FRAGILITY AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

Challenges to building local state – citizen relations in fragile settings

Marjoke Oosterom

Fragility at the Local Level

Challenges to Building Local State – Citizen Relations in Fragile Settings

Table of Contents

1.   Introduction

The importance of local democratic state institutions for lasting security and development is widely recognised (Risley & Sisk 2005). At the same time, state fragility at the local level is an area that has received very little attention in both academic and policy circles. A particular knowledge gap is the interface between citizens and the local state; how the state – citizen relationship can be rebuilt in an environment where social and political trust is minimal and where the threat of violence persists. Failing to address local state –citizen relations may hamper the consolidation of viable local democracies and undermine state legitimacy in the long run. Aid agencies and other civil society actors play important roles in these challenging and often hostile environments.Though their programmes may not be focused on local level state building, many of their activities have nonetheless implications for local governance. This paper will outline key issues for local state – citizen relations in fragile settings. Thus it aims to unpack some of the complexities of local state fragility, from which we can deduce implications for aid actors.

Debates about post-conflict state reconstruction have predominantly focused on putting national state institutions in place – e.g. the rule of law, parliament, and national elections. However, there is increasing evidence that one needs to work on 'both sides of the equation' in order to deepen democratic governance (Gaventa 2004). On the one hand, it is about strengthening voice and participation to be included into the policy process. On the other hand, the capacity of governments to be responsive and accountable to these voices needs to be enhanced. In contexts marked by state fragility, crises, protracted conflict or post-war, specific challenges exist on either side of the equation.

'A stable local level can prevent further conflict, even if national institutions turn out to be fragile.'

Hohe 2004:54

Though the 'fragile state' label is widely used, it easily masks the variation in state fragility and how this is experienced at the local level. Often the term is conflated with conflict prone societies, where the state has lost control over large parts of its territory and its monopoly on the use of force (e.g. Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq). It is important to keep in mind that violent conflict and insecurity are equally experienced in authoritarian, repressive states (e.g. Angola, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe). Here, it is actually a strong state that causes insecurity and fails to deliver on public goods and services. In other cases there will be weak states that lack the capacity to deliver without the occurrence of violent conflict. Furthermore, state fragility can apply to so called 'pockets of fragility' within an otherwise relatively stable and functioning state. Phases and fluctuations in state fragility also matter. It is important to distinguish different types and phases of state fragility, since the reconstruction of state-society relations will require different strategies in these divergent contexts.

Civil society organisations (CSOs) have become important players in fragile states since the 1990s. They form a highly diverse and fluid body of actors. Their roles and functions are subject to extensive debate; often the emphasis is on their role in delivering emergency aid and services, whereas governance and advocacy work is considered relevant but difficult (Goodhand 2006). The scope of peace building activities has increasingly broadened, in which governance related functions of CSOs gained importance; e.g state – citizen intermediation, government monitoring, and protection (World Bank 2006). CSO strategies vary across contexts in response to different forms of state fragility and the nature of the regimes. They also need to adapt to quickly changing circumstances or stages, like in transitions from humanitarian crisis to recovery and development.

It would be beyond the scope of this paper to elaborate the CSO and peacebuilding debate in detail, and it has been elaborated in length elsewhere. Instead, this paper will look into certain aspects of the debate that are less widely discussed; the particularities of local governance in fragile settings and the implications for the work of civil society actors, in particular non-governmental humanitarian and development aid actors. Considering the complexity of countries marked by state fragility, there are various challenges for civil society actors that relate to the local governance sphere. Challenges also vary for different types of aid actors; international or domestic, the more humanitarian or development oriented actors, CSOs working 'on conflict' or those working 'in conflict' (Goodhand 2006). For humanitarian actors, the nature of humanitarian aid can make it difficult to build relations with often incapable and hostile local government institutions, let alone think of long-term governance improvements. Aid actors that *do* have experience in democratic governance programming may have less experience in adapting their strategies to the particularities of fragile, conflict-prone settings.

This paper is an introduction to available literature on local democratic governance in fragile settings with an emphasis on contexts marked by protracted violent conflict. In this paper the term 'fragile settings' is used as it covers fragile states as well as regions within countries that experience state

fragility. Section 2 introduces the challenges to local governance in fragile settings drawing on three debates; fragile states and state-reconstruction, decentralisation, and participatory governance. Hereafter three thematic issues will be highlighted; legitimacy problems of local governments (Section 3), the tension between formal and informal governance institutions (Section 4), mechanisms for accountability (Section5), and challenges and opportunities for citizen participation (Section 6). These issues will feed into further thinking about the role of civil society organisations in (re)building local democratic governance in Section 7.

2. The absence of the local level in fragile state debates

Over the last decade the debate on fragile states has become a prominent issue on the development agenda. Interestingly, state fragility at the local level is not widely discussed (Jackson & Scott 2008; Van der Haar et al. 2009). Different areas of work have addressed issues that are relevant for studying local governance in fragile settings. Quite substantial bodies of literature exist on state reconstruction, decentralisation, and participatory governance. It is at the intersection of these three areas that we hope to find suggestions for how to work on local democratic governance in the difficult circumstances of a fragile, (post)conflict setting.

State reconstruction of fragile states

Governance refers to the exercise of political, economic and social authority in a society (Call & Crook 2003). Governance extends beyond the role responsibilities of public state institutions and refers to broader institutions and processes that organise the collective life of society. Though some of these institutions will be governmental, others will be informal (Brinkerhoff 2007). *State fragility* is described according to the performance of states in the following three domains; delivering security to its citizens and maintaining the monopoly on the use of force; basic service delivery, and maintaining political legitimacy (Brinkerhoff 2005).

Discussions about fragile states and state reconstruction show a *state-centred* approach and emphasise the consolidation of state institutions at *national* level. Institutions include legislative bodies, the constitution, elections, and the rule of law (Brinkerhoff 2005; Luckham et al. 2003; Eyben and Ladbury 2006). The emphasis being on institution building, efforts to improve a decentralised governance system would focus on improving the lower level state administrative systems, fiscal mechanisms and more effective service delivery (Hohe 2004; Lister & Wilder 2005).

An important critique on this approach says that it is too state-oriented and that merely creating democratic institutions does not necessarily lead to democratic, inclusive politics. More attention should be paid to a broader understanding of state – citizen relations, involving issues such as citizenship, democratic accountability and socio-political processes in wider society (Luckham et al. 2003; Galtung & Tisné 2009). In order to deepen this understanding, the point of departure should be citizen perspectives on government institutions that affect their lives (Eyben & Ladbury 2006). Another critique is that that the state reconstruction approach lacks a focus on political processes (Lister & Wilder 2005). Local government institutions are part of broader and complex political dynamics. Efforts to improve the sub-national government system should not solely address technical capacities, but the power relations between different levels of government and between informal authorities and state institutions.

Building democratic governance in fragile settings requires further thinking about improving state – citizen relations at different levels in society, and should go beyond institution building. It is about (re)engaging both state and society actors in democratic processes.

Lessons from decentralisation

Decentralisation was on the top of the 'good governance' agenda during the 1990s. The alleged merits of decentralisation are based on two assumptions. One is that it brings governments closer to the people and that it allows for larger numbers of people to be involved in decision-making on issues that affect their lives (Blair 2000; Steiner 2007). Decision-making thus becomes more inclusive, especially if various strata of society become more involved in the process, which means an improvement in local democracy. The second assumption is that decentralisation leads to more efficiency in public service delivery. More recently, decentralisation received renewed attention for its potential to enhance the local level security situation in two ways (Olowu 2003; Steiner 2007). One is that decentralisation offers potentially conflicting groups formal procedures and structures for relative

autonomy, thus contributing to national unity and stability. The other way is that it gives local authorities a formal role in conflict resolution at local level.

Strengths and weaknesses of decentralisation schemes are widely discussed, which can inform our thinking about local democratic governance in fragile settings. *Technical* deficits such as a lack of capable staff, knowledge about procedures and planning cycles, and lack of resources are quickly identified. Important critiques pointed out the importance of the '*politics'* behind decentralisation. Though decentralisation should delegate power to local government institutions, it is often used to strengthen the power of the central state and its control over local territories (Crook 2003). In **Nigeria** for instance, the local governance system was used by the military regimes to create loyal 'bosses' throughout the 1980s in order to bypass the federal state. In pre-crisis **Zimbabwe**, local governments were seen as the extended arms of the ruling party that had to mobilise villagers to work for communal labour or development schemes. Finally, there is a risk that decentralisation leads to increasing tensions in a population and even outburst of violent conflict, for instance when resources are mismanaged and decision-making is exclusive and favour certain groups in society.

Regarding citizen involvement, one became increasingly aware that more participation did not automatically lead to empowerment and responsive policies. In order to become effective, citizens' voices must not only be expressed, but also heard and responded to (Goetz et al. 2001). Already poor and marginalised citizens will have difficulties to have their voices included. Indeed, 'elite capture' of spaces that are offered by decentralisation is a serious threat; decision-making processes and resources are then dominated by local elites. Similarly, policy outcomes may become biased when spaces for involvement are dominated by men, certain ethnic groups, castes or class. The local spaces for involvement created by decentralisation may thus reflect existing inequalities in society.

Though there is a substantial body of literature on decentralisation, this literature has paid little attention to the particularities of fragile settings. Challenges to technical and political aspects of decentralisation will be different, as will be the conditions for citizen participation.

Lessons learnt in decentralisation processes also stress the importance to think beyond the institutional design of local democracies. It is necessary to understand the wider political context and imperatives behind decentralisation, as well as the social and political processes at micro-level.

Participatory governance

Contemporary approaches to participation emphasise the *political agency* of people, as in participatory governance (Hickey and Mohan 2004, Cornwall 2004). It expands earlier debates on participation to discussions on citizenship, rights, and the nature and type of spaces where people participate. All over the world initiatives take place that seek to improve the performance of democratic state institutions by strengthening citizen participation in the public domain and decision making processes. As elections take place only once every few years, through such mechanisms the number of opportunities to influence policy increases significantly. Famous examples are the health councils and participatory budgeting in Brazil, and participatory planning councils in the Philippines in which both government officials and citizens or their interest groups participate. These mechanisms are formally established by law, but there are numerous examples of more informal participatory development councils and forums.

John Gaventa argues that bringing in more direct and empowered forms of participation into the local governance sphere can lead to both democracy building and better development outcomes. However, this is only true under certain conditions. The spaces for participation through which social change could potentially take place are challenged by power relations inside and outside these spaces (Gaventa 2004). A central issue is thus whether and how mechanisms for civic engagement and the new spaces they create are conducive to widening and deepening democracy (Cornwall 2007). When, where and how can participation bring about transformation of institutions and socio-political relations that cause social exclusion, marginalisation and poverty?

Cornwall (2007) distinguishes five factors that are conducive to meaningful participation. First of all an overarching political project needs to be in place, which is committed to popular participation. This has to do with ideology and to what extent government bodies from national level to local level are committed to citizen participation, by loosening state control and thus allowing citizens to enter the public domain. Secondly, participation needs to be ensured in legal and constitutional rights. Thirdly, at local and individual level committed bureaucrats need to be able to respond to participation in a meaningful way, with respect for the participants. Fourthly, a strong and well organised civil society able to articulate interests. Lastly, an effective institutional design that includes procedures for broad-based civil society participation.

Literature on participatory governance has produced useful lessons on citizen participation at both national and local level, in particular about relations of power. However, while there is some work done on participation in the context of chronic violence (Pearce 2007; Wheeler 2009), more work is needed to find out whether and how participatory local governance is possible in fragile settings.

Most criteria that are conducive to civic engagement will not be present in fragile settings. State fragility and past or ongoing violent conflict and repression deeply affect the local public sphere. It affects state institutions, citizens and the organisations that support them, and the mechanisms for state – society interaction. Understanding the implications for local governance requires a detailed analysis of these three components.

Taking the debates further: challenges to local governance in fragile settings

What does the local level state look like in fragile and post-conflict settings? What does this mean for the relationship between citizens and local government institutions and for citizen participation? If there are challenges to functioning local democracies in relatively strong and stable states, then there will be even more challenges in contexts marked by state fragility and insecurity.

Regarding state institutions, *technical* problems for local government institutions are generally exacerbated in fragile settings. It is difficult to attract qualified and capable staff to areas affected by war, there are even less resources and there is hardly a physical infrastructure that enables officials to do the job. The *political* dynamics in which local government institutions are embedded are highly complex. The boundaries between the state and the citizenry are likely to be blurred and various organised non-state actors may exist, which are competing for authority. This complexity of actors and power relations will in turn affect the mechanisms for state– citizen interaction. Citizens themselves, as well as the organisations that support them, will have little space for civic initiatives and there are less opportunities to develop a sense of civic agency. Altogether these conditions are not favourable to civic engagement.

Some would therefore suggest that it could be wise to wait with promoting participatory approaches if there is no experience with popular agency or where the wider political context is unsupportive of it (Hickey & Mohan 2004). Micro-level democratisation is often pushed to the final stages of democratic reconstruction. However, it could make vital contributions to the depth, quality and durability of peace (Roque and Shankland 2007; Galtung & Tisné 2009). Furthermore, the local level is important for day to day experiences of the state, which shapes people's perceptions of the state and the political community at large (Van der Haar et al. 2009). It is also at the local level where people are involved in the public domain and thus build up a sense of citizenship. Thus, if both democratic institutions *and* democratic politics are considered to be crucial to a functioning inclusive democracy and if civic engagement is considered to contribute to the legitimacy of often new and fragile institutions, then it is necessary to carefully assess the potential of participatory local governance in adverse contexts.

The following sections will elaborate on the relationship between citizens and the local state in fragile settings. Each section highlights issues that are likely to be problematic and therefore possible barriers to improved state –society relations.

3.   Reconstituting legitimacy

Legitimacy refers to acceptance of a governing regime as correct, appropriate and right (Brinkerhoff 2007) and is one of the key issues for democratic governance. A loss of legitimacy in the eyes of some segments of the population is an important contributor to state fragility. Therefore, in fragile or post-conflict settings rebuilding legitimate political authority is a priority area for enhancing democratic governance.

 But what is this legitimacy crisis exactly? It is argued that democratic institutions in strong states such as in Europe and in the United States also face a legitimacy crisis: voter turnout in elections is low and people have no confidence or trust in their governments (Gaventa 2006). These are 'democratic deficits' or 'diminished democracies' (Skocpol in Gaventa 2006), where citizens have become detached from political life and the institutions that organise their lives.

What are the specific attributes of the legitimacy crisis in fragile settings? Unpacking the concept may be helpful to map the particularities. Broadly speaking there are two types of legitimacy. One is the *output-oriented* legitimacy, in which legitimacy is an extra outcome of government outputs in terms of service provision (Inbal & Lerner 2007). This is the dominant approach that stresses the technical

capacity and rather instrumental role of governments to deliver services, provide security, and adequately administer civil affairs. Though this is important it is not the single way in which legitimacy can be generated. It is strongly related to *input-oriented* legitimacy, which is about the voluntary consent of the population to be governed and live by the rules that are set by the governing institutions. If a society lacks shared ideas and values about this consent and is divided about what government ought to look like, this will create problems for its legitimacy. Crucial for input-oriented legitimacy is whether citizens can exercise voice and to what extent state institutions actively listen and respond.

Another issue is thus *by whom* a state is considered legitimate. Some authors make a distinction between the *de jure* and *de facto* state (Jackson 2005; Lister 2005; Jackson & Scott 2008). The *de jure* state enjoys legitimacy because it has established itself legally and will hence be recognised by the international community. The *de facto* state is the one that actually administers or exercises power over a territory, like in the case of warlords in certain parts of Afghanistan (Lister & Wilder 2005). This distinction demonstrates a state-centred perspective of legitimacy (who is in control?) rather than a citizen perspective (which actor is perceived as correct, appropriate and right?).

Issues and challenges concerning legitimacy will vary for different types of fragile settings – e.g. (post)conflict or authoritarian states. Repressive regimes use coercion to enforce their authority and hence there is no voluntary consent. Even if there is some extent of service delivery, people face insecurity that is caused by the state and the input-oriented form of legitimacy is severely undermined. Legitimacy problems in (post)conflict societies are again different. As will be discussed in the next section, there are often other, non-state actors that have filled the vacuum caused by an absent, ineffective or illegitimate state (Kyed & Engberg-Pedersen 2008). These actors may enjoy some degree of legitimacy at local level. Reconstituting legitimacy of formal government institutions in this case involves a careful analysis of these actors and how they should be addressed.

Local governments will need to establish a legitimacy of their own and hence need population support. Legitimacy can therefore not be attained without citizen involvement and it is crucial to consider what constitutes legitimacy in a particular context. Reconstituting legitimacy involves both enhancing the state's technical capacity to deliver (output) and expanding participation and inclusiveness (input). State institutions need to engage with the people and important non-state bodies of authority in the right way. Local governance in these settings may therefore imply linking not only citizens and local governments together, but also other actors. A misunderstanding of local power dynamics is an easy pitfall for establishing new local governance systems. Each context thus requires careful analysis of existing local power structures and socio-political processes.

To strengthen legitimacy of state institutions, aid agencies will need to work on both the output-oriented and input oriented legitimacy. Input-oriented legitimacy is about strenghtening citizen voices, and requires a thorough understanding of how citizens perceive local government institutions as well as other forms of authority in society.

4.   Tensions between state and non-state actors

External actors may have the impression that life in fragile settings has become completely disorganised or that there is even total absence of structures, while in fact collective life continues to be organised. Violent conflict *transforms* rather than destroys social and political foundations (Pouligny 2006:79). If public institutions stopped functioning – especially in terms of security provision - people will tend to rely strongly on institutions that lie outside the state domain. These non-state institutions can be very different in nature. Often, social institutions like traditional leaders, customary law and social practices are mentioned as important forms of organisation to rely on.

It is however important to look beyond the role of traditional leaders and extend the discussion to other non-state actors. Especially in areas marked by violent conflict where state institutions are virtually no longer present, non-state armed actors may establish a form of social order.[1] In many cases these actors go as far as creating of 'parallel states'; they start performing functions like protection, service delivery and even taxation (Pearce, McGee & Wheeler forthcoming 2010; Kyed & Engberg-Pedersen 2008). This section will first look into traditional leadership and how this is related to legitimacy. The role of other organised non-state actors will be discussed in section 4.2.

---

[1] Though CSOs are generally considered to be non-state actors, this section is about the role of organised (armed) groups in society, which regulate social life and provide where the state no longer does.

Traditional leadership and legitimacy

The tensions between formal and informal governance institutions is widely covered in literature, especially in the African context. At the local level, the role of traditional leaders cannot be underestimated. This is the reason for many authors to speak of a 'dualism of power structures' and 'dual legitimacy' (Logan 2008). Traditional governance structures have proved to be quite resilient and outlived numerous regime changes. This does not mean they are 'fixed'. In fact, the term 'traditional' or 'informal' may not be appropriate as traditional leaders were in various ways affected by colonial and post-independent regimes. Moreover, in several countries traditional leaders are granted formal authorities by the state, they are even recognised in constitutions, and have formal responsibilities in local level dispute resolution, land allocation and taxation. In this sense, they can hardly be seen as 'informal' institutions or non-state actors.

The extent to which traditional forms of authority and democratic governance are compatible or contradictory remains an issue for debate. Often traditional leaders and formally elected leaders are portrayed as *competing* for power and legitimacy. However, an analysis of *Afrobarometer* survey results shows that this dichotomy may be false (Logan 2009). African citizens are not trapped between competing authorities; rather they see both forms of authority as part of the same *hybrid* system of political institutions. The analysis showed that there is no contradiction between supporting traditional leaders and being committed to democracy. Especially at the local level, people that are supporting or criticizing traditional leaders are equally supportive or critical about official leaders.

Post-war **East Timor** is a case where traditional leaders were perceived to be more legitimate than the newly established local administration. After the collapse of the official administration in 1999, the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) focused on building national strong central state institutions that would be handed over to the Timorese in 2002 (Hohe 2004). UNTAET created 13 administrative districts. To supplement the central administration, the World Bank and the United Nations implemented the Community Empowerment and Local Governance Project (CEP), which entailed the creation of democratically elected village development councils. Traditional leaders were excluded from both the district administration and village development councils. The local population had different ideas about what constitutes legitimate leadership; for them the new bodies were not legitimate if traditional leaders were not part of it. Consequently, the population rejected the personnel of the district administration and the development committees faced huge problems. External actors had assumed that the implementation of decentralisation schemes would fill a 'political vacuum'. On the contrary, local power concepts, traditional systems of decision making, leadership and conflict resolution had persisted under Indonesian rule and the war. The 'vacuum' in reality meant nothing more than the absence of an official administrative system.

> ### Legitimacy issues in Sierra Leone
> In the case of Sierra Leone, the strong role and authority of traditional chiefs is a fact, but their legitimacy may be questioned. Local chiefs and their arbitrary behaviour are seen as one of the major causes of the outburst of the war. They heavily disadvantaged large numbers of the population and limited opportunities for a better future. This led to grievance and desperation among young men in particular, who saw no other solution but to join the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). Under the new Local Government Act of 2004 local chiefs are formally acknowledged by the state. They are assigned certain responsibilities and authority. In post-war Sierra Leone, the state had collapsed and had weak capacity and it seemed therefore to be a logical step to restore the chiefdoms in the rural areas. However, given the history, one could argue that it lacked sensitivity to the tensions in the past (Jackson, 2005).

Considering the importance of traditional leaders in many contexts, the question is *how* to work with them in a way that contributes to social justice, equity and well-being. The two examples show that their roles, legitimacy, their embeddedness in social life and their positioning vis-a-vis local government varies across contexts. The examples illustrate that it is important to understand how these relations developed historically. Every context requires careful analysis of the relationships between citizens, traditional leaders and local government institutions.

Aid organisations need to understand the position of traditional leaders from a citizen's perspective; how their legitimacy is constituted and how this evolved historically. They need to understand how they maintain their authority informally, but they also need to know about existing legal constructions that stipulate their powers.

Non-state actors and parallel systems

The presence and authority of non-state actors in fragile settings is a significant issue for reconstructing local democratic governance. As mentioned before, there is rarely a complete absence of structures that organise society when a state is absent. A wide range of non-state actors is known for their role in maintaining a form of (social and political) order, security and service delivery; customary 'courts', self-help and self-protection groups, religious institutions, but also warlords, guerrillas, or *vigilantes*. These actors and institutions may provide security and services in regions that otherwise would have been unsafe. It remains an issue for debate, however, how non-state actors affect local democratic processes in the long run. It needs to be considered to what extent these institutions are supportive of or threatening democratic principles; do they favour certain groups and marginalise others, are they responsive to the needs of the population and accountable, do they support gender equality? It cannot be taken for granted that these actors reach out to marginalised people and help build inclusive societies (Kyed & Engberg-Pedersen 2008).

It is important to analyse the nature of organised non-state actors and their positioning vis-a-vis local governments. While non-state actors may compete with formal state institutions in some cases, they may actually *complement* formal state institutions and facilitate or help their performance in other cases (O'Donnell 2004). Examples are community based associations that discuss and resolve concrete issues in the community. These associations can function as forums where local government officials can tap into and be informed about local needs. They can subsequently start supporting community initiatives or take responsibilities in solving problems.

The story becomes quite different when non-state actors are armed and have the means to establish a form of order and maintain their position of authority through coercion. Gaps in the political legitimacy of the state create the conditions for such organised non-state actors to emerge. These actors will *compete* with state authority and further undermine their functioning and legitimacy (Pearce, McGee & Wheeler: forthcoming 2010).

Afghanistan is a case where multiple authority structures compete for power. Throughout history state structures have coexisted with fragmented, territorial non-state structures that resisted centralised powers. In the early 1990s, before the Taliban seized power, different militias and warlords taxed the local population in areas where they were in control (Lister 2007). Overlapping patterns of authority continue to exist today and the local population needs negotiate its way through several social-political orders. Even in this setting some citizen initiatives were possible. Community fora in Mazar-e-Sharif (Balkh province), established with support from UN Habitat, tried to develop cooperative relationships with whoever was in control. They managed to continue their activities when the Taliban by 'cultivating relationships' with Taliban officials. Pashtun members of the community fora, who originated from the same region as many Taliban, negotiated these spaces for civic engagement (Lister 2007).

> ### Multiple authorities in the *favelas*
>
> An example from **Brazil** shows that armed non-state actors can become intermediaries, or gate-keepers, between the citizens and the state. Brazil is not a fragile state, but 'pockets of fragility' exist in the slums areas (favelas) of large cities. Here, various militias are in control, which fight against existing drug cartels. Research carried out in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro shows that the municipality cannot do anything in the favelas without the permission from the militias. Also community leaders need to negotiate with the militias if they want to start any type of project in the neighbourhood. The militias enjoy legitimacy in the favelas, because they effectively repress drug trafficking and related violence. They maintain their authority, however, by not allowing any other form of authority to emerge, like non-violent community associations (Wheeler 2009).

In fragile settings, it will often be the case that spaces for civic engagement need to be negotiated with various powerful actors, not only with the state. Different contexts will have different configurations of non-state actors with certain powers. They will profoundly shape the spaces in which citizen engagement can take place. Moreover, especially in areas that are still *in* conflict, negotiation with one actor might lead to repercussions by another. Democratic transitions *after* conflict will be affected by the presence of non-state armed actors and how they emerged from the crisis; whether and how they were involved in the peace process, to what extent they were included in the peace settlement, their sub-sequent status and entitlements.

An implication for aid actors is that they need to think beyond the clear distinction between citizens and the local state and analyse the complex relationships between actors. They need to determine how to involve and relate to organised non-state actors when supporting citizens and democratic initiatives – how small these efforts may be.

5. Are processes of accountability possible in fragile settings?

Like legitimacy, accountability is seen as one of the aspects of state – citizen relations that needs to be in place for a democracy to function at every level. '*Processes of accountability are generally seen as ways to keeping a check on the exercise of power; to holding actors responsible for their actions*' (Newell 2006). It is the responsibility of powerful actors to explain and justify their decisions and the consequences. *Horizontal* accountability refers to checks and balances within the system of the state, whereas *vertical* accountability is about the accountability of governments to parliament and the citizenry. *Social accountability* is often used to claims and demands made by citizens and their associations, from the state as well as from other powerful actors such as corporations or civil society actors.

Accountability has become a central concept in debates about international aid and development from the 1990s onwards. A large body of literature addresses the mechanisms for accountability and under which conditions such mechanisms might actually work. However, little has been done to come up with frameworks that relate accountability to context (O'Neill et al. 2008). In fact, there is hardly any work done on local level accountability in fragile settings (Jackson & Scott 2008). As mechanisms for accountability are difficult to achieve in relatively stable and effective states, creating such mechanisms in fragile settings is likely to be even more challenging.

'*Accountability exists when those who set and implement a society's rules - politicians and public officials - are answerable to the people who live under those rules*'.

O'Neill et al. (2008)

Mechanisms for accountability that might work will vary according to the local context and causes of state fragility. The configuration of local actors and their openness to such mechanisms will look different in authoritarian states or states weakened by conflict. Hence the efforts to strengthen citizen voice and create mechanisms for accountability will need to adapt to the particularities of these settings.Key aspects of a citizen – state relation of accountability are shown in **Figure 1**.
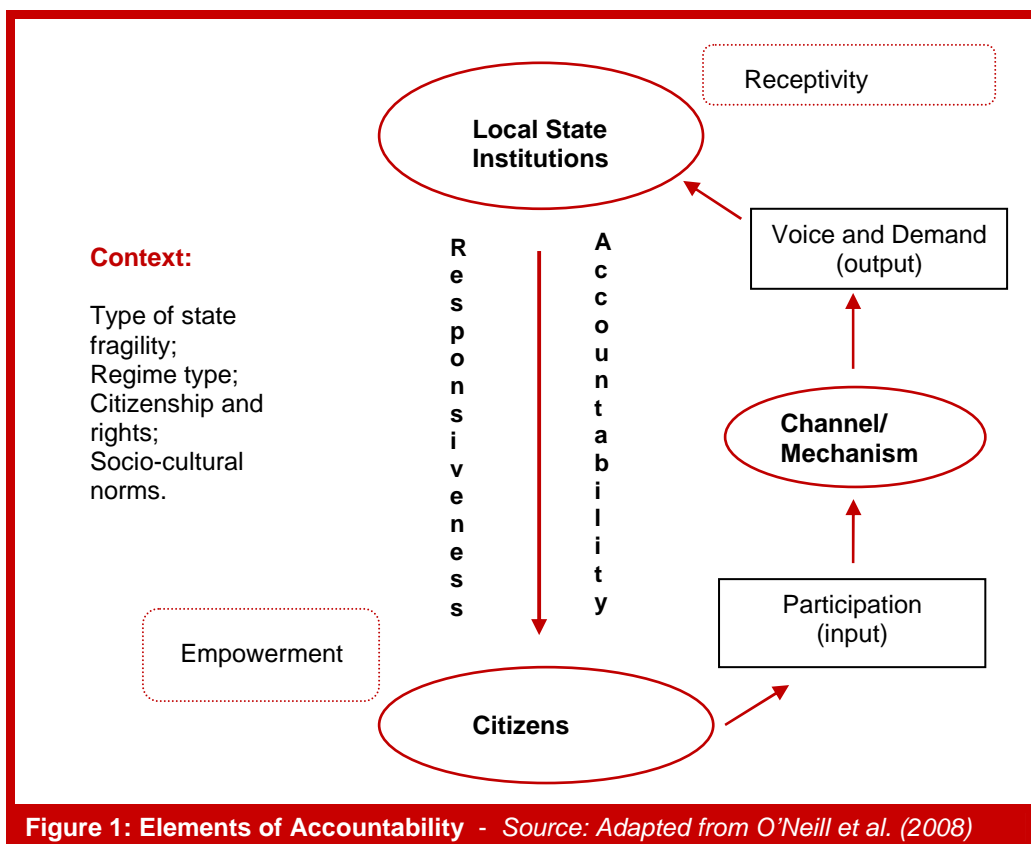

Figure 1: Elements of Accountability - *Source: Adapted from O'Neill et al. (2008)*

Literature points out that for a **voice** to be effective it needs substantial population support, adequately articulated and channels where it can be exercised. In fragile settings there are specific impediments to the exercise of voice. To speak out can be a risky undertaking and citizens may be

reluctant to exercise voice due to fear. Especially in situations where states are relatively strong but repressive or coercive, the exercise of voice could lead to repercussions. We also know that strengthening voices requires a thorough understanding of *whose* voice counts and responded to and to what extent these voices are representative of the wider population. This is even more precarious in a fragile setting. In (post)conflict settings, society is divided and characterised by deep mistrust, tension or suspicion. If certain voices are overlooked this can fuel existing tensions. Inclusiveness of voice and facilitating a dialogue in which each voice is equally heard is important in these areas. Another important lesson is that strengthening voice is not enough if state institutions do not respond (Eyben & Ladbury 2006). A study on donor supported Citizen Voice and Accountability mechanisms showed that in all case studies weak institutions, lack of government capacity and/or lack of political will were major obstructions to effective voice and the provision of accountability (Rocha Menocal & Sharma 2008). In fragile settings these problems will be even worse.

Regarding the role of local state institutions, literature points out two key features are conducive to accountability; **responsiveness** and **receptivity**. It could be argued that receptivity - the ability of the state to hear expressed concerns and the readiness to welcome voices - is largely about the political will of local governments and the extent to which they are accessible. It is a behavioural aspect (O'Neill et al. 2008), though also more technical issues such as procedures play a role. Responsiveness - the extent to which local authority actually responds to concerns and demands – will depend on both political will and technical capacities such as available resources or the discretionary powers of local governments.

The distinction between political will and technical capacity is useful for analysing different types of state fragility. *Authoritarian regimes* will not be receptive to any activity that might challenge their power and may use force to suppress such initiatives. In societies that experienced authoritarian regimes and hierarchical structures, being responsive to citizens is quite a new thing. Here, it is also new to citizens that authority can be questioned. Efforts to improve government accountability in authoritarian regimes may not book success, they can cause 'cracks in the system'. For instance in rural Mexico under the authoritarian regime of the 1980s and 1990s; an analysis of citizen actions showed that though these efforts did not survive authoritarian backlash, these experiences were used in later accountability campaigns (Fox 2007). In (*post)conflict situations* weak state capacity is a serious impediment for responsiveness, even if political will exists. Furthermore, in these settings the dichotomy between local state institutions and citizens is likely to be blurred by the presence of powerful (armed) non-state actors or the army itself, and by complex power relations that cross the state-society divide (Eyben & Ladbury 2006).

Broad-based consultative fora in Mozambique

The case of Mozambique is an example of how a participatory mechanism gradually evolved in a setting that was initially not open to sharing decision making power. In Mozambique the position of district governments had weakened due to the civil war (Jackson, 2002). The rural population was divided. In districts largely supporting FRELIMO the district governments were perceived as legitimate, whereas district governments in RENAMO support areas had serious legitimacy problems (Jackson 2002). Decentralisation had already started in 1998. A subsequent pilot was set up, which involved the allocation of budget from the province to the district as lead unit for district development. Central feature of the model were consultative meetings to which the district had to invite a wide range of local leaders, groups and aid organisations.

The consultative meetings were to address legitimacy and accountability deficits especially (Kulipossa & Manor 2007). These councils were allowed to take decisions about how to spend the budget allocated to the district. The central government was initially very reluctant to start this process, which had been mainly a UN initiative. It feared that such a radical change would threaten the political order and their powers, as it felt that its position was weak. Moreover, participatory planning would mean inviting members of the strong opposition party. It therefore allowed the project to start in a limited number of districts in one province, Nampula. When the project actually proved to strengthen government legitimacy the scope of the project was rapidly extended across Mozambique.

In fragile settings, how and through which **channels or mechanisms** voice is exercised becomes crucial. Structures and opportunities to channel voice are not static but they are continuously shifting, especially where changes in the (security) situation are the reality of the day. Examples of the more institutionalised channels for civic engagement are public hearings and consultations, village development committees and participatory district planning councils. Here, state and society actors meet and accountability is practiced. Research shows that examples of success occurred where both

the state institutions and the citizen capacity for voice were addressed within the same intervention (Rocha Menocal & Sharma 2008). Also in fragile settings, channels that allowed the interaction between citizens, local authorities and civil society organisations achieved results (Manor 2007). These findings support the argument that it is necessary to work on both side of the equation. Well-designed mechanisms offer a guided structure for negotiation and cooperation. Especially in areas where institutions were weak, an emphasis on co-responsibility was conducive to cooperative citizen – local state relations. A more confrontational strategy, making strong claims on local governments that would not have the capacity to respond, may lead to hostility as less appropriate (Galtung and Tisné 2009).

In Mozambique, the mechanism of a consultative council was key to the success of the project and improved local governance. The meetings enhanced people's understanding of the work of the district administration *and* their own civic responsibilities. The district government came out with much more understanding of local concerns and, having received extensive training as part of the project, was able to plan accordingly (Kulipossa & Manor 2007). The inclusive nature of the meetings was crucial for a growing feeling of co-responsibility and ownership of district development plans, to which all actors were willing to make an active contribution.

One conclusion from the above is that a key assumption of accountability is challenged in fragile states. Namely; all theories on accountability assume that there *is* a state in the first place, which will in some way respond to claims made by citizens. In fragile settings state actors may not be physically present at all, they are not even in control of a territory or simply too weak or dysfunctional. Manor (2007) argues that in these settings one cannot do much more than supporting the demand side of accountability; preparing the capacities for voice and engagement that can be used once state institutions start resuming their functions.

If local state institutions do exist in some form, enhancing accountable governance at local level requires engagement with local state institutions through supporting the channels for local state – citizen interaction. Strategies for establishing such mechanisms will vary across contexts. In the case of more repressive regime types, efforts will probably concentrate on creating safe spaces where voice can be exercised and opening up possibilities to link voices to the state. In less authoritarian settings it may be easier to start building coalitions and cooperative relations with government officials. For it needs to be recognised that the state is not a monolith. Different branches or officials belonging to local governments may be more or less receptive for citizens' voices and open to collaboration.

Aid agencies need to analyse in which form local state institutions are present and look for opportunities to involve *both* local state officials and citizens. This requires careful thinking about how to set up and facilitate channels through which citizen, officials and civil society can interact.

6. Challenges and opportunities for citizen participation

The ability to engage as active citizens in the wider social-political community and public sphere requires a sense of civic agency. In fragile settings, many factors are at play that pose a threat to developing a sense of agency and citizenship. This will affect the opportunities for peace building and (re)building local governance after the crisis. In this section the effects of violence and displacement will be discussed and how this affects the capacities for citizen participation.

The effects of violence and insecurity on citizenship

Kabeer and Haq (2009) indicate how active citizen engagement is about the individual citizen as well as the collective. Individual citizens need to have the capacity to question the status quo and the 'capacity to aspire', which refers to being able to imagine a different type of life. In many situations this implies that one has to overcome an internalised feeling of powerlessness and inferiority. Citizens then need to have the capacity to act upon their aspirations. The collective dimension is critical for individual citizens to acquire a sense of agency. To think and act as part of a larger collective is essential for acquiring consciousness about the situation. It is through social interactions that citizens may gain a sense of solidarity and strength, which can empower citizens to act and claim rights. Furthermore, collective action is much more likely to bring about change than individual actions. Using the individual and collective dimensions of active citizenship, we can start thinking how the experience of violent conflict affect people's attitudes, will and capacities for civic engagement in the present.

At the *individual* level, violent conflict shapes peoples' perceptions of the self as a citizen. Fear, insecurity, violent attacks, and numerous other events associated with conflict and repression result in feelings of powerlessness, marginalisation and humiliation. This has devastating consequences for a sense of civic agency, because the necessary capacities cannot be developed. People will fear to challenge powerful actors and the people that dare risk violent repercussions. Compliance or even support to the status quo is in many cases an important coping strategy. The capacity to aspire will be diminished. Even when stability returns, people cannot be expected to develop civic agency instantly. For example, years after the peace settlement one of the traditional leaders in **Mozambique** expressed that '*for him the peace agreement was no more than an interval in a conflict that could begin again at any moment'* (Jackson 2002:16). He had therefore instructed his people not to involve in district planning forum, fearing reprisals from the opposition.

The case of **Northern Uganda** demonstrates how the experience of conflict led to a feeling of being inferior citizens of Uganda. In the northern region, the Lord's Resistance Army committed large scale violent acts for over twenty years. Citizens felt abandoned by a state that failed to protect. This feeling was reinforced by the military, which also committed violence against civilians, but also by already existing ethnic and socio-economic divides between the north and south. This has fuelled mistrust in the state; even now that the region has been stable for two years, the people do not expect their government to deliver upon development needs.

To turn to the *collective* dimension, it is widely acknowledged that social relations and networks will be severely disrupted by conflict, often resulting in deep mistrust of others (Pearce 2004). This affects participation when people are reluctant to engage with one another as a result of social ties that were broken. Ongoing violence 'freezes' social interactions, which severely limits the development of associational activities through which citizens can share experience and develop capacities. In the case of **Rwanda**, deep distrust is characteristic of the society as a whole, which according to Unsworth and Uvin (2002) occurs at two levels; between the people at local level following the ethnic lines of Hutu en Tutsi, and between the people and the state. Distrust is a constraint on collective action. In addition, Rwanda has a history of authoritarian government. Also the current government is omnipresent and seeks to control civil society, which it seriously distrusts.

> Over many decades, Rwandans have learned that it is better not to stick their neck out. This mindset exists not only for ordinary people but also for members of CSOs at all levels of society. (...) Many of them lack the confidence and experience to explore available spaces and push them open wider.
>
> Unsworth and Uvin, 2002:4

CSOs play an important role in reconstructing the social fabric at local level, addressing social cohesion through reconciliation and conflict transformation programmes. Rwanda is a case in point, where aid agencies make a huge effort to reconcile different ethnic groups. This is not just necessary to create a peaceful society; strengthening social ties may indeed be a prerequisite for strengthening civic engagement in this context.

Reconciliation and conflict transformation are crucial areas of work in peace building. This work could be extended to enhancing democratic governance when rebuilding social cohesion and social networks is related to building citizenship.

The effects of displacement on citizen identity and social ties

Outbursts of violent conflict bring about high levels of displacement among the population. People may spend many years of their lives away from home, either as refugee abroad or as Internally Displaced Person (IDP) in their own country. Depending on the patterns and length of displacement, as well as the conditions people face during the period of displacement, people build up very different life experiences. These experiences have consequences for civic agency and collective action.

In **South Sudan**, there are different groups of returnees with very different life experience according to their history of displacement. A majority of the population was displaced to Northern Sudan, others

fled to Uganda and Ethiopia where they settled in host communities or refugee camps. On their return, they bring home very different experiences. These groups of displaced people have developed distinct habits and behaviours, values, or even a different first language. In areas of return, a big challenge is how these people will now live together (ODI 2008). For instance; some returnees who were in camps have had more education, and were more often exposed to HIV/Aids awareness programmes or women's rights. While the residing population recognises the value of the return of an educated group of returnees, they also denounce their behaviour as 'not really Sudanese'. Returnees from Uganda are said to have developed 'rural' habits, which are often labelled as uncivilised. Differences may become politicised. Some returnees feel discriminated against on the labour market. Moreover, there is political antagonism between those who lived in government controlled areas and those who lived in SPLA controlled areas.

In **Northern Uganda**, over 90% of the northern population was displaced to IDP camps from 2003 onwards. In the camps, a parallel governance structure of 'camp commanders' was put in place that was neither part of the government structure nor of the humanitarian aid structures. Aid agencies and district government required the IDP to select camps commanders from the IDP community. They were tasked with the registration of the camp population, food distribution lists and general camp issues such as housing and sanitation. This gave them a strong position and authority. Thus, several generations of people got used to this structure while living in the camps. Now that the IDP camps are gradually phasing out and people are returning home, it will be interesting to see how people's experience with camp commanders affects their expectations of the local governments that are resuming their functions in the region. A similar phenomenon occurred in South Sudan, where the government required the appointment of 'IDP Chiefs' in the areas where IDPs were living. This led to a new body of authority that later on in return areas caused tensions between these IDP chiefs, traditional chiefs and local governments (ODI 2008).

In sum, it can be argued that the experience of violence and displacement, resulting in feeling powerlessness and destitution, can undermine the basics requirements for citizen participation; a sense of civic agency, aspiration, the will and capacity to interact, and the experience and skills to raise a voice. Having lived in this situation for years or even decades, this will have long-lasting consequences for the way people behave once the crisis is over.

Civic engagement requires a sense of civic agency and has an individual as well as a collective dimension. The effects of violence and displacement on civic agency are often not taken into account. For CSOs to be able to support civic agency, they need to unpack and understand these effects.

When it does happen: civic engagement in fragile settings

Even in very adverse contexts small examples of social organisation can be found that foster civic engagement. Though they may be small, they could still be valuable for building experiences of civic agency. These instances can provide us ideas on how to support the people that are active and at the same time tell us about the type of spaces possible in these settings and where people apparently feel a minimum level of safety.

In many parts of **Colombia** daily life is marked by living with ongoing violence. In different parts of the country, even in the most violent towns, people did manage to get together and organise around certain issues (Pearce 2007). Women in the region *Oriente Antioquia*, a place that belongs to one of the most violent centres of the country, were supported by a Colombian NGO to form a women's organisation. Each of the women had deeply suffered the effects of war in terms of displacement, loss of family members, and living with continuous fear. The women first came together to discuss problems of sexual violence, military abuses, and violence committed by guerrillas. The NGO provided a safe space for discussing issues they feared and helped them 'recover a voice'. It enhanced their self-awareness and they felt strengthened by operating as a group. They then started to publicly challenge the abuses by violent actors. In doing so, they are reclaiming a safe public space. Factors that supported this process were the work of one NGO, which had over 20 years of experience in the region and supportive local mayors.

It is often assumed that crises, especially violent conflict, destroy all forms of associational activity. In reality, however, associational activity does continue to exist, though in different forms and usually less visible. When external aid organisations come in they may not recognise these forms of activity, after which they tend to start creating community based organisations from scratch (Jackson 2002). These may be less viable as they are not constructed on existing local values and forms of organisation. In post-war **Angola**, it was thought that civil society was virtually non-existent after years of conflict and authoritarian rule. Beneath the surface, people had started organising in

displacement camps. IDP committees had started off around IDP interests to enhance life in the camps and continued their activities after the war (Roque & Ferreira, forthcoming 2010). The committees gradually started taking issues to government, which was further stimulated by decentralisation. At the same time, government officials have participated in trainings that enhanced their knowledge of democratic institutions and their capacity to respond.

Instances of civic agency are possible in volatile settings; they emerge in safe spaces where citizens can come together, share experiences and reflect on their situation. They regain a sense of citizenship and start building the confidence and capacity to act.

7. Discussion: what role for civil society?

This paper outlined some of the complexities of local state – citizen relations in fragile settings. We need to keep in mind the differences between types of state fragility and that the conditions in these settings fluctuate over time. Violent conflict settings and post-conflict settings have different dynamics and therefore challenges to civic engagement will vary. More work needs to be done to enhance our understanding of the dynamics of civic agency and local governance in each particular setting marked by state fragility.

Key issues and implications

The issues that were elaborated in this paper have implications for aid actors, even if they do not work on democratic governance per se. Whether CSOs work 'on conflict' or 'in conflict'; in both cases they are part of a local complex reality and their activities will have implications for governance. Taking these issues into account may help aid actors to design their programmes in such ways that they can be conducive to strengthening state – society relations and help local actors re-engage in democratic processes. The key issues and implications for aid actors are listed below:

Legitimacy: State institutions gain legitimacy from various sources. We need to think beyond *out-put oriented* legitimacy and the notion that service delivery is the single most important source. *Input-oriented* legitimacy places voice and participation at the heart of a viable relation between citizens and the local state. Aid actors need to understand what constitutes legitimacy from a citizen perspective in order to help state institutions regain legitimacy of their own.

Presence of non-state actors: Fragile settings are characterised by highly complex configurations of actors and relations. Aid actors need to understand their power dynamics and authority, how they evolved historically and how they are perceived by the local population. Aid actors need to determine their own positioning and decide how to relate to organised non-state actors.

Accountability: In places where local governments are present in some form, opportunities need to be sought to strengthening both citizen's voice and state capacity. Strategies will depend on regime type and the complex power relations among all actors. Mechanisms need to be adequately facilitated, taking issues of inclusiveness and power inequalities between actors into account. Where local state institutions are not present or highly coercive, strengthening collective voice and awareness of citizenship and rights may build the foundations for future local state – citizen interactions.

Civic agency: Civic engagement requires a sense of civic agency, which has an individual as well as a collective dimension. It requires self-awareness, some extent of collectivity or shared interests among a population. To support this, it is important to understand how experiences of conflict have affected these dimensions and to know how people perceive themselves as citizens, the wider community and the state.

Safe spaces: In hostile situations, CSOs can play an important role in creating and maintaining 'safe spaces' where citizens can come together, share experiences, reflect on their situation and start building the confidence and capacity to act. In fragile settings it may be necessary to nurture civic agency in such safe spaces before linking issues to government institutions.

Approaches to local democratic governance

As Hilhorst and Van Leeuwen argued, it is important be aware how much domestic NGOs and local non-violent actors are actually able to do in very challenging settings (2005). Donors may be over-expecting or not recognize small, positive, but unexpected results. This paper now concludes with three approaches to improving local state – citizen relations in fragile settings. These three areas of work are not definite; much more work needs to be done to unravel the complexities at local level and their implications for local governance. The approaches may stimulate further thinking on how CSOs could respond to these complexities and thus improve the important work they are doing.

I. *Supporting a sense of civic agency*

Support to fragile settings should focus more on 'citizenship building'. The importance to strengthen local capacities to resolve conflict is widely acknowledged, since conflict is always manifested locally (Hilhorst and Van Leeuwen 2005). Similarly, local capacities that can drive development processes need to be strengthened. This is indeed widely recognised among CSOs. They often bring people together to discuss development problems and explore possibilities for collective action. To link these discussions to awareness of citizenship and agency is less common, however. A citizen-oriented civil society strategy emphasises improving the relationship between people and the state (Lund, Uvin & Cohen 2006). A citizen-oriented approach would emphasise strengthening capacities for voice and civic agency, referring to citizens as members of a wider socio-political community. A coherent strategy therefore places an equal emphasis on state and civil society institutions.

Several of the cases used in this paper illustrated the significance of sharing experiences and processes leading to growing self-awareness and self-confidence about civic agency.
Through interaction with others, people developed a collective awareness of their situation and prevailing problems. It did not only enhance their self-confidence, it also helped to consolidate social relations and networks that had suffered due to insecurity. In several instances local or external aid actors facilitated this process. A rights based approach was sometimes used to reflect upon the circumstances, which strengthened the people's beliefs that they should act.

Some contexts may be so instable that 'planting a seed' is all that is feasible, but even in volatile settings these efforts can help to create a basis for future social actions. Day-to-day practices of citizenship often start around small concrete issues, which nonetheless lead to improvements of daily life and thus strengthen people's understanding of agency. These instances of civic agency should be fostered, as they prepare people for when the security situation improves and opportunities for engagement with state institutions arise.

An issue for debate is in which situations CSOs can actually link their peace building activities to citizenship building and how they should go about. Considering the individual and collective dimension of civic agency, which peace building activities are suitable entry points? What is possible in hostile environments? How would it work for aid actors that work 'on conflict' and 'in conflict', are there differences?

II. *Supporting channels for engagement*

Once capacities to exercise a voice have developed, one can look for openings in the local government system to involve local officials. CSOs can play an important role in facilitating interaction between local governments and citizens, by supporting channels or mechanisms through which these interactions take place. Even in settings where mechanisms are not institutionalised, people may have developed informal practices to negotiate or even put pressure on formal institutions after which channels could be modelled (Galtung & Tisné 2009). The design of these mechanisms and processes for negotiation need very careful consideration, for they could easily become exclusive and work against the interests of already marginalised groups. Three issues require immediate attention:

- Civic engagement is about power relations; among citizens, between citizens and the state and other powerful actors, and between different layers of the state. Participation literature has pointed out the strengths, pitfalls and challenges for meaningful participation. Who has initiated the mechanism and on whose terms do participant negotiate, who is included, whose voice is heard; all these issues need to be considered when trying to link citizens to their local government institutions.
- Organised non-state actors affect the mechanisms that cross the state – society divide. It is likely that spaces need to be negotiated with any (armed) actor, state or non-state, which has authority in the area and the means to curtail spaces through coercion. CSOs decisions

about how to relate to influential non-state actors cannot be ad hoc, but require strategic thinking and thoughts about long-term consequences. This is of crucial importance in cases where non-state actors compete with state authority, armed, or if they are important to a local population while inherently undemocratic.

- The wider political environment counts. Political dynamics at higher levels are supportive or prohibitive of local state – society interactions. This underlines the importance to link local level activities to work at national level. Also, national policies and regulations determine how much decision making power local government institutions actually have. It is important to be aware of this in order to match realistic citizen demands. National policies may even provide for channels for civic engagement. Even if they do not function it is probably less useful to create new, parallel structures than trying to revitalise and improve existing mechanisms.

An issue for discussion is how channels for citizen engagement should look like in different types of fragile settings, under different regimes, and with various power constellations of state and non-state actors. What works in South Sudan does not work in Afghanistan and perhaps not even in neighbouring Northern Uganda. A thorough analysis of power relations may help to respond to the particularities of different contexts.

III. *Working with or bypassing local governments?*

One of the challenges of working in fragile settings is to consider long-term goals and strategies, while aid actors need to respond to immediate needs and continuously changing circumstances and instability. In the long run, functioning local government institutions and engaged citizens are essential for a sustainable local democracy. To strengthen the capacities and legitimacy of local government institutions it is necessary to involve them in early stage. Is this always possible in fragile settings?

In extreme cases, engaging local governments may even be a risky undertaking. A regime can be so repressive that it will not tolerate any citizen initiative and respond with increased coercion. Often a state heavily controls the spaces for participation and sets the rules for engagement, using citizen participation to reinforce its own powers. In complex volatile situations where armed non-state actors compete for authority, involving local governments may lead to repercussions and renewed insurgencies by these actors. Their presence will not allow the formal government to extend their authority or gain legitimacy. The population is then caught in between. In these cases one can do little more than protecting safe spaces where civic agency can develop and support initiatives that may help people to regain some control over their lives.

During humanitarian crises, aid agencies have to meet the immediate needs of a vulnerable population. Short-term measures need to be adopted, which in most situations leads to bypassing local governments. Where a crisis situation is sustained over time, but especially in cases where a transition to recovery takes place, other arrangements need to be considered that shift away the attention from maintaining parallel humanitarian structures to (re)building government structures. Failing to do so risks undermining the legitimacy of government institutions (Goodhand 2006; Manor 2007). Though local government institutions are likely to be weak, corrupt and unreliable, not addressing their roles and responsibilities may hamper long-term democratic processes.

If aid agencies continue to bypass local government institutions, aid actors will fail to strengthen the relations between citizens and the state. If civil society actors or other non-state actors are better in performing certain functions that actually belong to the responsibility of local governments, this may undermine the will of local state institution to improve their performance as well as their legitimacy in the eyes of the population. This was a risk in **Mozambique** where some emergency programmes were still running when the district planning model started. Several NGOs bypassed the district government to work directly with the poor communities, because district governments were considered to be corrupt. This, according to Jackson (2002) stimulated the population to attract NGO project funds. Other NGOS worked directly with district governments, but in such ways that it prompted the district government to be responsive to aid agencies rather than to other levels of government or their constituencies. This did not build the capacity of communities to negotiate with their government, nor did it stimulate district governments to engage with the population.

An issue for discussion remains *when* and *how* local government institutions are to be involved in order to build a functioning local democracy. Strengthening local government institutions is often deferred to a post-crisis stage. However, it may be necessary to address local government institutions earlier.

Bibliography

Bastian, S. & Luckham, R. (eds.) (2003) *Can democracy be designed? : the politics of institutional choice in conflict-torn societies*. London: Zed Books

Blair, H. (2000). "Participation and Accountability at the Periphery: Democratic Local Governance in Six Countries." *World Development* 28(1): 21-39.

Brinkerhoff, D. (2005) 'Re-building Governance in failed states and post-conflict societies: core concepts and cross-cutting themes.' In: *Public Administration and Development*, Vol. 25, No. 1, p. 3-14

Brinkerhoff, D. (2007) *Governance in Post-Conflict Societies. Rebuilding Fragile States.* London: Routledge

Call, C. T. and Crook, S.E. (2003) On Democratisation and Peace building. In: *Global Governance*, Vol. 9 (2003), p. 233-246

Crook, R. (2003) 'Decentralisation and Poverty Reduction in Africa: The politics of local-central relations.' In: Journal of Public Administration and Development, Vol. 23 (2003), p. 77-88

Cornwall, A. (2004) 'Spaces of Transformation? Reflections on issues of power and difference in participation in development'. In: Hickey, S. And Mohan, G. (2004) *Participation. From Tyranny to Transformation?* London/ New York: Zed Books

Cornwall, A. and Schattan Coelho, V. (eds.) (2007) *Spaces for change? The politics of Citizens Participation in New Democratic Arenas*. London: Zed Books

Englebert, P. (2002) 'Patterns and Theories of Traditional Resurgence in Tropical Africa'. In: Mondes en Développement (2002)

Eyben, R. and Ladbury, S. (2006) Building effective states: Taking a citizen's perspective. Working paper published by the Development Research Centre on Citizenship, Participation and Accountability; www.drc-citizenship.org

Ferreira and Roque, S. (forthcoming 2010) Zed Books Publication

Fox, J. (2007) *Accountability politics: power and voice in rural Mexico*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Galtung, F. and Tisné, M. (2009) 'A New Approach to Post-War Reconstruction.' In: Journal of Democracy, Vol. 20, No. 4, p.93-107

Gaventa, J. (2006) 'Triumph, Deficit or Contestation? Deepening the 'Deepening Democracy' Debate'. *IDS Working Paper* No.264. Brighton: Institute of Development Studies

Goetz, AM and Gaventa, J. (2001) 'Bringing citizen voice and client focus into service delivery', *IDS Working Pape*r, No. 138. Brighton: Institute of Development Studies

Goetz and Jenkins (2004) *Reinventing Accountability: Making Democracy Work for the Poor.* London: Macmillan/Palgrave

Goodhand, J. (2006) *Aiding Peace? The Role of NGOs in Armed Conflict*. Rugby: ITDG

Van de Haar, G.; van den Berg, D.; and Langen, E. (2009) *Local Government and the politics of Peace-building and reconstruction of fragile states: preliminary findings and discussion*. Working paper published by VNG International.

Hickey, S. & Mohan, G. (2004) Participation. From Tyranny to Transformation? London/ New York: Zed Books

Hilhorst, D. And Van Leeuwen, M. (2005) 'Grounding local peace organisations: a case study of southern Sudan.' In: *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 4 (2005), p.537-563

Hohe, T. (2004) "Local Governance after Conflict: Community Development in East Timor." In: Journal of Peacebuilding and Development. Vol 1, No. 3 (2004), p. 45-56

Inbal, A.B. & Lerner, H. (2007) 'Constitutional design, identity, and legitimacy in post-conflict reconstruction'. In: Brinkerhoff, D. (2007) *Governance in Post-Conflict Societies. Rebuilding Fragile States*. London: Routledge, p. 45-63

Jackson, D.H. (2002) "Local Governance Approach to Social Reintegration and Economic recovery in post-conflict countries: The view from Mozambique." Discussion paper for the workshop '*A Local Governance Approach to Post-Conflict Recovery'*. New York, 8 October 2001

Jackson, P. (2005) "Chiefs, Money and Politicians: Rebuilding local Government in Post-war Sierra Leone." In: Public Administration and Development, Vol. 25 (2005), p. 49-58

Jackson, P. & Scott, Z. (2008) Local Government in Post-Conflict Environments. UNDP publication for the Workshop on Local Government in Post-Conflict Situations: Challenges for Improving Local Decision Making and Service Delivery Capacities. Oslo, 28-29 November 2007

Kabeer, N. and Haq Kabir (2009) 'Citizenship Narratives in the Absence of Good Governance: Voices of the Working Poor in Bangladesh.' *IDS Working Paper*, No. 331 (July 2009). Brighton: Institute of Development Studies.

Kulipossa, F.P. and Manor, J. (2007) 'Decentralized District Planning and Finance in One Mozambican Province'. In: Manor, J. (ed.) (2007) *Aid that Works. Successful Development in Fragile States*. Washington: World Bank, p. 173-198

Kyed, H.M. and Engberg-Pedersen, L. (2008) 'Local Governance in Fragile States.' *DIIS Policy Brief*, October 2008. Copenhagen: Danish Institute for International Studies

Lister, S. And Wilder, A. (2005) 'Strengthening subnational administration in Afghanistan:
technical reform or state building?' In: *Public Administration and Development, Vol.* 25, No. 1, p. 39-48.

Logan, C. (2009) 'Selected chiefs, elected councillors and hybrid democrats: popular perspectives on the co-existence of democracy and traditional authority.' In: *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 47, No. 1 (2009), p. 101-128

Luckham, R. (2009) "Introduction: transforming Security and Development in an Unequal World". In: *IDS Bulletin* Volume 40, No 2, March 2009, p. 1 -12

Luckham, R. ; Goetz, AM.; and Kaldor, M. (2003) 'Democratic Institutions and Democratic Politics' in Bastian, S. and *Luckham, R.* (eds.) (2003) *Can democracy be designed? : the politics of institutional choice in conflict-torn societies*. London: Zed Books

Lund, M.; Uvin, P. and Cohen, S. (2006) 'What really works in preventing and rebuilding failed states.' *WWIS Occasional Paper Series*, Issue 1 (November 2006). Washington DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars

Manor, J. (ed.) (2007) *Aid that Works. Successful Development in Fragile States*. Washington: World Bank

Newell, P. (2006) 'Taking accountability into account: the debate so far.' In: Newell, P. and Wheeler, J. (eds.) (2006) *Rights, Resources and the Politics of Accountability*. London: Zed books

ODI (2008) *The Long Road Home. Opportunities and obstacles to the reintegration of IDPs and refugees returning to Southern Sudan en the Three Areas. Reports of Phase I and II*. London: ODI - Humanitarian Policy Group

Olowu, D. (2003) "Local Institutional and Political Structures and processes: Recent Experience in Africa." In: *Public Administration and Development*, Vol. 23 (2003), p. 41-52

O'Neill, T.; Foresti, M.; and Hudson, A. (2008) *Evaluation of Citizens' Voice and Accountability: Review of the Literature and Donor Approaches.* London: DFID

Partos (2008) *Conflict Transformation: a Science and an Art. Synthesis report of the thematic evaluation: 'CFAs on the road to conflict transformation'.* Evaluation carried out by South Research, Peace Research Leuven, and Ecorys (November 2008).

Pearce, J. (2004) Assessing Civil Society Participation: War and Post War contexts. *CFP Evaluation Series 2003-2006: No. 4.* MFP BreedNetwerk.

Pearce. J. (2007) 'Violence, Power, Participation: Building Citizenship in Contexts of Chronic Violence.' IDS Working Paper No. 274. Brighton: Institute of Development Studies

Pearce, J.; McGee, R.; & Wheeler, J. (forthcoming 2010) 'Violence, Democracy and Security: Exploring Perverse Interfaces'. *IDS Working Paper.* Brighton: Institute of Development Studies

Pouligny, B. (2005) 'Civil Society and Post-conflict Peacebuilding: Ambiguities of International programmes aimed at building 'New' Societies.' In: *Security Dialogue*, No. 36, p. 495-510

Risley, P. and Sisk. T.D. (2005) Democracy and United Nations Peace-building at the Local Level: Lessons Learned. Report published by International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance - IDEA

Rocha Menocal, A. and Sharma, B. (2008) *Joint Evaluation of Citizens' Voice and Accountability: Synthesis Report*. London: DFID

Roque, S. and Shankland, A. (2007) 'Participation, Mutation and Political Transition: New Democratic Spaces in Peri-urban Angola.' In: Cornwall, A. and Coelho, V.S. (eds.) (2007) *Spaces for change? The politics of Citizens Participation in New Democratic Arenas*. London: Zed Books, p. 202-225

Roque, S. and Ferreira, I. (forthcoming 2010) 'The Nucleo Representativo das Associações (NRA) do Dombe Grande: Building Democracy and Citizenship at the Local Level'. In: Von Lieres, B. and Schattan Coelho, V. (forthcoming 2010) *Mobilising for Democracy*. London: Zed Books

Steiner, Susan (2007) "Decentralisation and poverty: conceptual framework and application to Uganda." In: *Public administration and development*, 27,no.2 (2007), pp. 175-85

Unsworth, S. and Uvin, P. (2002) *A New Look at Civil Society Support in Rwanda*. Paper for Tufts University, Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy.

Wheeler, J. (2009) 'Negotiating Access for Participatory Research with Armed Actors.' In: *IDS Bulletin*, Vol. 40, No. 3, p.100-103

World Bank (2006) *Engaging Civil Society Organisations in Conflict-Affected and Fragile States. Three African Country Case Studies*. Report No. 32538-GLB. Washington DC: World Bank, Social Development Department