The quality of local governance is an important factor in territorial development. It should be accompanied by a fully fledged policy for decentralising responsibilities. What is more, most importantly, the corresponding financial means should be provided. Activities carried out by associations and businesses should find a way of fitting in to the local context, otherwise initiatives will inevitably open up new cracks between the project beneficiaries and those within the community that have been left out. Local involvement also ensures the long lifespan of a project. As for the role of international organisations, they should accompany the process and encourage local coordination. Often projects are led by countries in the Global North without responding to local needs. There is therefore a need for shared arenas where private, public, local, national and international stakeholders can work together. Finally, private investments are becoming increasingly common in Africa. Local authorities must take part in negotiations so as to ensure that government and businesses are not the only ones to benefit.

SPEAKERS

Tue David Bak
Manager, Partnership Development, BSR

Marguerite Barankitse
Founder and President, Maison Shalom

Giovanni Camilleri
International Coordinator, Initiative ART, PNUD

Antoine Raogo Sawadogo
Former Minister for Territorial Administration, Decentralisation and Security, Burkina Faso / Chairman, Laboratoire Citoyennetés

MODERATOR

Laurent Delcayrou

Head of Local Governance and Territorial Management Department, CIDR

SUMMARY OF INTERVENTIONS

Laurent Delcayrou points out that local governance can be defined in a number of ways. It is often linked to the process of decentralisation and can be defined as the way in which a territory is 'governed', referring in particular to the nature of relationships that stakeholders at the local level may or may not maintain with each other, these being associations, businesses and local authorities.

Local governance and territorial development

Antoine Raogo Sawadogo starts by offering a more precise definition of local governance, which would entail ensuring that all the rules regarding regulation in a given territory are coherent, be they political, economic or cultural, thus allowing for a peaceful form of 'shared living'. In order for local governance to become a factor of development, it must first receive legal recognition from the State and must then be correctly managed with sufficient funding. The current decentralisation process is only slowly progressing, or possibly even taking steps backwards, due to the fact that the higher levels of power are not able to see the benefits therein. This process needs to be reinvigorated and certain sections of the population are becoming increasingly involved: women are showing growing interest in managing public affairs, non French speakers are becoming mayors where a French speaker has traditionally held such a role, etc. National authorities should not recede but rather advance. A notable example is that of funding, which is concentrated in capital cities to the detriment of local collectivities. A glance at Western Africa shows us that it is made up of a vast number of villages, 8000 in Burkina Faso, for example. Populations are confined to this local setting and this should therefore be the basis for developing the nation.

Tue David Bak completes the overview of the situation by providing the point of view of businesses. CSR policies can fall into one of two categories: those that make do with simple projects such as building infrastructure or a school, and those that seek to go further by working closely with civil society and government. Seeing as businesses and associations have no structure which allows them to take part in a process of dialogue, shared platforms must be created in order to favour joint working methods. Companies are not specialists on political issues but they nevertheless have an essential role to play in local governance. On the other hand, organisations such as the UNDP can support collectivities in their dialogue with businesses. Finally, despite a rise in private investment, local authorities should take part in negotiations which are currently limited to a two-way dialogue between the national government and multinational companies. A growing number of multinationals in developing countries are willing to play a greater role in development, which is why they are showing enthusiasm and a desire to support local governance actions.

A social approach slotted into a local context

Marguerite Barankitse explains her thoughts on a locally integrated approach. Following the massacres in Burundi, she set up an association for orphans which looks after up to 10,000 children. One day, a poor mother and father approached the organisation saying that their son had asked them if they would die so that he could live as comfortably as the orphans did. By trying to help the orphans, new cracks in society had opened up. The orphanages were then closed down and the children reintegrated into foster families in their home villages in order for them to live life in their own countries. Therefore, in order to improve the lives of these children by creating stable surroundings for them, the overall local situation needs to be improved. There are many other examples of conflicts linked to a lack of dialogue, one being that of the Hutus and Tutsis who should put an end to the practice of having separate segregated bars and cinemas in the same village. Local governance is first and foremost about creating places for shared dialogue. For this, funds are necessary which are currently not to be found.

The point of view of the international institutions

Giovanni Camilleri underscores the fact that although national policies sometimes do not achieve the expected local impact, local authorities are not always able to provide the necessary solutions, since decisions are

taken at other levels; sometimes nationally and other times globally. This is why mechanisms for bringing these different levels together should be set up in order to make multi-level governance possible. This would allow the territorial approach to respond not only to local needs but also for negotiation links to be set up with the levels where the ability to respond can be found. Building a school is not enough; concerns have to be raised regarding the way in which the school will fit into the local and national education system, a much more complex feat.

This is why the UNDP has launched the ART initiative (Articulation of Territorial and Thematic Networks of Cooperation for Human Development), a tool for facilitating dialogue between territories on subjects of shared interest such as labour, health, water and education. It also intends to be an articulation framework for the many different stakeholders interested in working within a shared multi-level strategy. Another concrete aspect of the ART programme is the support it provides to territories in countries which are interested in putting together a request for cooperation, using as its starting point a participatory dynamic focused around analysing possible needs and responses. This represents an alternative to the top-down tendency within international cooperation while also being an exercise which strengthens social cohesion among the different territorial stakeholders; another very important aspect for governance. There is therefore a need to create awareness among international cooperation stakeholders on the need to respond to territorial requests instead of working on the basis of simply offering cooperation. This approach would avoid efforts being spread too thinly; it would strengthen coordination among stakeholders and avoid competition for funding.

SUMMARY OF DEBATE WITH THE AUDIENCE

Does the local development you encourage aim towards achieving autonomy or is it a step towards opening up to the world?

Giovanni Camilleri points out that the type of local development envisaged is that of joining up local and global aspects, therefore corresponding to the second option.

What does healthy development for children consist of? Would this involve speaking to them about peace?

Marguerite Barankitse tells us that when she wanted to close down her orphanages in order to register the children in their communities, her colleagues reminded her that the children would go back to places where the murderers of their families were to be found. One young girl did indeed meet her parents' killer. Upon meeting, he immediately knelt down to ask for forgiveness. She responded by saying that she knew her parents would never be able to be brought back but that he could help her by becoming her godfather. Creating healthy surroundings for children means creating peaceful surroundings.

What will come out of solidarity being shown between territories?

Antoine Raogo Sawadogo goes back to the main problem of territories in the Global South: the lack of local project ownership. Actions are carried out either directly by countries in the Global North or companies in the national capital. The returns for local collectivities are scarce. If a technical problem arises, nobody can repair it quickly. In order for this solidarity between territories in a country to be created, firstly the nation state has to become a reality as opposed to simply being the ghost that the country has been pursuing for the last fifty years. Therefore, in order to create citizenship, a communal rationale has to be fostered.

MORE ON THIS TOPIC

- PNUD's ART programme : web.undp.org/geneva/ART/