# Choice, Recognition and the Democracy Effects of Decentralization

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# ABSTRACT

How do 'democratic decentralization' projects and policies affect democracy? Many democratic decentralization reforms are well-crafted. Ostensibly these reforms would transfer functions and powers to elected local governments. In implementation of 'decentralization' activities, however, governments, international development agencies and large non-governmental organizations are choosing to work with a wide range of other local interlocutors, including deconcentrated agents, private bodies, customary authorities, and NGOs. However, recognition of these parallel local institutions means that fledgling local governments are receiving few public powers and face competition for legitimacy. When do these choices foster local democratic consolidation and the production of citizenship? When do they result in fragmented forms of local authority and belonging? This article draws on cases from Benin, Brazil, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Malawi, Russia, Senegal, and South Africa to explore effects of institutional choices and recognition on three dimensions of democracy: 1) representation, 2) citizenship, and 3) the public domain. It lays the groundwork for developing guidelines to evaluate project and policy interventions for their effects on local democracy.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

# ACRONYMS

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| BVC | Beach Village Committees |
| FVPP | Fundacao Viver, Produzir, Preservar |
| NGO | Non Governmental Organization |
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development |
| PROFOR | World Bank Program on Forestry |
| EGAT | USAID's Economic Growth, Agriculture and Technology |

## PREFACE

The mandate of The Swedish International Centre for Local Democracy (ICLD) is to contribute to poverty alleviation and to strengthen the individual´s freedom and rights by promoting local democracy. In order to fulfil this mandate, we offer capacity building programmes through our *International Training Programmes*, decentralized cooperation through our *Municipal Exchange Programmes* and, most importantly, knowledge management through our *Centre of Knowledge*. The Centre will document key lessons learned from our ongoing activities, initiate and fund relevant research, engage in scholarly networks, organize conferences and workshops and set up a publication series.

The paper by Jesse Ribot is the third to be published in a series from the workshop named *State of the Art of Local Governance. Challenges for the Next Decade* organized by ICLD in Visby, late April 2010. Several of the leading scholars in the field of local governance/local democracy participated in the workshop. In *Choice, Recognition and the Democracy Effects of Decentralization* Ribot explores the effects of institutional choices and recognition on three important dimensions of democracy: i) representation, ii) citizenship and iii) the public domain. The article lays the groundwork for developing guidelines to evaluate project and policy interventions for their effects on local democracy.

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# INTRODUCTION

Elected local governments have been established in many countries. In some, higher-scale intervening agents - central governments, international development agencies, large non-governmental organizations (NGOs) - choose to support elected local governments. In others they avoid them in favor of a plethora of parallel institutions. The result is a multiplication of local institutions and the cultivation of identity- and interest-based forms of inclusion over residency-based citizenship. This choice of local institutions appears to be fragmenting the local arena into competing and conflicting identity and interest groups. Through many of these choices the public domain - the material resources and decisions under public control - is being enclosed and desecularized.[1] Citizenship - the right and ability of people to shape the polities that govern them - is being narrowed.

One of the great challenges ahead for the building of effective local democracy is to furnish elected local authorities with sufficient and meaningful discretionary powers to enable them to represent their populations. Meaningful discretion in the hands of leaders will provide local populations with the motivation to engage as citizens. This article provides some theoretical background along with case examples aimed at the eventual development of institutional choice guidelines to ensure government, development agency and large-NGO policy and project interventions support rather than hinder fledgling local democratic government (see Ribot 2004;2008).

The choice by higher-scale intervening agents of the local institutions to partner with or to empower shapes three dimensions of local democracy: representation, citizenship, and the public domain. This article explores the origins and effects of the power transfers to an emerging mix of local institutions on local democracy. In particular, it focuses on transfers and non-transfers by sectoral bodies and the instrumental programmes of states and other intervening organizations. The cases cited in the article draw mostly on decentralization activities in the natural resource sectors. It argues 1) that these sectoral powers are more important than fiscal transfers that analysts of decentralization tend to focus on, 2) the transfers being made do not create discretionary spaces under representative authorities, and 3) without discretionary power in the hands of representative local authorities there is no representation or citizenship - there is no local democracy.

The vast majority of studies of democratic decentralization[2] focus on why it is promoted and legislated for or its effects on service delivery efficiency or equity (Crook &Manor 1998; Bardhan & Mookerhee 2006; Tulchin & Selee 2004; Oxhorn, Tulchin &Selee 2004; Larson &Ribot 2004). Some scholars are beginning to focus on democracy outcomes of democratic decentralization. Yet, there are still "few critical analyses of whether this localisation actually generates the expected outcomes, especially in terms of democratisation" (Harriss, Stokke &Törnquist 2004:4). Nonetheless there is an emerging literature with observations on the effects of 'democratic decentralization' on local democracy (Ribot 1999; 2003; 2004; Grindle 2007; Ribot, Chhatre &Lankina 2008; Harriss, Stokke &Törnquist

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1  In contrast to Habermas' (1991) focus on the *discursive* domain of public interaction, we emphasize the material basis of authority, that is, the powers (resources and domains of decision making) over which citizens can interact and attempt to influence public decisions.

2  Decentralization involves transfers from central government to lower levels within the political-administrative hierarchy of the state (Mawhood 1983). Since the mid 1980s, the majority of developing countries have legislated decentralization reforms (Crook and Manor, 1999; World Bank, 2000; Ndegwa, 2002). Many claim that they are undergoing 'democratic' decentralization (Ndegwa, 2002). The stated aim of these reforms is to establish and democratize local government for purposes of democratization itself and for improving service delivery, local development and resource management. While it is adequately justified on the basis that democracy is a good in itself, political and development theorists also emphasize the material benefits of local representation. Decentralization reforms - whether administrative or democratic - are believed by many theorists and practitioners to improve efficiency and equity (Mawhood, 1983; Crook and Manor, 1998).
Local decision makers are expected to be better able to decipher and respond to local needs because they are physically close to the people and are mandated to work on behalf of the whole local population (as in administrative decentralizations), or are systematically accountable to the population (as in democratic decentralizations). The general logic of decentralization is inclusive and public. It is predicated on proximity and democratic processes reducing transaction costs, producing better accountability of decision makers to the population, enabling them to better integrate across local needs, to internalize externalities, and to match decisions and resources to local needs and aspirations (Agrawal and Ribot 1999). For some counter-arguments see (Treisman, 2007; Rubin, 2005; Lankina, 2004).

2004:4) and some observations on its role in higher-scale democracy (Chhatre 2008; Grindle 2007).[3]

Decentralization reforms have legislated for the creation of elected local governments across the developing world. But these democratic decentralizations are rarely implemented in the manner that is expected to add up to local democracy. "Hence, the benefits predicted by economists, political scientists, and management specialists as consequences of decentralization provide a palette of possibilities, not of realities" (Grindle 2007:178). There are, of course, good reasons for why it is difficult to establish local democratic authorities (Ribot, Agrawal &Larson 2006; Agrawal &Ribot 1999; Grindle 2007). There are now many elected local governments in place. But, they rarely hold the powers that would enable them to respond to local needs and aspirations.

Harriss, Stokke &Törnquist (2004:6) observe that "…the test for democracy is not about the existence of formal democratic rights and institutions, but whether they have real meaning for people."[4] Such meaning in local democracy is contingent on whether democratic local institutions have anything to offer to local people. They usually do not. Mkandawire (1999 cited by Törnquist 2004:205) describes some African countries as 'choiceless democracies' due to the ways in which their discretion is constrained in the global political economy. Local or sub-national democracies are all-too-often like these choiceless national democracies. Their meaningful discretion is constrained.

It is around meaningful discretionary powers that local democracy can form. For example, Grindle (2007:17) found that, although constrained, local arena political competition in Mexico was growing and significant, and that political competition grew around the new resources provided under decentralization. In her Mexico study, civil society was able to organize, make demands for investments, and receive responses from local government (2007:125-7). But in general, local democracy is limited by the lack of resources and poor downward accountability. In natural resource sector decentralizations Ribot (2004) found in a fifteen-country comparative study that local actors either hold significant powers but are not democratic or they are accountable to their population but hold no significant powers. Neither power without downward accountability nor accountability without powers can be labeled democratic.

Many battles take place over whether to decentralize, how to structure new decentralized local governments, and what powers to transfer to them. A lot of attention is focused on fiscal transfers from central government - how much and with which stipulations. However, new fledgling local elected governments are imbued with or starved of powers through decisions made elsewhere. The allocation of significant powers is often exercised by sectoral ministries, donors, and large international and national NGOs. These institutions allocate or withhold important powers, such as the power to decide who has access to resources and markets, who has labor opportunities, who receives training, and who gets construction contracts. Transfers made by line ministries and other higher-level intervening institutions are extremely important and largely ignored by analysts of decentralization due to their

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3  Grindle (2007:2) asks "What is the meaning of decentralization for democratic governance?" Grindle (2007:7-13a) summarizes the arguments in favor of local democracy as a learning arena for democracy writ large. Some scholars argue that local participatory democracy teaches people to be "more effective at rewarding and punishing the behavior of local officials." Such participation provides an "effective 'school' for democracy, providing an arena for learning skills of deliberation and the rules that structure conflict resolution in democratic systems." "Decentralization increases the ability of citizens to select responsive public officials and hold them accountable for their performance." So, decentralization has both local and national 'democracy' effects.
4  Harriss, Stokke and Törnquist (2004:6; also see Harriss 2004) analyze the process of democracy and democratization in 'relational and contextual' terms by using Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, capital and social fields. To analyze local government, they map 'capitals' as translatable powers that enable some actors to gain legitimacy and to create an 'official version of the social world'. Their model provides the possibility of viewing external interventions as forms of capital that can be translated into authority (democratic or not) and can in turn reshape through practice the norms and institutions (habitus) that guide behavior. Here social fields are the spaces created by relations of power (capital) among interacting actors.

focus on fiscal transfers.[5] Often they withhold powers from elected local governments, often they work with or allocate to parallel institutions.

Transfers to non-government bodies that often take place in the name of decentralization are better labeled privatization, participatory or empowerment approaches, NGO and civil society support, social funds, or community-driven development (Ribot 2003; Pritchett &Woolcock2004). Each approach empowers different kinds of local institutions or authorities, with potentially different democratic and distributional outcomes. Because of support for and proliferation of local institutional forms, fledgling democratic local governments often receive few public resources or powers and must compete with a plethora of new local institutions (Ribot 1999; Namara &Nsabagasani 2003; Manor 2004; Poteete 2007:16; Larson &Ribot 2007). Democratic local government is rarely given the means - discretionary authority, technical support, equipment or finances - to represent or to engage local people in public affairs (Crook &Manor 1998; Ribot 2003). Numerous cases[6] illustrate how local government has been fettered in this manner (see Ribot 2003; Ribot &Oyono 2005; Xiaoyi 2007; Bandiaky 2008; Hara 2008; &Spierenburg et al. 2008; &Toni 2007) while others show that central government or external actors have successfully - even if not wholeheartedly - promoted greater local representation (Chhatre 2008; Larson 2008; Lankina 2008; &Ito 2007; Grindle 2007:176).

This article first examines the logic behind local 'institutional choices' and the effects on local democracy of choosing or 'recognizing' different kinds of local authorities under what are called 'decentralization reforms'. 'Institutional choice' refers to the choice of the locus of authority (actors or institutions). I use the term 'choice' to attribute agency and therefore responsibility to government and international organizations for their actions. Governments and international organizations manifest their choice of local authorities by transferring powers to them, conducting joint activities or soliciting their input. Through their choices, they are transforming the local institutional landscape.

The term 'recognition' (*à la* Taylor 1994) evokes the literature on identity politics and multiculturalism.[7] I use the concept of 'recognition' (applying it to authorities rather than individuals or their cultures and identity groups) to better understand the effects of the chosen mix of local authorities on representation, citizenship, and the public domain. Different forms of local authority imply different development and equity outcomes. *Knowing why* particular choices are being made helps to relate their outcomes back to - to interrogate and influence - the project and policy design process. *Understanding their effects* helps to identify approaches most likely to strengthen local democracy while serving the needs of local people and broader developmental objectives.

The 'choice and recognition framework' (Ribot 2006 ;2007; Ribot, Chhatre &Lankina 2008) is outlined in this article. The section below outlines my focus on recognition of authority. The following section develops the basic concepts of choice and recognition and criteria for examining their effects.

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5 These higher-scale intervening institutions allocate decision-making powers and sometimes fiscal resources that, if measured, would probably swamp the importance of direct fiscal transfers from central government to local government. This is certainly true in the environmental sectors and probably in other sectors. It is through the line ministries (their codes, decrees, orders and behaviors) that executive control is maintained over local actors and their resources. Plenty has been written on the means line ministries use to retain central control. But political scientists seem to focus on the national legislation of decentralization and its design, missing the forest of powers for a few fiscal twigs. More work is needed on how much discretionary power (not just fiscal resources) of interest to local people (like land-use decisions, road building decisions, or natural resource access) is allocated via decentralization legislation and how much is allocated via line ministries.

6 The cases discussed in this article are mostly derived from the World Resources Institute research programme entitled 'Institutional Choice and Recognition: Effects on the Formation and Consolidation of Local Democracy' conducted from 2005-2007. See Ribot 2008; Ribot, Chhatre and Lankina 2008.

7 Also see Kymlicka (2002) and Fraser (2000).

# RECOGNIZING AUTHORITY

Individuals and groups seek recognition[8] (in the sense of acknowledgement); similarly, leaders and their institutions seek to be recognized in the numerous arenas in which they operate. Hagberg (2004:200) shows how development NGOs in Burkina Faso seek recognition in multiple arenas - local, state and international.[9] Sikor and Lund (2009:1), show that 'the process of recognition of claims as property simultaneously works to imbue the institution that provides such recognition with the recognition of its authority to do so' in what they call 'the "contract" that links property and authority'. Acknowledgement by other actors is part of the process of gaining and maintaining authority. This acknowledgement is partly predicated on the ability to recognize and uphold property claims.

The holding of power - such as the ability to make and enforce decisions, rules or adjudications - shapes the ability of an authority to attract claimants and to help enforce their claims. There is a dyadic relation between property claimants and authorizing actors. But there is also a dyadic relation between local authorizing actors or authorities and the higher-level intervening agents who empower them. Their ability to authorize property claims is, at least partly, predicated on backing by the state or other institutions, having financial or technical resources needed to mobilize people or pay for services, or the ability to enable access to resources or to other authorities. These are some of the material underpinnings of local authority.

The 'politics of recognition' literature (*à la* Taylor 1994) provides means for exploring moments where one actor recognizes another as consummated through transfers of some form of power to that authority or individual. The relation does not just affect the binary relation between the higher-level actors and sub-national authorities. The state, donor or international NGO recognizes and is recognized by the local actors they seek to partner with or empower - in a kind of 'contract' that links authority and authority (cf Sikor &Lund 2009:1). That act of mutual recognition and the sharing or transfer of power - or even the harnessing of these actors as extensions of the state, donor or international agencies - subsequently reshapes the relation between the empowered actors and the populations with which they interact or which they dominate or rule (e.g. the 'dual mandate' of Lugard 1926; Chanock 1991).[10] There is a cascading recognition effect when higher-level institutions recognize more local bodies that are transforming their relations with local actors.[11]

States and national and international institutions are constantly engaged in recognizing new and existing authorities around the world - creating, strengthening and weakening them. In the process, they are producing and destroying different forms of authority and those authorities' reign over their constituent populations. Such recognition is at the heart of reforms called 'decentralization'. The recognition literature provides some insights into the effects of choices on the authorities they recognize. To leverage these insights, this article shifts the focus of the recognition debates in two ways: 1) from the recognition of *culture* and *identities* to the recognition of *authority*, and 2) from Taylor's view of recognition as enfranchisement to a more ambiguous view of recognition as having positive and

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8  I use the term recognition following Taylor (1994 and Fabian (1999). The term here is simplified to 'acknowledgement', but I choose to use it due to the useful critiques of Taylor to be addressed later in this article.

9  Hagberg (2004:200), studying locally rooted voluntary development associations in Burkina Faso, observes that "Associations need to seek recognition in three different realms. First, they seek to be recognized in the home arena so as to enjoy legitimacy and grass roots support. Second, the associations need to be officially recognized by the Burkinabe state. Third, they must seek to be recognized internationally so as to obtain funding and support."

10  In 1977, when Senegal's Rural Council system was just being established, it was already evident to one researcher that the demands of party politics would undermine popular participation. "The Rural Community could be a body that would organize and steer desired auto-centric development.  But for this, it must be removed from political controversies.  Unfortunately, it is already becoming a stake for the political parties who are trying to control its executive institution.  A politicized Rural Council is at risk of not serving the interests of the community, but those of the party(ies) from which its members are derived.  In this manner popular expression is at risk of being strangled, one more time." (André Carvalho, 1977 cited by Hesseling, n.d.:43).

11  This is partly why I have called the structures being established in the name of decentralization in the natural resources sectors in Africa a 'modern reproduction of indirect rule' (Ribot 1999).

negative consequences for democracy.[12] We find that critiques of Taylor's concept of recognition[13] by Fraser (2000), Tully (2000), Markell (2000), and Povinelli (2002) shed light on the enfranchising and disenfranchising effects of recognizing different kinds of authorities. As shown below, the recognition literature provides conceptual tools for analyzing the production of democratic local authority under democracy 'decentralization' reforms.

# THE POLITICS OF CHOICE AND RECOGNITION

This section outlines an analytical framework for evaluating the enfranchising potential of forms of local authority. It is broken into discussions of the 'politics of choice' and the 'effects of recognition'.

## The Politics of Choice

In practice, designers of democratic decentralization are choosing 1) powers to transfer, 2) means by which to make those transfers, and 3) local institutions (ostensibly democratic local government) to receive powers. Each choice has an effect on the relation between higher and lower authorities and between those lower-scale recipient authorities and their constituents. In very few reforms are appropriate and sufficient discretionary powers transferred to local institutions that are not private or dependent on and accountable to higher-scale authorities. In most transfers to elected bodies, few powers of significance are transferred other than mandates - which are often underfunded. While the choice of powers to transfer and the means of transfer[14] affect local empowerment, I focus on the choice of local institutional interlocutors.[15] Power transfers and the inclusion of local institutions in power sharing or significant decisions are viewed as the material means of institutional choice and recognition.

Under democratic decentralization reforms, the public justifications for the choices of local institutions vary widely. They include efficiency and equity arguments, democracy arguments, pro-poor agendas, virtues of civil society, superiority of community-based and/or indigenous systems, and advantages of direct participation. Lurking beside the public justifications are other interests such as donor pressure, fear of loss of power and authority, fiscal crises, political crises, maintaining privilege, or cultivating political constituencies. Understanding the rationale behind institutional choices can shed light on ways to influence decentralization policy processes. Understanding the effects of recognition helps to identify approaches most likely to foster dynamic and articulated local democracy.

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12  Including instances where the authorities being recognized are created by those recognizing them.

13  Taylor's (1994) 'politics of recognition' describes a set of tenets for redressing identity-based inequities. For Taylor, recognition redresses inequities by privileging cultures and identity groups that have been marginalized. The politics of recognition identifies marginality as a product of 'misrecognition' or prejudices against cultures and cultural forms. Taylor argues that misrecognized cultures must be 'recognized' - promoted, protected and empowered - so as to enable individual members to develop a positive image of themselves and to fulfill their potential as individuals within the broader society. Recognition, for Taylor, is an act of enfranchisement.

14  Transfers that have to be eked out of central authorities through favors and promises or that are conditional, making the receiving local institutions dependent on and accountable to the central or higher-scale bodies supporting them. Security of transfer matters deeply. As Fraser (2008:32) points out, affirmative redistribution can cultivate misrecognition by entrenching a group in a dependent relation as the needy recipient of the largess of aid. As Grindle (2007:178) observes, for local officials "…bringing down resources was a complex and time-consuming job. Discovering what programs were available, who controlled resources for them, how the resources could be used, what needed to be done to get them released, how they were to be accounted for - these were among the steps that were the routine of daily life for many mayors and department heads in the thirty research municipalities" that Grindle studied. "They also invested considerable time in developing the contacts and friendships that would make it more possible for them to gain access to these resources. … This, then, was a major focus of official municipal life…." While Grindle focuses here on the motives of the mayors, it is clear that the work they must do for access to resources makes them dependent on the political hierarchy.

15  The choice of powers to transfer matters – local governments need sufficient and meaningful discretionary powers – they can be executive, legislative and judicial. The mix of powers transferred to local institutions is often manipulated so as to minimize local discretion. Subsidiarity principles have been developed to guide the creation of a local discretionary domain (Ribot 2004).

There are multiple ways to explain institutional choice. Ostrom (1990) makes a public choice argument that the mix of institutions reflects the aggregate aspirations of individuals maximizing their own good. Bates (1981) shows that political actors select authorities and institutions to meet their own narrow economic and political interests (also see Frye 1997). Törnquist (2004:211) notes that local institutional arrangements can be chosen to circumvent party and political clientelism. Some authors show that local institutions have a role in choosing themselves and imposing themselves on emerging opportunities and decision-making processes (Eckert 2006; Boone 2003; von Benda Beckmann and von Benda-Beckmann 2006; Gaventa 2002). Clearly all of these processes are at play.

Chhatre (2008) Hara (2008) Toni (2007) and Ito (2007) describe how in India, Malawi, Brazil and Indonesia policies and decisions of higher-level authorities, with or without influence of local citizens, result in the creation, selection or appointment of specific authorities and/or enable local actors to engage or capture new opportunities. In Himachal Pradesh, India, legislators chose to work with *panchayats* because local people had opted to use the *panchayats* as a channel to influence the pradesh environment minister. Local people chose *panchayats* for their political connections and their emerging powers under decentralization reforms. Chhatre describes this political 'virtuous circle' linking people to *panchayats* and *panchayats* to legislators as 'political articulation.' (Chhatre 2008.)

In Mangochi District, Malawi, headmen in the villages traditionally played a mediating role in fisheries decisions. The Fisheries Department with donor support, however, created elected committees to represent the whole population of each fishing village in order to balance the interests of fishers. Subsequent to the creation of BVCs, Malawi's decentralization laws created elected District Assemblies with the power to manage fisheries. The new laws would require transfer supervision over BVCs from the Fisheries Department to the District Assemblies. However, this transfer was prevented by opposition from Members of Parliament who were threatened by the creation of District Assemblies. Further, the Fisheries Department did not trust the BVCs enough to give them significant powers - starving them of authority. Central government had no interest in empowering the District Assemblies enough to allow sectoral committees - fisheries in this case - to be transferred out of the centrally controlled fisheries line ministry. Parliament had no interest in allowing District Assemblies to even come into being. Donors did not trust district authorities enough to allow elected district representatives to control the BVCs. The result was a weak BVC functioning outside of the legal framework of decentralized but powerless democratic district institutions. (Hara 2008.)

In Para, Brazil, donors and central government avoided local governments, arguing that local government was dominated by elite interests (such as ranchers and loggers) and was not worth working with. Toni (2007) describes how mayors and councilors were sidelined by donors even in the exceptional localities where candidates from the pro-poor ruling-party were elected. Donors' mistrust of local authorities precludes their working through these bodies; NGOs were given preferential treatment and resources. Although the ruling-party allied NGO FVPP (Fundacao Viver, Produzir, Preservar), representing some100 grassroots movements, cared about the interests of the poor, Toni questions the degree to which FVPP is a 'grassroots' body. He points out that FVPP is used by the government as a 'paid service sector' provider and is accountable primarily to bodies within the government (also see Resosudarmo 2005). Donors chose NGOs arguing that they wanted to cultivate civil society and social capital. Toni also shows how Ministry of the Environment and donor discourse that local governments' lack capacity is not reflected in practice in agriculture and forest management.

In the Bandung district of Java, Indonesia, powers and resources were successfully transferred to popularly elected district governments, opening new opportunities to influence policy and its implementation at the district (*bupati*) level. There has been a clear opening of space for political competition in which village heads have gained a significant influence in district electoral politics. Despite advances resulting from this decentralization, Ito (2007) shows that a civil-society approach to local democracy chosen by the district heads is excluding poor and marginal populations from democratic decision making resulting in investments that serve elites while ignoring the demands of the poor. The *bupati* and district bureaucrats justify working with elites on grounds of efficiency - getting the

work done. Rather than a broad cross-section of civil society working with local government in a voluntary and broad-based manner, aligned participants are selected and cultivated. The chosen civil-society organizations do not represent a broad cross-section of local society. The alignment of district government with the elite reduced public participation, hemming in the public domain by reserving public decisions for a narrow elite. Ito argues that the stratifying effects of the choices of the *bupati* were obscured by the positive civil society discourse of international development institutions (Ito 2007).

In these cases, local institutions, and the forms of representation, belonging and public space they produce, emerge through policy choices. The dilemmas and choices faced by policy elites (decision makers, policy makers, policy planners and other political and administrative officials with policy responsibilities) are critical to understanding policy change (Grindle 2007:3). Bates' (1981) notion of 'institutional choice' is useful for bringing attention to the motives and actions of the central authorities that are crafting decentralizations, and, in the process, shaping the local institutional landscape. Bates (1981) argued that governments *choose* among policy options based on political utility. For example, they choose to create allocative and rent-seeking opportunities that will help them to consolidate their own political and economic power. Following Bates' approach, decentralization researchers can unpack the explicit and implicit logics governments and international organizations use to choose their local interlocutors. Understanding the politics of choice - why decision makers choose the institutions they choose - requires an understanding of both stated and unstated objectives, the understandings of the logic and beliefs informing decision makers' choices, and their awareness of the effects of these choices. Applying Bates' analysis of policy logic with Taylor's 'politics of recognition' enables a thorough analysis of the motives behind acts of recognition from above and their effects.

## The Effects of Recognition

Governments and international organizations usually emphasize development outcomes when promoting decentralization, and many also give high billing to participation and democracy outcomes. They also often evoke improved environmental management or other sectoral efficiency improvements. But the results of their institutional choices on development, the environment or on the emergence and consolidation of local democracy usually differ from stated objectives or expected outcomes.[16] How can we analyze whether the mix of recognized institutions is helping to establish, strengthen or consolidate local democracy?

The 'politics of choice and recognition' framework extends the discussion of 'recognition' to institutions. Like the recognition of culture or individuals, the recognition of local institutions or authorities confers power and legitimacy, and cultivates identities and forms of belonging. The choice of local authorities or organizations by government or international agencies is a form of recognition. Following Markell (2000:496) 'recognition' is something used to refer not to the successful cognition of an already-existing thing, but to the constructive act through which recognition's very object is shaped or brought into being' (Also see Fabian 1999). This recognition takes place through the transfer of powers, partnering in projects, engagement through contracts, or via participation in dialogue and decision making. Recognition strengthens the chosen authorities and organizations with resources and backing, reinforcing the forms of belonging these local institutions engender and the identities of their members. In doing so, recognition shapes three key aspects of democracy discussed below: representation, citizenship and public domain.

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16   Despite the extreme difficulty in establishing links between institutional arrangements and development or ecological outcomes, a body of data is emerging (World Bank, 2000; Conyers, 2002; Mansuri and Rao, 2003; Foster and Rosenzweig, 2004; Heller et al., 2007; Ribot, Treue and Lund 2010; Phelps, Webb and Agrawal 2010).

## Representation

In recent decades many institutions have been created or cultivated with the purpose of increasing popular participation and empowerment in planning and decision making (Fung &Wright 2003; Fung 2003).[17] While increased participation may have democratic characteristics by bringing a broader cross-section of the population into decision making, participatory processes are often neither representative nor binding (Mosse 2001). Following Manin, Przeworski &Stokes (1999), democratic representation occurs when leaders are both responsive and accountable to the people. Accountability is achieved through positive and negative *sanctions* and is a defining characteristic of democracy. Responsiveness requires leaders with *powers* - the discretionary power to translate needs and aspirations into policy and policy into practice (Ribot 2003; Pritchett &Woolcock 2004). So, to be democratic, institutions must be representative: accountable to the people and empowered to respond.

In decentralization and other local development interventions, outside authorities choose to work with, and therefore recognize, local authorities. In doing so, they cultivate these authorities, strengthening and legitimating them. But how representative are the chosen institutions? In current decentralizations - even those called 'democratic' - governments and international donors are largely choosing to avoid elected local government in favor of other institutions (see Hara 2008; Bandiaky 2008; Toni 2007; Romeo 1996; Agrawal &Ribot, 1999; Manor 2004; and for exceptions, see Lankina 2008; and Lankina &Getachew, 2006). This choice is critical in that it deprives local elected authorities of the powers transferred to the local arena while empowering alternative or so-called 'parallel' authorities. Empowering local line-ministry offices, NGOs, customary chiefs, and private corporations can de-legitimate elected local authorities while legitimating parallel bodies. Elected local government is forced to compete and struggle with other local institutions for the legitimacy that follows from control of public decisions and service delivery.

Representative local authorities can be strengthened through recognition (Lankina 2008). They may be weakened, however, 1) if they receive too little power to be effective (Bandiaky 2008; Hara 2008; Larson 2008; Spierenburg et al. 2008; Toni 2007), or 2) if parallel institutions overshadow or pre-empt their ability to serve public interest (Hara 2008; Bandiaky 2008; and Toni 2007). Manor (2004) describes the democracy effects of under-funded local governments with a mandate to manage natural resources operating in an arena with over-funded environment committees. Transferring public powers to parallel authorities in the local arena can take powers away from, and produce competition with, democratic local government. That competition can be divisive (Toni 2007) or it may lead to more efficiency and better representation all around (Chhatre 2008; Ito 2007). It can undermine the legitimacy of local democratic authorities while producing conditions for elite capture, or it may produce a pluralism of competition and cooperation that helps establish and thicken civil society and articulation between society and government (Chhatre 2008; Lankina 2008).[18]

The recognition of cultural authorities provides insights for analysis of democracy outcomes. Fraser (2000) argues that Taylor's recognition of specific 'misrecognized' groups, '…insofar as it reifies group identities, … risks sanctioning violations of human rights and freezing the very antagonisms it purports to mediate.' By reifying culture, Fraser (2000:112) suggests, the politics of recognition places '…moral pressure on individual members to conform to a given group culture. Cultural dissonance and experimentation are accordingly discouraged, when they are not simply equated with disloyalty. So too is cultural criticism, including efforts to explore intragroup divisions, such as those of gender, sexuality and class'. Fraser (2000:108-111) argues that privileging culture and identity diverts attention from the material and social bases of distribution, potentially reinforcing material injustices.

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17  Fung (2003) writes, however, on participation of civil society and of people within civil society in processes of decision making. He does not, however, seem to view representative forms of government as sufficient or even necessary to the democratic processes.

18  This is not to deny the importance of competition between public and private agencies or local governments for efficient provision of public services (see Lankina, Hudalla and Wollmann, 2008).

Recognizing identity and interest-based authorities imposes their notions of culture and their interest on those under their rule - similarly suppressing intra-group difference (also see Mamdani 1996). Indeed, by reifying group identity, recognition obscures internal cultural differences and subordinates the '…struggles within the group for the authority - and the power - to represent it' (Fraser 2000:112; also see Povinelli 2002:6-13).

These critiques are not limited to instances where culture-based injustices are redressed through strengthening of cultural identities or privileging of one cultural form over another. These critiques apply to any reforms where powers are transferred to local authorities - identity-based, interest-based or residency based. Recognition is not merely an act of acknowledging an existing identity or authority; recognition creates or enforces that authority (Markell 2000:496-7), and therefore must be analyzed as a political act with profound consequences for democracy. The transfer of material powers or backing to an authority is based on some 'recognition' of the recipient authority - its consistency with or mutual visions of the giving authority's worldview or objectives. The transfer then re-enforces or transforms that authority, enabling that authority to define the breadth of belonging and the forms of rule to which its constituents are subjected.

Empowering of customary or indigenous authorities illustrates these points. The desire to privilege 'misrecognized' cultures often drives international development interventions. Across Sub-Saharan Africa, South-East Asia, and Latin America, for example, 'indigenous', 'customary' and 'traditional' authorities are making a political comeback (Geschiere &Boone 2003; von Benda-Beckmann et al. 2003, Larson 2008). This re-emergence is at least partly cultivated from above - a result of government, donors and international NGOs recognizing the authority of chiefs and headmen. The re-emergence of customary authority is so widespread and takes so many forms that it must also be attributed to particular local histories reshaped by global changes that give new life to traditional forms of belonging and identity (Engelbert 2002). Important blind spots, however, are evident in development approaches that favor indigeneity. First, political analysis and judgment of indigenous governance systems are rarely featured in the new approaches (a new kind of 'anti-politics', à la Ferguson 1994). Second, custom and customary authority are conflated, such that customary authorities are favored rather than custom itself (also see Moore 1986; Chanock 1991).

But not everything indigenous is 'good'. Many of the 'indigenous' governance systems, when analyzed as *political systems* rather than being viewed as *cultural forms*, would be labeled autocratic, despotic, oppressive, patriarchal, gender biased, or gerontocratic. Some indigenous cultures condone and continue forms of servitude and slavery. But when we call them 'indigenous', it is as if suddenly the nature of authority and governance is obscured behind a fog of cultural relativism. Those who favor cultural groups and indigenous peoples do not want to judge them. The confusion is deepened since many cultural or indigenous authorities are substantively democratic and do indeed work on behalf of their people (Larson 2008; Spierenburg et al. 2008; Spierenburg 1995; Olowu et al. 2004), while elected local governments often marginalize the poor, women, indigenous peoples, and lower castes (Agrawal &Gupta 2005; Crook &Manor 1998; Crook &Sverrisson 2001). Where communities are already highly stratified along the lines of power, income, wealth, and social status, recognizing local governments can have the effect of 'obscuring internal differences' within the village, thereby further marginalizing lower castes (Agrawal &Gupta, 2005).

Clearly, authority should not be legitimized just because it is labeled 'democratic', 'customary' or 'indigenous', nor should power over the public domain be transferred uncritically to NGOs or private bodies. While elected local government is often scrutinized, the terms 'culture', 'private' or 'NGO' should not provide protection from political analysis - even if these authorities are locally 'legitimate' or considered 'authentic' (see Ntsebeza 2005). To avoid double standards, cultural and political authorities as well as civil society, community and private leaders should be viewed in the same critical light. This critical equity provides a starting point for a dialogue among cultural and political stances. All local authorities need to be evaluated for how they represent people, encourage citizenship and produce an engaging public domain.

## Citizenship

Recognition of different kinds of authorities and organizations entails different forms of belonging (Lankina 2008; Larson 2008; Bandiaky 2008; Toni 2007). Under democratic authorities, belonging is inclusive of those who reside in a jurisdiction - residency-based citizenship. In liberal democracies, citizenship is usually associated with entitlement to certain civil, social, and political rights irrespective of one's identity and interests (Sparke 2004). But, 'rather than merely focusing on citizenship as legal rights', Isin and Turner (2002:4) argue that "there is now agreement that citizenship must also be defined as a social process through which individual and social groups engaged in claiming, expanding or losing rights." Citizenship has come to be a process of being politically engaged and of shaping the fate of the polity in which one is involved (Isin and Turner 2002).

Sikor and Lund (2009:8) bring together property rights and citizen rights (as two aspects of social life *avoir* and *être*) that exist "only to the extent that they are produced, endorsed and sanctioned by some form of legitimate authority." "As authority grants or denies legitimacy to property claims, such claims are intimately bound up with the scope and constitution of authority. The two form a contract of mutual recognition" (Sikor &Lund 2009:9). Authority is legitimized and sanctioned at least partly in so far as it can support such claims.[19]

Power transfers to local interlocutors both empower and legitimize them as authorities - providing a material basis of their ability to authorize. Power transfers authorize. Hence there are also contracts among authorities of different scales such that one recognizes the other and in the process produces the other's authority. In return there is some presumption that the acts of a lower-level authority will be recognized by the higher-scale authority and will promote its vision and agenda. Empowering a local authority gives it a role and resources, making it worth engaging, giving people a reason to belong and to exert influence. Authorities that are open to influence foster citizenship, while those that impose their will and are less inviting of engagement may produce subjects.[20]

Different authorities authorize different forms of belonging. Residency-based citizenship is an inclusive form of belonging associated with democratic authorities who are ostensibly open to influence by the resident population. In private groups and NGOs, belonging is more narrow, based on interest - often class or objective driven. Membership in these organizations can also be based on identity, such as profession or any other entry criteria the leaders or members (in the case of democratically run private institutions) establish. In customary and religious institutions, membership is often based on identity - such as ethnicity, place of origin, language, or religion. Self-appointed or hereditary, private and customary leaders may be less systematically accountable to their members.

Different kinds of authorities confer different rights and offer diffrent kinds of recourse - they are accountable to the population to different degrees. Under some authorities people are citizens - with rights and recourse - under others they are managed as subjects (Mamdani 1996). Citizenship emerges where there are empowered and downwardly accountable authorities - worth engaging and open to engagement. Choosing the locus of authority establishes, strengthens or weakens citizenship. Where public resources are channeled into private bodies or autocratic authorities, the scope for citizen engagement is diminished.

## Public Domain

Without powers, no authorities are worth influencing - even if they are accountable. A 'domain' is that which is dominated by an authority. The public domain consists of the powers (resources and decisions) held, or citizen rights defended by, a public authority. It is the set of political powers vis-à-vis which citizens are able and entitled to

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19  Hagberg (2004:205) describes "The president of a given association must round his legitimacy not only in his leadership skills and access to funding but also in other powerful registers linked to origin, ethnicity and family. The success of the leader will depend upon the aptitude to combine such different registers of power and legitimacy." The choice of local interlocutors is partly a choice of actors who appeal to these forms of legitimacy and therefore these forms of belonging.

20  Engagement does not have to be invited. Resistance is also a form of engagement that is used to confront imposed authority. Resistance too is part of the production of citizenship – the ability to influence governing authorities.

influence public authorities. Retaining powers in the public domain maintains and reinforces public belonging in, and citizen identification with, the public authorities and with other citizens in the polity. Conversely, privatizing public resources and powers to individuals, corporations, customary authorities or NGOs diminishes the public domain. Such enclosure shrinks the integrative space of democratic public interaction. Without public powers there is no space of democracy - there is no 'public domain' for citizens to engage in.

In Senegal, for example, Hesseling (n.d.) observed in the 1970s that while local government was elected, the state had given it too little power to have a meaningful relation with local populations, noting that they had nothing to offer. There was no public domain, no citizenship and no democracy. A 1996 decentralization law and 1998 forestry law gave elected rural councils considerable authority over forest exploitation and management. But since the forest service never allowed the councils to exercise these powers, the elected authorities remain powerless and frustrated that they cannot respond to local needs. The foresters (supported by USAID and World Bank forest management projects) created committees - often headed by traditional authorities - to manage the forests rather than allowing the councils to exercise their legal rights (Bandiaky 2008; Faye 2006). There is still little they can offer their communities and community members do not engage them on forestry matters. (Ribot 2009; Larson &Ribot 2007).

In decentralizations, the choice to allocate public powers among multiple interest and identity groups may enclose the public domain and fragment society into interest- and identity-based forms of belonging by taking those powers from public authorities. The privatization of public powers to NGOs and other private bodies is a form of enclosure. When actors receiving these powers are customary or religious authorities, this enclosure constitutes a desecularization of powers. These acts diminish the domain of integrative public action, undermining residency-based belonging and citizenship. A public domain is a necessary part of representation and of the production of citizenship. It is the space of integrative collective action that constitutes democracy. For decentralizations to produce benefits in equity, efficiency, and democratization, retaining substantial public powers in the public domain is essential.[21]

In Mexico citizens were able to organize and demand benefits when local government had new resources with which to offer services – this created new spaces of citizen engagement (Grindle 2007: 175). This is the kind of space that intervening agents must create if local democracy is to take root.

## DISCUSSION and CONCLUSION

The institutional choice and recognition framework has been for comparative multi-case research to interrogate the democracy effects of recognition of local institutions and authorities (elected local government, pluralism, privatization, NGOism, support for customary chiefs) (the results are summarized in Ribot, Chhatre &Lankina, 2008).[22] By examining the effects of choosing these different institutions in decentralizations, researchers examined the propositions that: 1) the support given to local authorities privileges and strengthens them - whether their constituencies are residency, identity or interest based, and 2) when governments and international agencies empower local authorities, they are enforcing upon the members of the groups the particular forms of comportment,

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21  Törnquist (2004:207) argues that radical policentrists promote "…wider and more institutionalised public spaces than the Habermasian coffee shop discussions and media debates, where people who are active in various citizen organisations and self-managed activities can meet, deliberate, and communicate directly with the politicians and local administrators as well as take basic decisions with regard to local government priorities." Such organizations are important. But the motive for such 'radical polycentrism' to emerge will be the significance of the decisions they can hope to influence - if local governments have the resources and capabilities to act, then the people are likely to attempt to make them act; if not, then there is no public domain. When I talk of the public domain I am not talking of the public sphere of Habermas. I am talking of the material decisions and resources over which interested parties engage.

22  This research took place through the World Resources Institute's comparative research program, 'Institutional Choice and Recognition in Natural Resource Decentralization (see Ribot 2008; Ribot, Chhatre and Lankins 2008).

accountability relations, belonging, and beliefs of the chosen authorities. The cases from this comparative study have been cited in the above discussion and provide some preliminary data on the ways in which institutional choices are made within 'decentralization' reforms and how they shape representation, citizenship and the public domain.

The governments of India, Brazil, Indonesia, Russia, Guatemala, Benin, Senegal, Malawi and South Africa have launched processes ostensibly designed to enable local people to govern their own affairs (Ribot, Chhatre &Lankina, 2008). In all of these case central government, donors or development professionals proclaimed a belief in democratic local government. This belief seems to have driven choices in India, Indonesia, Russia and Guatemala. In Brazil, Guatemala and Malawi mistrust of local government, however, compelled politicians, government agencies and donors to choose alternative local authorities. Mobilization of a union social movement in Brazil and an indigenous social movement in Guatemala, instrumental management objectives in Malawi, Benin and Senegal, belief in civil society in Brazil, Indonesia and Senegal, and a line ministry's support for group rights in South Africa drove the choice toward parallel local authorities. The outcomes of these choices were mixed. Recognition of local government in India, Indonesia, Russia and Guatemala helped local governments to become relevant and more representative. In Brazil, Malawi, Benin and Senegal, the circumvention of elected local government channelled resources into 'deconcentrated' project committees and other private 'civil society' organizations. In South Africa, recognition of collective private rights produced a democratically chosen ethnic leader.

The empowerment of local government in India and Indonesia illustrates how democratic competition shapes the political articulation of citizens with the state (see Chhatre 2008; Ito 2007). While in India citizen engagement is broad based, in Indonesia engagement is between the state and a narrow elite. This narrow engagement followed from a selective civil-society approach to local democracy in which policy makers choose or cultivate an elite state-allied civil society. Ito (2007) in Indonesia shows the limits of a 'civil-society' approach to local democracy and development, increasing competition to influence decentralized public office could, over time, generate incentives for elite to expand social inclusion, providing opportunities to poor villagers to influence policy. As Chhatre (2008) argues, competitive elections at multiple levels over time and several electoral cycles are needed for articulation to trickle down to the most marginalized sections of society. Lankina (2008) also shows how the struggle for local power in Russia has engaged deputies with the population in a more articulated political struggle. The governor, aligned with the Kremlin, is at odds with municipal deputies who are actively cultivating a local citizenry and appealing to European donors and governance standards as part of their struggle to consolidate their locality's political power and autonomy.

The selective civil-society approach was also used in project implementation by the forestry and fisheries departments in Senegal, Malawi and Benin where projects produced 'civil society' committees composed of hand-picked local actors allied with project objectives. In these and the Indonesia case, civil society approaches are used to selectively empower class, party, ethnic and gendered allies, reproducing and entrenching existing social stratification. This civil-society approach is not enabling all groups within society to influence governance on an equal basis. In Brazil, however, the state chose an arguably pro-poor local union movement as its institutional ally and in Guatemala the self-selected indigenous leaders did effectively protect the interests of their marginalized population. Where civil society emerged from social movements, it appears that a civil-society approach was effective at broad-based representation and serving the interests of the poor. Similarly, in Chhatre's (2008) India case, a locally constituted social movement against a forestry project articulated broad-based representation through local government - the *panchayat*.

Democratic deepening is shaped by the way 'unequal social relations and uneven institutional environments impinge upon the exercise of citizenship' (Heller et al. 2007:627). In most of the case studies, transferred powers - whether discretionary or merely the implementation of mandates - follow the contours of existing divisions and inequalities shaping national and local politics. The powers took on the contours of a balanced political competition

in Himachal Pradesh, India (Chhatre 2008). They divided along party lines in Para, Brazil.[23] They articulated via class divisions in Bandung, Indonesia (Ito 2007). They fractured along indigenous and settler-integrationist lines in Guatemala (Larson 2008). Where few discretionary powers are transferred, as in Benin and Senegal, project funds and interventions still flow along lines of traditional ethnic and gender hierarchies (Mongbo 2008; Bandiaky 2008). Agrawal and Gupta (2005) argue that decentralization can exacerbate existing socio-economic inequality unless decentralization programmes are specifically biased towards disadvantaged groups, rather than being formally neutral in their design and implementation. Bandiaky (2008) also shows that gender biases are not addressed by gender-neutral projects and argues for skewing recognition toward women and other marginalized groups.

The cases reviewed for this article show that distributive aspects of recognition are not solely local. Mechanisms are needed to ensure that marginal populations can engage in their own governance. Local and central government play roles in assuring both inclusion and empowerment of marginal groups. In Indonesia the choice of elite civil society is biasing distribution by channeling investments toward elite interests (Ito 2007). In Guatemala and South Africa, however, it appears that marginal populations are being served by their own local institutions, while in South Africa that success came with the support of the central government's land commission (Larson 2008; Spierenburg et al. 2008). When does local authority or local democracy serve the poor? Are Crook and Sverrisson (2001) right that local democracy does not serve the poor without a central mandate to do so? How significant is Foster and Rozenzweig's (2004) research showing that democratic local governments in India are more pro-poor than autocratic local authorities or Heller et al.'s (2007) findings that all categories of respondents - including farmers, unions, scheduled castes and women found improved service delivery following democratic decentralization reforms? Clearly, democratic decentralization can serve the poor, but targeting women, low castes, and underprivileged groups with focused attention on biased hierarchy is probably a needed complement to any local authority if local democracy is to redress entrenched inequity (also see Mansuri &Rao 2003:11-14; and Heller et al. 2007:629; Crook &Sverrisson 2001).

Recognition of representative authorities can provide for representation of diverse interests. Recognition of non-representative authorities can subject individuals to the cultural or ideological vagaries of those authorities. Many struggles for recognition and many acts of acknowledgement uncritically recognize non-representative authorities. Tully (2000:477) points out that struggles over recognition and distribution must be subject to 'democratic disagreement, dispute, negotiation, amendment, implementation, review, and further disagreement'. To remain democratic, these struggles need to be subordinated to democratic authority. 'A free and democratic society will be legitimate even though its rules of recognition harbor elements of injustice and non-consensus if the citizens are always free to enter into processes of contestation and negotiation of the rules of recognition' (Tully 2000:477). But rules are not easily contestable when chosen authorities are non-democratic and the choice of those authorities is imposed by inaccessible higher authorities. The central irony of the common practice of recognizing cultural authorities - chiefs, indigenous or ethnic leaders - in the name of freedom or democracy is that this recognition can constrain the very contestation that makes a society free and democratic.

More than the 'democratic disagreement, dispute, negotiation, amendment, implementation, review, and further disagreement' of Tully (2000) or progressive targeting of the poor, of women and of marginalized castes and ethnicities are required. Criteria are needed to judge the likely human rights and material equity effects of choosing particular authorities. Fraser (2000:115) does so by proposing the ideal of 'participatory parity', by which all citizens and citizen groups, regardless of identity, must have equal opportunity to participate in democratic institutions. In the institutions chosen by governments and international organizations, inclusive parity is not always evident. Chosen

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23 Toni (2007) shows how in Para, Brazil, the national ruling party, local government authorities, and donors marginalize elected local government. Brazil's ruling party is supported by a union-based social movement while local government authorities are dominated by an opposition party. Central government and donors funded the union movement while sidelining even the few elected pro-poor ruling-party mayors or councillors due to the political history and a general mistrust of local governments.

authorities are enabled to recognize other actors as authentic, or to discipline those they consider inauthentic. They are able to determine who belongs and who does not. In the cases explored in this article, chosen actors are shaping who belongs and benefits - they are choosing by gender, migrant status, indigenousness, ethnicity and by interest. Recognition is enabling cultural and non-cultural authorities who can in turn shape the boundaries of inclusion and determine what resources and decisions are made by a broad public and which are to serve individual and collective private ends. To produce and maintain the 'opportunity' for equal inclusion will require the production of a meaningful public domain with built in bias that favor poor and marginal groups.

To many practitioners of development it does not seem obvious that neither elections without power transfers nor the devolution of power without popular accountability constitute local democracy. Simple guidelines for policy and project design and implementation, as well as for monitoring and evaluation, are necessary to ensure that interventions support representation, citizenship and the development of a public domain. The common framework for design and evaluation of decentralization that characterizes it as a combination of administrative, political and fiscal transfers has little analytic purchase. Decentralization is, in its most basic form, constituted of local actors who hold meaningful discretionary powers and who are accountable to a broad cross-section the local population (Agrawal &Ribot, 1999). Meaningful discretion in the hands of downwardly accountable local authorities creates a public domain while making citizenship meaningful and possible. Training attention on the logic of institutional choice and its effects can help us to understand why democracy is created or hindered while attention to the effects of recognition can help foster democracy outcomes - creation of a public domain, representation and engagement of citizens.

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