

LORC 4th Group Research Meeting

Intensive Discussions on the forthcoming book, *Foundations for Local Governance: Decentralization in Comparative Perspective*

Date: 15-16 February, 2007

Venue: Ryukoku University, Fukakusa Campus

Participants: Eriko Aoki, Frederick Golooba-Mutebi, K. N. Harilal, W. D. Lakshman, Nobutaka Matoba, Rika Kato (2nd day only), Minoru Obayashi, P. S. Reddy, Chihiro Saito (2nd day only), Fumihiko Saito, Deddy Tikson, Ken Arai

This two-day meeting was held in order to discuss and develop the draft chapters of the forthcoming book, *Foundations for Local Governance: Decentralization in Comparative Perspective*.

DAY ONE: 15 February, A.M.

Introduction and General Points

The meeting was opened by introductory remarks by F. Saito, in which the objective of the book was restated. This was followed by general discussions on the book as a whole, and the following points, *inter alia*, were confirmed.

- Information to be included may vary from one country to another, but basic information on geography, population is always necessary. In the beginning of each country background chapter, a short and good introduction should be provided for readers who are not familiar with case study countries.
- Each chapter needs to address where the imperative for decentralisation comes from.
- Each country background chapter also need some information of what kind of people become sub-national/local politicians and why, using the existing literature as much as possible.
- It would also be desirable for country background chapter to include some basic data so that rough but meaningful comparison can be made for example about number of officials working at sub-national levels and sub-national public expenditures.
- Contributors also need to think carefully the question: How best can the nature of the state be described in each country? This question helps to shape the analytical lens by which the discussion can take place.
- Use of public opinion survey, e.g. Afrobarometer (<http://www.afrobarometer.org/>) /

Asiabarometer (<https://www.asiabarometer.org/>) may be useful.

- The terms 'local government' and 'sub-national government' are not synonymous. It will be stated in the introductory chapter that 'sub-national government' means the governments other than central/national government, and in each chapter this is to be clarified, for each country has its unique structure of government layers. Neither are the terms 'authority' and 'government' synonymous. In the book it would be better to use the term 'government.' In any case, these terms need to be used with care.
- The final draft is due by the end of March 2007, and the publication is expected in the middle of this year. LORC will purchase 180 copies of the book, the distribution of which to contributors is to be negotiated later.

Following that, the draft chapters on each respective country were presented and discussed. The points raised for each draft were such as below.

South Africa 1 (Reddy and Maharaj's chapter presented by F. Saito)

- What are the imperatives for decentralisation?
- What kind of people are going into local politics? Do they become politicians for the sake of prestige, economic return, or what? (And how are representatives treated, in terms of the pay?)
- Local civil society participation in decision making?
- Quality of participation?
- Service delivery?
- Difference between black and white communities (in terms of participation in local politics and distribution of skills) – any change in the post-Apartheid era?
- The organogram/diagram explaining local and subnational governments needs to be inserted.
- The chronology of developments needs to be clarified in the text.

DAY ONE: 15 February, P.M.

South Africa 2 (Tapscott's chapter presented by Reddy)

- Financial sustainability is important.
- The conclusion can be backed up further by recent empirical evidence of what is happening on the ground.
- Good to highlight the element of trust. How the legacies of apartheid affect trust among different ethnic groups, between leaders and followers, etc is suitably examined

in South Africa.

- Section on Integrated Development Plan is interesting. Since the state in SA is becoming developmental, it is important to what extent IDP is fulfilling its expected functions.

Uganda 1 (Golooba-Mutebi's chapter presented by F. Saito)

- It is essential to explain the paradox in a way understandable by readers who do not know Uganda well: non-party democracy and movement polity. The "paradox" is further complicated by the transition from non-party democracy to multiparty democracy. Whether this is an ordinary transition for further democratization or not perhaps depends on how various relevant issues are analyzed.
- The organisation of the chapter follows the style suggested by the editor, but if other way is more suitable given the political history of Uganda, this can be discussed.
- The chapter needs some kind of logic to be organized more clearly and coherently, and that may be the political system
- It would be helpful to explain the change in the nature of the regime during its long stay in power. Museveni may be realising now that decentralisation went too far and trying to re-centralise.

Uganda 2 (F. Saito's chapter presented by Golooba-Mutebi)

- The chapter seems to argue that superficial participation is better than non-participation at all.
- The government now takes control of the salaries of the officers of local government, and this is said to be undermining local autonomy. Yet officers themselves are happy with this arrangement, for they are freed from the authority of local leaders. This may lead to conflict and poor service delivery, though.
- The figures from Afrobarometer need to be treated with care – complexity is not captured by this kind of survey.
- It is true that there have been some improvement in service delivery, especially in education and health. However, there are also observable weaknesses. e.g. serious shortage of medicine.
- Some NGOs are owned by local and national politicians and have no independence, i.e. they are a part of patron-client network. This was not mentioned in the paper. NGOs are often keen on partnerships, because it is a good way of staying in business.
- There is much more participation fatigue than mentioned in the paper.
- In Rwanda, participation rate is high because it is enforced from elected local leaders.

Ghana 1 (Ayee's chapter presented by F. Saito)

- Some similarities with Uganda – legacy of the so-called non-party democracy.
 - The so-called multi-party democracy is not necessarily 'democratic' in reality?
- Where is the imperative for decentralisation coming from? More from outsiders than Ghanaians themselves?

DAY TWO: 16 February, A.M.

Indonesia 1 (Tikson's chapter presented by Aoki)

- How can the state be characterised? Some elements of neo-patrimonialism?
- How can the nature of civil society be described?
- Why decentralisation is implemented? To maintain the integrity of the country? If so, there may be a tension. Was decentralisation initiated by the interest of the central government?
 - The interests of the centre and localities cannot be separated, though?
- Administrative reform and political reform are to be differentiated. In Indonesia decentralisation is a part of administrative reform, yet very political.
- Shah (ed.) (2006) *Local Governance in Developing Countries*, Washington, D.C., The World Bank, contains a lot of data which may be of good use.
- Figure 2.1. is confusing and needs to be reworked. See Indonesian chapter in Shah's book.
- Discussion on the devolution of resources needs more clarity.
- Other country background chapters (Ghana, SA in particular) would serve as good samples when reorganising this chapter.

Indonesia 2 (Aoki's chapter presented by F. Saito)

- It is not clear how different parts of the chapter are related to each other. e.g. discussion on the plurality of culture in Indonesia and the later discussion on Flores; the relevance of Rokkan's theory to Flores.
- Global processes are related to local, micro level process – granted. The question, however, is HOW they are related. How for instance do global economic changes affect ways in which people in Flores define their interests?
- Decisions at local level are still important in the context of global economy.
- Do ordinary people in Flores feel something positive is happening in the context of

decentralisation?

- The use of the term 'ritual village' may be confusing.

India 1 (Harilal's chapter presented by C. Saito and Kato)

- The conclusion is not as strong as the main body of the chapter, for the tone sounds a bit more journalistic than academic.
- It is right to point out the necessary to improve the architecture of decentralised planning in the state, yet the chapter should indicate more concretely how this can be done, e.g. by addressing the questions such as: how to improve the capacity of the officials who work full-time for LSGs; how to enhance the function of amendment acts in 1999.
- There is a difficulty in keeping people engaged, and the rate of participation is declining. Even in Kerala, voter turnout of local elections has declined. This needs to be addressed through a discussion on how to improve the relationship between the people and officials.
- The role of state intervention is rightly highlighted but it may as well be desirable to consider the ways in which the capacities of LSGs could be developed.
- More description of underlying political and social condition may be required?
- The role of business sector is important to devise holistic reform at local levels. As Kerala example attests, economic aspects are inter-related with socio-political aspects.
- The terms 'local governments' and 'subnational governments' need to be used as precisely as possible. They do not necessarily mean the same thing.
- While the general introduction of India and Kerala is already written in the ms, this may be reviewed to see if this requires further revision.

DAY TWO: 16 February, P.M.

India 2 (C. Saito and Kato's chapter presented by Harilal)

- It is taken for granted in the draft that Karnataka is behind Kerala. This claim needs to be substantiated by more evidence. Karnataka is also characterised with active civil society movement and rich social capital. The difference needs to be discussed more clearly.
- It is said that nature of social capital in Kerala is different from that of Karnataka, for in Karnataka the civil sector is mainly constituted by externally funded NGOs, while in Kerala it is not primarily consisted of overseas donors. If this point is to be developed further, the authors need to look at the historical evolution of civil organisations in

Kerala. In any case, if the comparison of the civil society organisations in Kerala and Karnataka is done more systematically, it would strengthen the discussion.

- The relation between decentralisation and participation – is decentralisation motivating participation, or participation supports decentralisation?
- It may be useful to look at some literatures on social movements.
- In many places traditional ways of participation have been largely replaced in the course of modernisation with what may be called ‘orchestrated participation’, which tends to end up with ‘participation fatigue’. Kerala seems a unique exception where participation is internally generated. What drives this?
- What makes the social movements in Kerala sustainable?

Sri Lanka 1 (Gunawardena and Lakshman’s chapter presented by F. Saito)

- How are the decentralisation attempts related to the issue of civil society participation and/or liveliness of autonomous civil society?
- The fact that devolution was implemented because it was imposed by Indian government needs to be more emphasised.
- Difficulty in characterising the nature of the state. Is the conception of ‘neo-patrimonialism’ relevant to Sri Lanka? Or welfare state with a characteristic of populism?
- More basic statistical and geographical information to be included?

Sri Lanka 2 (Dissanayake’s chapter presented by Lakshman)

- Some explanations on the areas selected for the study would be necessary.
- Given that the study is based on particular areas of Sri Lanka, it may not be appropriate for the title of the chapter to say ‘in Sri Lanka’ – this probably needs to be modified to something like the second chapter on India.
- Issue of ownership – what does it mean? What does it take for people to feel ownership?

Ghana 2 (by Obayashi on his own chapter)

- Information plays a very important role in participation and local engagement.
- There are various different ways of communicating information at local level. If some data is available to indicate people use which media for what purpose, it would be helpful. To what extent radio is important, compared with other types of communication methods?
- CLGF Handbook provides useful background information.

- What is the main research question? Or what is the main purpose of this chapter?
- Are the broadcasters interested in communicating local political affairs on the radio?
- There is a programme in which the chief executive appears, it was said. The radio programme may be used as a propaganda tool to advance the chief executive's interest, on the one hand, but it also opens up a possibility that people are exposed to a kind of information to which they never had access before, on the other.
- National medias may be providing some information relevant to localities. People may be more used to them than local media for the latter is new.

Wrap-up

Having gone through the discussions above, the meeting was closed with the following remarks, which would form a basis for the conclusion of the book as a whole.

- There are limitations in governance reform or decentralisation. Decentralisation may be well intended but this itself cannot resolve everything.
- There has been a tendency that different kinds of reform programme have been implemented separately: 1) decentralisation and government reform; 2) liberalisation of market toward economic development; 3) supporting/empowering civil society/grassroots activities are not well connected. We need to have more holistic understanding.