Decentralization and Participatory Democracy

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1. Abstract

Rethinking Governance; Decentralization and Participatory Democracy

This is an ongoing project that has been developing a ‘state centric-relational’ approach to governance. This has devolved key governance functions to partnerships with societal organizations, or ‘the formulation and implementation of public policy increasingly takes place in and through interactive forms of governance, involving a public and private actors’. In which process the states have enhanced their capacity to govern by strengthening their own institutional and legal capacities but also by developing closer relations with non-state actors.

Government and International organizations are perceived to be more important, having a greater impact on people’s lives, so pressures grow for greater transparency, participation and accountability. A greater percentage of the world lives in democracies than ever before.

Decentralization involves the shifting of fiscal, political and administrative responsibilities from higher to lower levels of government. Participatory democracy, as a subset of governance theory, emphasizes democratic practices. Throughout the centuries, thinkers in many different cultures contributed to the development of democratic government. Whereas citizen participation in the governmental process has traditionally focused on measures designed to support and facilitate increased public access to information about governmental activities, efforts to extend the rights of the citizens to be consulted on public issues which affect them, and to see that the broad citizenry will be heard through fair and equitable representative political systems, participatory governance seeks to deepen this participation by examining the assumptions and practices of the traditional view that generally hinder the realization of a genuine participatory democracy.

2. Introduction
A greater percentage of the world lives in democracies than ever before. Information flows more quickly amongst the politically informed as a result of the information revolution. More people are politically active. Globalization benefits many people, but not everyone. There are also clearly growing environmental challenges associated with development. There is an impressive area of good practices and ideas to rethinking governance. In this ideas to improve procedures enhancing participation, transparency and These need to feature more prominently in providing checks and balances on traditional public institutions, good transparency mechanisms including e-governance, to redesign our systems of governance to devolve power from centralized, hierarchical institutions and evolve more collaboration among individuals, groups and institutions including government and the media.

3. Objective of the Paper

The paper is focused on achievement of following objectives:
   a. Re thinking Governance
   b. Decentralization to create the most efficient and accountable form of government possible
   c. Participatory Democracy for good governance;

4. Re-thinking Governance

The World Bank initially defined governance as “the manner in which power is exercised in the management of the country's economic and social resources for development”. Under this notion, the elements of good governance were: Political and bureaucratic accountability; participation by involving community and grassroots organizations in the design and implementation of public projects decentralization of administration; creation of ombudsman offices, and establishing a legal framework for defining property rights and enforcing contracts and liabilities.

Rethinking Governance question assumptions and seeks to clarify how we understand governance. It is best understood as ‘the strategies used by governments to help govern’, capacity to govern by exerting top-down controls and
developing closer ties with non-government sectors. Good governance based on transparency and accountability at various levels, started and ended with stakeholders or citizens. Good governance, attention must be focused on the primary responsibilities of the government.

5. Decentralization

The expansion of local autonomy through the transfer of powers and responsibilities away from national bodies. All modern states are divided on a territorial basis between central and peripheral institutions. The differences include the constitutional framework within which centre-regional relationships are conducted, the distribution of functions and responsibilities between the levels of government, the Political, Economic, Administrative and other powers that the centre can use to control the periphery, and the independence that local bodies enjoy.

6. Participatory Democracy

In the Gettysburg Address, Abraham Lincoln spoke about “a government of the people, by the people, for the people,” Democracy is a set of rules intended to give ordinary people a significant voice in government. The word democracy comes from the Greek words demos, meaning “the people,” and kraits’, meaning “to rule”. So form of government in which the people govern, either directly or through elected representatives. Participatory Democracy also called pure or direct democracy, where everyone actively participates in every decision.

7. Effect of Globalization on Decentralization and Participatory Democracy

During the last decade, the winds of democratic movements and reforms have achieved global scale, and democratic decentralization has spread worldwide. In every continent most governments have embraced decentralization programmes. Some 95 percent of democracies now have elected sub national governments, and countries everywhere-large and small, rich and poor – are devolving political, fiscal, and administrative powers to sub national tiers of government.
8. Process of Decentralization and Participatory Democracy

Decentralization and Participatory Democracy takes many forms and has several dimensions. Indeed, a wide variety of institutional restructurings are encompassed by this label, and several variants may be operating at the same time within a country, and even within a sector.

9. Designing Decentralization and Participatory Democracy

Institutions have had an increasingly important influence on decentralization in recent years because of technological change, political demands for greater participation, and the emergence of global and local capital markets, among other factors institutional factors that shape the design of decentralization and influence its economic impact.

10. Rethinking Governance for Decentralization and Participatory Democracy

The main objective of decentralization is to create the most efficient and accountable form of government possible. Decentralization is often introduced to offset a possible that has caused dissatisfaction with centralized system. It is essential to consider the wide range of issues that influence decentralization.

11. Conclusion

To achieve Good Governance the Government shall be on a mission to follow clarity, conviction, compassion and consistency in governance which are prerequisites to achieve the principles and vision of good governance through decentralization and participatory democracy. Under decentralization by devolution, an autonomous corporate body politic is created at the sub national level with both political and administrative power. These powers are derived from the residents of the area through democratic elections. Grassroots participatory democratic practices are
essential to the success of this form of decentralization. Rethinking decentralization Incentives for Accountability, The Role of Capacity, Policy Dialogue and Project Design are needed according to time factor.

12. References

10. The World Bank webpage.