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## [DYNAMICS BETWEEN DECENTRALISATION AND PEACE BUILDING ]

This paper gives food for discussion about the dynamics between decentralisation and peace building. It is stated that both decentralisation and peace building are means to create an integrated society. After distinguishing four dimensions of decentralisation we continue with a reflection on the necessities for the implementation of decentralisation. Three general reflections follow, before going into depth about the special care the implementation in post-conflict areas takes. Besides describing some risks of decentralisation, questions are raised about home grown solutions and the role of the international community.

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## Discussion paper Decentralisation and Peace building

### 1. Introduction

What is the relationship between decentralization and peace building? And when does the first contribute to the last? When it comes to state building processes the international community seems to easily assume that decentralization among many things directly leads to peace building. Practice however shows us that this is not always, and only under certain circumstances, the case. In this paper we search for the dynamics between decentralization and peace building and look for conditions under which decentralization contributes to peace building.

#### Central question

A lot of literature has been written about conditions for decentralization and structures of well designed decentralisation processes. Is the law consistent? How should the national and local government (inter)act? What are the best governance structures to result in the best decentralisation? Political and administrative conditions are taken as the starting point of discussion. Decentralisation then serves the aim of good governance. In this paper our focus however is on peace building. How can decentralisation serve as a peace enabler? What is needed for successful decentralization processes in a (post)conflict context?

Importantly, decentralisation is a means to an end and not the end in itself. The question we need to ask ourselves is why do we want to implement decentralisation? Interestingly central concepts in both peace building literature and decentralization discourses coincide. Common conditions are for instance: accountability, subsidiarity, social cohesion and inclusivity or citizenship (Brinkerhoff 2005; Rapport l'atelier 2010). We assume that both peace building processes and decentralization processes are organized for a same purpose: to organize a state in such a way that there is stability, no conflict, and a well organized society (presumably a condition for peace) for all parties in the state; this is in consequence an integrated society. Accordingly, decentralization is one of the means for a (better) integrated society.

The central question throughout this paper thus evolves: How to organize decentralization processes so that they improve integration, internally (within the municipality) and externally (in the contact with neighboring municipalities and other government structures), and that they add to conflict-solution, preventing exclusion or isolation of certain groups of citizens? Shortly stated: when does decentralization lead to integration?

#### Objective

Writing this discussion paper is part of a larger project in which also several expert meetings are organized. With this paper and these expert meetings in different regions, the Netherlands, Great Lake district and South Sudan, we strive to connect scientific, policy and practical perspectives on decentralization and peace building. The picture obtained will help in rebuilding states and point out to the international community where they can help to make decentralization a success for peace building.

When searching the literature and consulting people on their experiences, it quickly becomes clear that there is not one true and explicit approach to decentralization in post-conflict areas. This paper will bring forward some conditions for a successful integration of decentralization in the peace building process. It must be noted that these conditions should be related to a country's own reality and will vary in importance from place to place. The paper provides fuel for discussion. It will by no means provide answers to all questions.

## Chapters

In the following chapters we first explain in short theory about decentralisation. This is followed by an elaboration on the local government as middle level leader who can have an important role in peace building. To estimate its legitimacy and effectiveness one should know about the actors within the government and its role during the conflict. In chapter four the assumption that decentralisation contributes to separatist movement is explored in short, taking the Western Balkan as an example. Chapter five elaborates the relation between decentralisation and citizens initiatives or home grown solutions. Last chapter before the conclusions focuses on the role of the international community.

### **2. Decentralisation**

Governments all over the world, from countries in Africa to countries in Latin America, Asia or Europe, have undergone repeated decentralisation reforms. (Ribot and Oyono, 2005; expert meeting in The Netherlands 27/09/2011). The aim and way of implementation has as many variations; the ideal model changes over time. Where first the focus lay on the management of the local population and national cohesion, with the local government as an arm and instrument of national authority, the focus has now shifted towards a means for democratization and decision-making processes on local level. “ For democratic decentralisation to serve these ends, it requires transfer of discretionary powers into the hands of representatives or at least downwardly accountable local authorities to replace administratively mandated managers” (Ribot and oyono,2005;208).

#### Dimensions of Decentralisation

The World Bank defines decentralisation as: “the transfer of authority and responsibility for public functions from the central government to subordinate or quasi-independent government organizations and/or the private sector” (World Bank: <http://www.ciesin.org>). A categorization can be made along on four fields: political, administrative, fiscal, and market.

*Political decentralization* seeks to empower citizens or their representing local authorities to be involved in decision-making. Thereby raising a sense of ownership of the state with citizens and representatives. The implementation of *administrative decentralisation* does not touch decision-making strategies, but redistributes certain public service delivery responsibility, authority and resources to another agency of the national government; either to field units, subordinate units, semi-autonomous public authorities or area-wide, regional or functional authorities. *Fiscal decentralisation* implies that the local governments have revenues of their own, that they are free to allocate to projects. “Financial responsibility is a core component of decentralization. If local governments and private organizations are to carry out decentralized functions effectively, they must have an adequate level of revenues –either raised locally or transferred from the central government– as well as the authority to make decisions about expenditures. In many developing countries local governments or administrative units possess the legal authority to impose taxes, but the tax base is so weak and the dependence on central government subsidies so ingrained that no attempt is made to exercise that authority” (World Bank: <http://www.ciesin.org>). With *market decentralisation* a shift from the public to the private sector is understood. Privatisation and deregulation are types of market or economic decentralisation.

Furthermore three forms of administrative decentralisation can be distinguished.

- a. Deconcentration – redistributing decision making authority and financial and management responsibilities among different levels of central government. The aim is to create strong field offices and local administrative capacity under the supervision of central government ministries.
- b. Delegation – the central government transfers responsibility for decision making and administration to others not totally controlled by the central government. The final responsibility however stays with the central government. The other institutions are accountable to the central government.

- c. Devolution – “governments devolve functions, they transfer authority for decision-making, finance, and management to quasi-autonomous units of local government with corporate status. Devolution usually transfers responsibilities for services to municipalities that elect their own mayors and councils, raise their own revenues, and have independent authority to make investment decisions. In a devolved system, local governments have clear and legally recognized geographical boundaries over which they exercise authority and within which they perform public functions. It is this type of administrative decentralization that underlies most political decentralization.” (World Bank)

<http://www1.worldbank.org/publicsector/decentralization/what.htm>

The following quotation shows that a differentiation and development in decentralisation is apparent in South Sudan. *“The Local Government Administrative Officers of South Sudan have experienced various types of decentralization, ranging from deconcentration to delegation and to devolution. [...] The present decentralization policy requires involvement and participation of various stakeholders, including elected leaders, traditional leaders, and communities in the development process. It is important for Administrative officers to understand the roles and functions of the various actors, and the procedures and processes of service delivery.”* Local government; Training Needs Assessment 2009 South Sudan pp21

The Needs Assessment executed by the Local Government Board of South Sudan conveys that the form decentralisation has now taken requires certain capacities from local government officers. Without having the right capacities in place transferring responsibilities and authority to local governments might come from a good heart but will not be very effective nor efficient. Instead of connecting well with the citizens, a failing local government can enlarge the distance between citizens and government. Several other conditions for decentralisation are named by divers authors and institutions like the World Bank and A. Agrawal and J.C. Ribot.

#### Reflection on decentralisation

Decentralisation is not the medicine against all political, socio-economical or administrative illnesses and not by all means good or bad. It is just a means to put in place. This place differs in each country or region. It is thus central to know the context before choosing which type of decentralisation and how to implement it.

Furthermore, everyone seems to agree on that with decentralisation comes necessarily the allocation of finances and authority over certain revenues, from central level to the local level. Local governments must have their revenues and own expenditure. Their accountability over this amount of money is towards the citizens and not to the central government.

Financial management asks for certain capacities. These capacities and others that are asked from local officers with the shift of tasks, responsibility and accountability, need to be made available. This can include organizing or attending capacity trainings or enabling local governments to hire someone with the right capacities.

Decentralisation does not only ask for certain ability/capacity, it also requires a willingness at the national and local level. A first and foremost question in decentralisation cases is not what capacity building is needed, but is there willingness to decentralize, or do we need a mind-shift? At least a legal and institutional framework, driven by an intrinsic political motivation, supporting and directing the process of decentralisation needs to be present.

In conclusion we can say that decentralization is generally understood as one of the most important reform processes that can help bring about a well-functioning democratic system that will provide all necessary services, will enhance a sense of democratic ownership of the state from the part of the

citizens (Van den Berg, 2011). However, there are at least three conditions for a successful decentralisation process:

- Fiscal decentralisation: financial responsibility – adequate levels of revenues at local level and authority to make decisions about expenditures
- Capacity at local government
- Willingness from central government (and local government)

Decentralisation processes in an existing state with clear governance structures we assume differs widely from implementing decentralisation in a new state with possibly no or very different pre-conflict state structures. The next question is how best to implement decentralisation in a post-conflict context? Are there special conditions involved in the case of a post-conflict context?

### 3. Local government and peace building

Issue at stake: legitimacy – what was the role of the government during the conflict and how is it looked upon by citizens now?

*“ We believe that it is the duty of local governments to work for peace, freedom, democracy and prosperity and by doing so to contribute to the international development and peace-building agenda; we believe that local governments, the government tier closest to the people, can truly feel the needs of their citizens and are in a unique position to respond to these needs.... (...)”*

First World Conference on City Diplomacy, June 2008

Local governments have the potential to mobilize other local actors for community-based initiatives, in the realms of security, socio-cultural or economic development and strengthening of local democracy. In Guatemala the local government has now because of decentralising powers the possibility of contacting neighborhood agents, thereby being informed about neighborhoods and containing violence. Given the crucial positioning of local governments, between the national state and the citizens, they may be able to bring all the relevant actors to the table: local civil society representatives, business people, peace committees, traditional (and often non-formal) local government institutions, religious communities’ representatives, as well as the police officials, the army representatives, and local branches of security services.

We can see municipal leaders as ‘middle-level leaders’ who can relate local developments to national levels – either directly or via national associations of local governments. Given their position, they often can inform the top-level leadership on the needs and ideas arising on the ground, as well as help to translate and implement national agreements at the local level.

Cases of peace building in Kenya, Burundi, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda, analysed by Arthur Wiggers of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG), illustrate the variety of ways a local government can aid to its citizens and bridge the gap between the government and its electorate. It adds to the argument that a local government should have authority on certain issues. A local government can very well handle own responsibilities and tasks while being accountable to citizens. Nevertheless a case in Eldoret Municipality in Kenya learned that not always all aspects of conflict can be tackled by a local government. For some, a change or enforcement of national policy or politics is the only remedy. When decentralizing authority to local level governance vertical and horizontal interaction stays a necessity. The local governments’ accountability however changes towards its citizens who will judge the government legitimate or not.

Local governments in regions close to state borders can sometimes play an extra role, by developing cross-border co-operation with counterparts in the neighboring state(s). Such projects have for instance been successful in the context of the relations between Croatia and Serbia. Concrete

projects focused on restoration of bridges and the ferry connection, visum-free travel for citizens in the border areas and access to the local markets on both sides of the border.

The 'social contract' that governments have with their citizens, can be seen as the basis of a functioning democracy. This 'contract' implies that the state provides security and services to all of its citizens and that the citizens accept that the state has the monopoly on violence and that it has a law-making and law-implementing mandate. Ways must and can be found to use local social contracts as building blocks for national state-building. Local governments can play their part in the bottom-up restoring of the social contract (Van den Berg, 2010).

Local government are thus potential **actors** in the reconstruction processes amongst many others as civil society, media, business etc.. One that can bring others together and can play an important role as interlocutor in the state-society dialogue. However, they are also an **arena**. A local government is created by many actors within – administrative officers, politicians, and citizens. Functions within the local government might be filled and laws in place, but a local government can only function well as peace builder when legitimate (Noor et.al., 2010).



To be effective in peace building and a respected player in peace building processes, it is to be asked how citizens perceive the local government. South Sudan learns us that a local government should be 'civilianized', and should not stay militarized. Also, there should be an even representation of the citizens in the local government. Other than the question of what sort of people represent the local government, is the question what role did the government have during the conflict. What sort of conflict was it? If citizens were at conflict against the government, its role in peace building processes will be different. Consideration of the conflict context and the actors within a local government is therefore necessary before considering the implementation of decentralisation.

Local governments and other actors involved may have a tendency to wait for all legislation to be in place before developing formal and informal local structures to involve the community in policy development and implementation. Numerous examples can be given nevertheless – from Turkey, Western Balkans, Rwanda, Congo (DRC) and many other countries – that it is wise not to wait for all the national paperwork to be done. If the local governments develops the platforms for consultation and co-operation with other local actors (civil society, businesses, media, in some cases also police and army representatives), they will have an advantage that will pay off once the formal framework for decentralisation has been adopted. Such platforms will bare fruit anyway, regardless of the question whether decentralisation is being implemented.

Looking at decentralisation from the perspective of peace building, the concept of the 'enabling environment' comes to the fore. Decentralisation can best be organised in a way, that it provides local governments with the incentive, the mandate and the capacities to be a strong actor in support of peace and peace building. Again, participation, citizenship and integration are the key words.

#### 4. Possible risks of decentralisation?

Issue at stake: tension autonomy vs separation?

Issue at stake: isolation and exclusion?

Issue at stake: strong state vs bottom-up building?

Decentralisation is often named the cause for separatist movements to gain strength. There might be a tension between the act for self-determination of groups of citizens providing more autonomy, and territorial integrity when the boundaries of the nation are not questioned and separatist movements are not increasing. However, it is often named such a threat by national political elite who are afraid their own power might be decreased by decentralisation (Musch et Van den Berg, 2011). In many cases this threat has not come about. Instead, decentralisation gave minorities that might have become separatist movements or were before, the satisfaction of a large autonomy. So if handled well, it will diminish the risk of separatism.

Examples of the Western Balkan lay bare the tension between giving more autonomy, but not inflicting separation. In the cases of Croatia and Kosovo, new municipalities were created along the lines of ethnic majority. In Croatia, it was a success. It needs to be seen if it will contribute to lasting peace in Kosovo; many of the conditions are there, but it looks as if the local governments themselves, the civil society and the international community do not use the opportunities to the full. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, two entities and ten cantons were created with the Dayton Peace Accords. This model of decentralisation has brought further separation and segregation of inhabitants, also because the central state is extremely weak and crucial mandates have been laid in the hands of the two entities. In the case of Macedonia, more mandates were given to the local governments as a means to appease the Albanian Macedonians who strived for more autonomy and even took up arms (Van den Berg, 2011).

In all cases decentralisation was implemented to amongst others secure the position of minorities. More autonomy, even newly created municipalities where the states minorities would form a majority, needed to keep all citizens together, stilling separatist or emigration movements. In all cases a minority group of people can now because of the decentralisation choose their own local representative in government and have certain autonomy over their own wielding and yielding. The basic argument for implementing such decentralisation is as mentioned earlier that the local leaders know best the ways of the people, their problems, dreams and fitting solutions. Also by bringing power to minorities they ought to feel included and not passed by.

Although in all three cases the ideas behind the decentralisation models are similar, the models and effects of the implementation are not. Where in Macedonia and Croatia decentralisation largely worked to establish satisfaction and a sense of security within the minority population; the decentralisation model chosen in Bosnia and Herzegovina made the situation worse, increasing separatist tendencies (especially in Republika Srpska, the Serbian entity in Bosnia and Herzegovina), hampering nation-wide reform and jeopardizing the process of European integration.

So, not in all cases decentralisation contributes to good governance and peace building. By lack of capacity, legitimacy or willingness for a dialogue and true power transfer, decentralisation might actually increase or contribute to conflict. What can be learned from the Western Balkan cases is:

- Focusing on power transfer to minorities should be part of a larger plan, not the goal in itself. They should not be lifted out as a special group. Decentralisation with differences for groups can have politicization and a lack of nationwide support in effect.
- When creating overlap in functions and responsibilities, and thus fuzz about whom is accountable to whom, decentralisation might weaken the national government and

provide antagonistic groups with powerful tools to in a way continue their war, albeit with non-violent means.

- It is important that the decentralisation brings concrete visible results within a reasonable time span. If such positive development does not come about, public support for decentralisation will fade away.
- Beware of isolation or exclusion. It is crucial to provide equal opportunities for all citizens.
- The best results with decentralisation in the western Balkan have been realised when the international community was actively involved in the implementation phase, securing transparency and accountability in the process, involving civil society organisations in decentralisation-related programs. The international community can also play a key-role in financing (elements of) the decentralisation.

In the decentralisation discussion it is often mentioned that the implementation of decentralisation requires a strong state, a strong central government. The reverse however can be argued for as well. Decentralisation can strengthen the state, bottom-up. Local governments can often provide solutions that are immediately seen and felt by citizens. When a local government acts responsible and accountable and because of decentralisation they involve citizens in decision-making processes, a solid foundation is built for a strong and democratic state. Citizens get a notion of what a government could mean to them and what citizenry implies for them. They may well call for more serious national government policy, and such pressure from within can lead to more sustainable government policy reform than external pressure by IC bodies.

In most countries where decentralisation has been implemented in a successful way, the national government did have a solid decentralisation strategy and resources were in place to support the local government in the process. It is important that all levels of government understand that in the end the accountability for government work should be towards the citizens, more than towards higher authorities and/or international donor agencies. Even when states and donors speak about the importance of citizens' involvement and participation, the reporting models are largely or fully upward-oriented. Local governments and other local actors should not forget that more is needed; they have the important task to account for their work to the citizens, in a serious way.

The role of citizens or civil society and the importance of a clear policy of the international community is further analyzed in paragraph 5 and 6. A last issue as food for thought is the question of scale. Does a country as DR Congo or even South Sudan require a different approach than countries of the Western Balkan? And which implications should that lead to in terms of decentralisation models and dynamics?

## **5. Formalized structures vs home grown solutions**

**Issue at stake:** when should citizens initiatives be formally recognized and how to connect it to local governments?

When discussing decentralisation and learning about experiences from practice one returning aspect is the existence of citizen initiatives that have taken over government responsibility. Should those be formalized? DR Congo shows cases of mono-ethnic areas where citizens have put in place structures that are efficient and effective. Although the government of DR Congo does not reach every citizen in the country, in many places streets are swept, garbage taken and trees cut. A gap is filled that the lack of a consistent, legitimate and accountable local government leaves.

“Municipalities everywhere perform critical functions that determine the quality of life of citizens and collective welfare: roads and traffic, transport, water supply, schools and kindergarten, health centres, sport facilities, waste collection, museums, theatre and music halls and even cemeteries.

However, often municipalities do not have the adequate size and sufficient resources to perform many of their functions alone in an efficient and effective way” IMC Guidelines (2009:6). What’s more, in post-conflict regions citizens might, still, lack freedom from fear (they are not secure) and freedom from want (they lack basic needs such as housing, water and food). Quite often, the national state cannot or does not want to provide security and the necessary services to its citizens. It is inevitable, in these cases, that the local governments will try to fill the gap – even if this would go beyond their formal mandates or capacity (Van den Berg, 2011) However, when also a local government cannot or does not take up its tasks and fill a gap left by a national government, citizens own initiatives might come into place.



Citizens initiatives filling the gap a government leaves works out well in some cases, in others it increases conflict. In CR Congo it seems to work to a certain extent, but only in mono-ethnic regions and without much inter-municipal or inter-regional contact. After the conflict in Egypt a home grown police force developed in some of the neighborhoods. On the one hand this secured its neighborhoods citizens, on the other hand no coordinator has been in place to contact and interact with the home grown police force, leaving them to act as they wish. Empowering oneself without keeping contact or interact with others, increases the tension and discourse of Us against Them, We versus Others. Like we argued about decentralisation; own initiatives can be great, as long as they don’t exclude ‘the others’, or lead to isolation.

What to do with these home grown solutions, when what you aim for is decentralisation of officially recognized governments? Is it important to have formalized the structures? By formalizing institutions and structures it becomes part of a system nation wide. This provides a certain meaning and could decrease the bond it has with citizens. Another pitfall is that decentralisation could lead to centralization. It could be that the local government becomes an arm of the central government, not having much to decide, but with the central government as the mastermind and steering wheel. If it should not be formalized, should it then be formally recognized?

Croatia is an example of where the international community well invested in both local governments and civil society. Their role was directive, not decisive, they did not dictate but guided. Their actions were transparent connecting expertise and capacity to clearly stated competences, while leaving authority with the local governments. However, as Ribot and Oyono (2005:208) argues: “pluralism without representation rest a scene for elite capture.” The act of the international community should naturally be context specific.

## 6. Role of the international community

Issue at stake: how do Western discourses fit in the local context?

Issue at stake: how to support both local governments and civil society so that they strengthen each other.

The role of the international community is a disputed one. For each case there is sought a balance of interference, influence and assistance. We can distinguish three types of formal framework for the involvement of the international community:

1. The 'host' state can be a protectorate. Decision-making is taken from national and sometimes even local institutions and organisation; instead the international community is ruling.
2. The international community can have mandates on different levels of governance. The people rule their state, but the international community has the mandate to overrule in case they do not see the policy fit. The frequency and range of such interventions may differ.
3. There is influence of and assistance by the international community upon the basis of their roles as monitors and donors – money and capacity-, and ways of thinking. They can direct their wishes, and manage aid.

It is the last role an international community can have that suits decentralisation processes best in most cases. It is a widespread criticism that the international community is not supporting the state and people, but is too much dictating what should be done. The international community agencies would better offer and direct their support, in interaction with existing or developing governance institutions as local governments but also civil society. Decision making is left with local people, although often advised one way or another by the international community. At least people will come into contact with a different way of thinking and acting. The case of UNTAES in Croatia (1996-1998) is a good example of such a successful IC involvement (Van den Berg, 2011). In consequence, when first it becomes clear the international community will have a role in rebuilding a conflict prone state, it should reflect upon itself. What discourses does it have? What does it intend to do? Is there a date for its exit, is there a exit strategy?(Benschop, 2011)

Decentralisation as such also seems to have a certain Western concept notion of leadership and authority. How to rule? When are you respected and to whom do you need to be accountable? What does citizenship involve? Decentralisation requires the ability and capacity to make decisions at local level. In Western democratic thinking it is most logical that citizens as individuals or organized in civil society should be involved in processes of decision making. However the question is to which extent this connects to the reality of people in an other state and how far do you want to go with enforcing your discourses?

In addition, we should not forget that the 'Western model' of democracy is implemented in various ways; there are huge differences in political culture and political systems in countries such as the USA, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, Italy and the Netherlands – to name but a few. Also often democratisation programs do not take into account the time needed for learning processes. Practice in different parts of the world has however shown that local governance is strengthened by including citizens in decision making processes. That is one of the universal dimensions of democratisation. People do have and express an interest in the improvement of their personal habitat.

Support for the importance of cooperation between government, civil society and traditional structures to enhance effective implementation of projects can be found in cases in Kenia, Burundi or Rwanda. Wiggers for instance marks that "[...], several meetings with the various actors involved, such as council officers, councilors and community representatives, were nevertheless required to reduce the mistrust that existed among the community members. The community chiefs have played

an important role in this by trying to generate both support for the markets and public confidence” (Wiggers, 2011:3).

As the Western international community is more known to involving all sorts of stakeholders in decision making processes, they can have an important role of bringing these parties together; connecting decentralized governments, civil society and others. Nevertheless, many of the donors find it difficult to facilitate the co-operation of the modern local government structures with the traditional ones. They often have a tendency to focus on the new structures, even though they may often lack credibility and capacity. Traditional leaders may in many cases not be elected, but they often do have authority and credibility in the eyes of the citizens. It is very important that the international community supports development of interfaces between ‘modernity’ and ‘tradition’. The Local Government Act of South Sudan does provide possibilities to do so.

The issue at stake here is how to include civil society or other civil representative organizations and structures, like traditional or informal structures, in decision making processes of the local government without creating possible elite capture.

Sustainability can also be a problem, especially in cases where international actors have taken the lead in programs. They have to make sure that the local institutions have sufficient capacity and willingness to continue the work. All too often projects come to a halt or fail to deliver quality once the international involvement has ended.

## **7. Conclusions**

We have seen a variety of decentralisation examples that included very different countries, with different cultures, histories of conflict, and scale. The question we asked ourselves is: what are the conditions for decentralisation to contribute to peace building and hence an integrated society? Integration in this is about bringing people together, binding them, people that initially do not wish to work together. It is about citizenship above all else. And the interaction of all sorts of stakeholders – individuals, institutions and organizations.

So first, if we work on decentralisation without saying real opportunities to have decentralisation strengthen integrative tendencies, we should rather not embark on the decentralisation process. If we see risks of any kind in decentralisation processes, we would propose to incorporate elements that can help overrule or compensate such negative consequences.

Second, we can conclude that our understanding of the most crucial dimension of decentralisation for peace building is political decentralisation. Decentralisation as a means to peace building is more than the administrative rearranging of tasks from a central office towards a field officer who is still accountable to the national government. It implies the political decentralisation, where citizens are invited to the negotiation table and are part of the decision-making process. It implies citizenship above all else and to organize meetings with everyone, without exclusion based on ethnicity or background.

Third, it must be noted that there are always conditions to decentralisation for implementing it right. It is generally agreed upon that for decentralisation to work, some financial authority needs to be transferred to local level. In addition, to have a working local government, its employees, administrative officers and politicians, need to have the capacity to work on its competences. Last but definitely not least, there must be willingness at national level to transfer authority to local level. Without willingness it is labour lost.

Additionally, for implementing decentralisation in post-conflict areas special attention must be paid to the conflict context. This effects the legitimacy of a local government in a post- conflict phase and

thus the decision if decentralisation would be adequate. Also, the conflict might have had the consequence that traditional structures or home grown solutions filled the gap a government would have had. Their role in decentralisation must be considered. Cooperation between traditional structures of governance, civil society and local governance seems to be most important for the effect of projects. If considering the context and discourses the international community can have a strong positive influence in enforcing decentralisation while empowering and connecting these different stakeholders.

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