GOOD GOVERNANCE AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN DEVELOPMENT DISCOURSE

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Abstrak: Partisipasi, transparansi, dan akuntabilitas dalam konsep good governance seringkali dipandang sebagai jaminan bahwa distribusi dan redistribusi kekuasaan dan sumber-sumber pembangunan akan dikelola melalui proses dan struktur yang partisipatori, sehingga pembangunan yang berkesinambungan dan berkesetaraan jender akan terwujud. Artikel ini mempertanyakan universalitas dan sensitivitas jender dalam implementasi good governance. Bias nilai Barat dan neo-liberalisme menimbulkan tantangan dan masalah dalam pengimplementasian good governance di negara-negara sedang berkembang. Pengabaian keterkaitan patriarki privat dan publik dalam konsep good governance juga menghambat terwujudnya good governance di negara sedang berkembang. Argumen utama dalam artikel ini adalah bahwa konsep dan implementasi good governance harus memperhitungkan diversitas sosial, sejarah, kultural dan politik antarbangsa. Juga harus sensitif terhadap kebutuhan kelompok dan individu dalam masyarakat. Dengan perkataan lain, kesetaraan jender harus mendapat prioritas penting dalam agenda good governance. Tanpa kesetaraan jender dalam manajemen pembangunan, good governance menjadi tidak realistis dan patut dipertanyakan.

Kata kunci: pemerintah daerah, ikatan kewarganegaraan, dan perspektif jender.

INTRODUCTION

Governance is a key concept in current development debates. The concept of governance, which includes accountability, participation, transparancy and human rights as its basic components, is considered a crucial requirement for the success of development, especially in developing countries. International development agencies with diverse interpretations, yet similar emphasis on governance substantiate these components of governance in terms of good governance. Since the 1990’s good governance has become an issue of conditionality in promoting accountable and effective governance in aid recipient countries. However, concerns over the imposition of the Western concepts of governance and good governance by international development agencies onto developing countries, and the inconsistencies in the application of ‘good governance’ among developing countries, bring concepts of governance and good governance into the centre of development debates.

This paper examines the principles of good governance and tensions it creates when implemented in a way that neglects the cultural, political and historical diversity found within most countries. I will first elaborate on the debates surrounding the definitions and usage of governance and good governance. Exploration of the concepts of governance and good governance from a gender perspective will enable us to view local governance as a locus of women at the local level in redefining political agendas of development. However, this paper does not intend to establish a fixed definition of governance, rather, it will focus on discussion on diverse concepts of governance in order to gain insights into the complexities of the implementation of governance. I will argue that since governance is an interactive process of governing, a governance approach rather than a government approach provides a suitable framework for examining processes of governing. Thus, I will use the governance concept primarily as a descriptive and analytical tool through which several questions crucial to understanding governance can be posed: What are the notions of governance? If governance means plurality in interactions, how accessible are they to women? Have diverse definitions of good governance incorporated a gendered understanding of policy and implementation?
DISCUSSION

Government or Governance?

Governance has long been equated with ‘governing’, the process aspect of government (Mayntz, 1998). The first paradigm of political theory on governance perceives governing as steering, a top-down approach in policy making and policy implementation (Mayntz, 1998). Thus, governing becomes a linear model in which power is used to secure the implementation of policies that have been determined by the rulers. In this model of governing, rulers are strictly differentiated from the ruled, which creates a win and lose game of power. Deviations amongst the ruled people’s reactions towards the determined policies, norms, and rules are considered as threats towards the power of the ruler. This creates suspicion between the ruler and the ruled. This mode of governing causes the implementation and enforcement of policies and programs to become more intensive and expensive (Dunsire, 1993:24), since the state has all the responsibilities and acts as a single agent in policy making and implementation. The huge burden on the state, plus the rigidity and clumsiness of its bureaucratic structure, reduce the capability of the state to establish close relations with the society which then contributes to the state’s loss of legitimacy (Peters and Pierre, 1998). This way of governing contradicts that of voluntary obedience of the people argued by Spinoza (1677 cited in Dunsire, 1993:30):

Men [sic] should be governed in such a way that they do not regard themselves as being governed, but as following their own bent and their own free choice in their manner of life; in such a way, then, that they are restrained only by love of freedom, desire to increase their possessions, and the hope of obtaining offices of the state.

Dissatisfaction with the state’s performance as the centre of political control in dealing with pluralist demands from the public gave rise to support for ‘governance’. Discussion on governing diverts attention to alternative forms of societal governance which put more value on the potential and capabilities of the society itself in governing. The search for alternative forms of societal governance develops into two separate lines of discussion: the market principles and horizontal self-organization (Mayntz, 1998). Based on the political ideology of neoliberalism and Thatcherism, the market principles emphasize deregulation and privatization as the main instruments in achieving both economic growth and economic efficiency. The private sector rather than the state is considered as being more effective as an agent of development (Mayntz, 1998; Peters and Pierre, 1998). In horizontal self-organization the state actors still occupy a special position as participants in policy networks in which they maintain crucial means of intervention even where there is devolution of decision making to institutions of societal government (Mayntz, 1998). The dialogic rationality of governance is ensured through the nature of the reciprocity between actors in which, in order to gain some political influence and benefit from better overall functioning of the system, individual economic partners give some of their autonomy to the state. On the other hand the state gives some of its authority in decision making to influence economic activities (Jessop, 1998).

Diverse definitions of governance emerge in this new paradigm of governance. The UNDP (1997) defines governance as ‘the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority in the management of a country’s affairs at all levels’. This definition equates governance with the management of society. However, the complexity of the interdependency between the state, community, and private sector in fulfilling the diverse public demands and interests implies that governance cannot be limited to managing the society efficiently. The World Conference on Metropolitan Governance, in its meeting in Tokyo 1993, rejected the reduction of governance to management and the division of governance into merely the political and technical dimensions. It suggested that governance should be perceived as including the visions and strategic decisions of a country, and should include five fundamental dimensions: political, contextual, constitutional, legal, and administrative/managerial. It should imply bottom-up decision making, involving all concerned people at every level of government and non-government organizations (Beal, 1996:4). The importance of cooperation and partnership between government and civil society is emphasized in the UNCHS (2000) definition of governance:
Governance is to be taken as co-operation between government and non-government actors. Good governance means effective co-operation between these actors to bring about solutions that are in the general interest and likely to receive wide support. Good governance thus entails inclusive decision-making processes.

Hence, a meaning of governance includes not only efficient management of resources and power, but also the enhancement of people’s participation in the processes and structures of governance.

Patterns of interaction and networking, then, become the dominant feature of governance in this new paradigm. Kooiman (1993:258) explains governance as the ‘…emerging pattern (or order) of a system that is both the outcome of social processes (interactions) as well as the medium through which actors can act and interpret this pattern’. Concurring with this definition, Jessop (1998:30) refers to governance as:

‘…the models and manner of governing, government to the institutions and agents charged with the governing and governing to the act of governing itself’. These interpretations of the governance concept provide insights into defining the relationship between governing and governance.

Recently there has been a shift in the development of the governance paradigm from political guidance or steering (the first paradigm) to:

1. Governance as a new mode of governing that is distinct from the hierarchical control mode, a more cooperative mode where state and non-state actors participate in mixed public/private networks.
2. Governance as different modes of coordinating individual actions, or basic forms of social order (Mayntz, 1998:1-2).

This new paradigm of governance reveals a shift from a more traditional patterns of governing as ‘one way traffic’/unilateral focus (from those governing to the governed) to a ‘2 way traffic’/interactionist focus in which ‘(dis) qualities of social-political systems and their governance are viewed from the perspective of the recognition of mutual needs and capacities’ (Kooiman, 1993:35-36).

The nations of governance brought about by the new paradigm provide a dynamic approach in understanding governance in two ways. Firstly, the notion of governance requires a focus on active processes rather than passive, static accounts of institutions. An understanding of the structure of political institutions is indispensable, as it allows for the exploration towards the ways in which the key actors have used those structures and institutions; what resources, options and strategies are available to those actors. Secondly, the notion of governance suggests a process of rule making in which government and political elites are locked into economic and social networks these may be formal or informal, vertical hierarchies or more horizontal egalitarian relationships, cooperative or conflictual (Goldblatt, 1998:1-2). These notions of governance rest on three theoretical principles: the existence of a crisis of governability, the exhaustion of the traditional form of state intervention reflected in this crisis and the emergence of a tendency or of a convergent political trend in all the developed countries that is giving rise to a new form of governance better adapted to each context (Merrien, 1998:57).

Despite diverse definitions and interpretations of governance, debates on governance seem to agree that governance refers to styles in governing in which stakeholders create a dependent network. In these governing styles the boundaries between and within public and private sectors have become blurred. Rhodes (1997), identifies the shared characteristics of governance:

1. Interdependence between organizations. Governance is broader than government, covering non-state actors. Changing the boundaries of the state meant the boundaries between public, private and voluntary sectors became shifting and opaque.
2. Continuing interactions between network members, caused by the need to exchange resources and negotiate shared purposes.
3. Game-like interactions, rooted in trust and regulated by rules of the game negotiated and agreed by network participants.
4. A significant degree of autonomy from the state. Networks are not accountable to the state; they are self-organizing. Although the state does not occupy a sovereign position,
it can indirectly steer networks (Rhodes, 1997:57).

From the foregoing discussion it is obvious that interaction and networking among mutually dependent powers become basic interrelated concepts in governance. Differing from the concept of government which is concerned mainly with institutional aspects of policy making and policy implementation, and which adopts a top-down perspective, this concept of governance focuses on processes of governing and interactions among diverse actors as mutually dependent powers. ‘Governance is about managing networks, not only by government but also by the interactions between government and society; private and public institutions’ (Rhodes, 1997:52). The essence of governance is its focus on governing mechanisms which do not rest on recourse to the authority and sanctions of government (Stoker, 1998). It is a dynamic process produced by the interaction of public and private (Kooiman, 1993:2). The concept of governance, which emphasizes processes of governing rather than institutional aspects allows for greater attention to be given to the linking of various actors and the using of their combined potential to deal with development problems which would otherwise be neglected if we discussed only government.

To some, the dispersion of political control and policy making to collections of non-state actors in the new paradigm of governance may be perceived as the loss of state power and control (Merrien, 1998; Peters and Pierre, 1998). However, this shift from government to governance in which there is power transfer from the state to the society cannot be considered as diminution of the power of the state. The concept of governance does not mean the state loses its power or withdraws from activities in governing or separates from the society, rather, it implies a changing form of state control (Bhatta, 1998) and a shift in the way of governing in which a state acts as a balancer of social forces and social interests and as an enabler to social actors and systems in order that they may organize themselves (Kooiman, 1993). Thus, the preferable role of the state is as a balancer which influences and directs relations between social actors into a more desirable balance (Dunsire, 1993).

In arguing that governance implies changes in ways of governing rather than the loss of state control, Kooiman (1993:2) points out that ‘in the ‘co’ forms of governance such as co-steering, co-managing, co-producing and co-allocating (social-political way of governing), public or private actors do not act separately but in conjunction, together, in combination’ that is to say in ‘co’ arrangement. Hence, in governance the allocation of responsibility between public and private spheres becomes more blurred. Interaction is based on the recognition of interdependencies since the strengths and weaknesses among stakeholders differ. To succeed, ‘governing’ needs to cooperate and integrate stakeholders’ contributions to strengthen each other (Kooiman, 1993:252).

In governance, the quality of civic engagement is of equal importance to the governing capacity of government. At this point, the synergistic relationship between government and the governed is crucial. Evans (1998) provides a useful definition of synergy as mutually reinforcing relations between governments and groups of engaged citizens which rests on a relational basis: ‘An intimate interconnection and intermingling among public and private actors is combined with a well-defined complementary division of labor between the bureaucracy and local citizens, mutually recognized and accepted by both sides’. As enabler, government is expected to ‘enable not only highly organized and strong actors but also individual citizens and social movements to infiltrate within the administration and to be represented within the policy making process’ (Kooiman, 1993:257). Thus, synergy in governance goes beyond the question of how to make the strengths and weaknesses of diverse stakeholders become complementary to the creation of embeddedness between society and government.

Order, rule and collective action are the expected outcomes of both government and governance: ‘Governance is ultimately concerned with creating the conditions for ordered rule and collective action. The outputs of governance are not therefore different from those of government. It is rather a matter of a difference in processes (Stoker, 1998:17). Whereas government (as the first paradigm of governance) reveals the hierarchic mode of governing in which government officials and institutions guide or steer policy development and implementation, in governance these policies and their implementation are determined through the interaction of various stakeholders.'
Although, in general, there seems to be similarity of the outcomes between government and governance namely, order the concept of governance requires a greater degree of participation from diverse stakeholders in achieving this objective. The concept of governance also implies the existence of networks in which diverse stakeholders depend on each other. In this new paradigm of governance, government is only one of the components in the network of governing which has to interact independently with other components. Interdependency between stakeholders implies that none of them has absolute control over the processes of governing, and this will enlarge the maneuvering space for diverse stakeholders in influencing the processes (Peters and Pierre, 1998).

Good Governance Applied in Third World Contexts

Although good governance, which focuses on the building of efficient and capable organizations, has been the concern of development administration since the 1960s (Minogue, 2002:122), it has only recently been accorded a central place in the discourse on development. Governance is a buzzword among donors and development agencies, one which has gained much interest in the 1990s in relation to the World Bank’s findings on the significance of a country’s capacity as a component in achieving successful and sustainable development (Bhatta, 1998:4). The emergence of governance in development discourse is a response to persistent poverty, according to the UNDP Human Development Report 1990, which situates governance as ‘the primary source of the problem in developing countries, and as the basis for solution’ (Schmitz, 1995:68). This Western notion of governance has been developed by international donors in incorporating good governance as a condition when giving aid to developing countries.

International aid donors, although similarly emphasizing the significance of governance, have broad definitions of governance ranging from the neutral label of governance to a more political definition of good governance. Under the label of ‘good governance’ the Department for International Development Administration (formerly UK Overseas Development Administration) provides an example of an ‘overtly political’ definition of governance (Minogue et al., 1998:5-6) consisting of four main components:

1. Legitimacy implies that a system of government must operate with the consent of those who are governed, who must therefore have the means to give or withhold that assent; such legitimacy is seen in the British policy document as most likely to be guaranteed by pluralist, multi-party democracy.
2. Accountability involves the existence of mechanisms which ensure that public officials and political leaders are answerable for their actions and use of public resources, and will require transparent government and free media.
3. Competence in making and executing appropriate public policies and delivering efficient public services is essential.
4. Respect for law and protection of human rights should buttress the entire system of good government.

On the other hand the UNDP, uses a more neutral label of sound governance in which good governance is defined as addressing the allocation and management of resources to respond to collective problems, and characterized by participation, transparency, accountability, rule of law, effectiveness and equity (UNDP, 1997). This definition is more sensitive to cultural and political differences among countries since it recognizes the differences in governments’ responses towards the ideas of participation, individuality, order and authority and also the possibility of differences in combining efficiency and accountability across diverse forms of political authority (Minogue et al., 1998).

The World Bank has an in-between interpretation of governance which leads to a seemingly contradictory strategy. Its documents emphasize professional policy making and management in using resources effectively, thus, policy making on political interventions should be avoided. At the same time, by also emphasizing the significance of strengthening civil society, the World Bank has frequently overstepped borders of its neutrality as reflected in its inability to avoid political connotations in nearly half its governance lending projects in 1991-1993 (Minogue et al., 1998).

Linking good governance to development Larmour (1998), provides another useful classification of definitions of good governance as:
1. Democratic governance, which is concerned with legitimacy, accountability, and human rights. It addresses traditional concerns of Western political theory, and tends to be invoked by bilateral aid donors, and the OECD, which links good governance to participatory development and the improvement of women’s rights.

2. Effective governance, which is less concerned with the form of government and focuses more on the ability to govern. It is expressed by the World Bank, which has had to be careful to avoid going beyond its mandate and commenting on its members’ ‘internal political affairs’.

3. Coordination, that sees order as the result of the actions and interactions of formally constituted governments and other private and voluntary associations. Order is not something imposed by the government’s actors, and cannot be sharply distinguished from them. Three distinct ordering principles or modes of governance can be identified within these relationships: hierarchical rules, market exchanges, and shared values. Any actual policy, program or organization involves a mix of modes. Governance as a coordination approach provides a framework for understanding the role of the private sector, non-government organizations, and the state in development.

Despite various classifications of the definition of good governance, in general good governance has accountability, transparency, openness, and rule of law as its basic components (Bhatta, 1998:232). It entails a vast set of democratic processes and institutions at every level of society, from the local council to regional, national and international institutions, that ideally allow the voices of the people to be heard, conflicting interests to be peacefully resolved and a forging of consensus towards greater social progress (Wijkman, 1998:2).

Good governance aims for more than merely efficient management of economic and financial resources, or particular public services. Rather it encompasses a broad reform strategy to strengthen the institutions of civil society and make government more open, responsive, accountable and democratic. Thus, in good governance the efficiency concerns of public management overlap with the issue of accountability of institutions involved in governance (Minogue et al., 1998:6).

The universality of the aim of good governance in supporting democracy and human rights, raises the significant issues of the applicability and the achievement of good governance in diverse countries. International development agencies are criticized for being unaware of structural and cultural differences between developed and developing countries and also among and within developing countries (Roots, 1996; Alcantara, 1998). The concept of governance was coined in the North by international development agencies based on Western experiences of development. The OECD document reflects the promotion of the universality of a Western model of development, lacking reference to the recent experience of contemporary Asia (Roots, 1996). The inability to distinguish between regime type and good governance reduces the document’s applicability to Asia where good governance thrives amidst political diversity (Roots, 1996: 146). Thus, good governance is perceived as the imposition of Western values on governance which is likely to fail if it is to be implemented in developing countries. Minogue (2002:135), explains the failure of good governance as follows:

On current evidence it seems likely that good governance will also fail as a universalizing project, representing as it does the attempted imposition of a Western model at a time when globalizing tendencies are producing a world in which the economic power of Western countries is increasingly under challenge, and their cultural values are increasingly at odds with those of other societies.

The Western concept differentiates between and separates, strong and weak states. Thus good governance supposedly occurs when the state retrenches, becomes less powerful, assumes a low profile and operates in a network with private interests and groups as a partner scarcely more important than others (Merrien, 1998:58). In the realm of developing countries, especially in Asia, the division is blurred. In East Asia there is a strong but limited government (Roots, 1996; Kiely, 1998). A strong state which is accountable and responsive to the people ‘a socially progres-
sive state that receives its visions and strength from the principles of a popular or inclusive democracy in which a division of power has been negotiated that allows many development problems to be managed by decentralized units of governance in cooperation with the people themselves, organized in their own communities and popular organizations’ (Brohman, 1996:275-276). Cases from East Asia suggest that states are strong when critical and durable limits channel government’s behavior into activities compatible with economic development (Root, 1996:141-143). The combination of weak and strong state usually emerges as the successful model of governance in Asia. Hence, the Western notion of good governance is inadequate in explaining the East Asian stories of ‘failure’ and ‘success’ since it has been based on the ‘flawed neoliberal paradigm’ which perceives state as an inefficient actor of development and has thus reduced development to a simple process of technical policy making (Kiely, 1998:63).

The African perspective on governance also criticizes the universality of good governance (Kruiter, 1996; Nzomo, 2001). The North imposing their notions of good governance with an emphasis on accountability and transparency, is considered as being neglectful and derogatory toward the images of African culture and government since it perceives dishonesty (in the form of corruption) among the Africans as the root of development problems in Africa. From the African perspective inefficiency in development processes in Africa is more of a problem of incompetencies (capability mobilization and capacity building) which is inseparable from the past experiences of Western colonialism. The Northern concept of good governance is also considered as reducing problems of development to merely management issues. It argues that governance is historically contingent, therefore, governance should be separated from the notion of goodness. Good governance should be placed in its historical context. The notion of governance should be based on community or group with an emphasis on balance over rights and duties rather than on individual rights. Competency and incentive would be elements of good governance together with accountability. The African perspective on governance urges that governance’ which places equal emphasis on the role of the state and civil society and their interaction is needed (Kruiter, 1996).

Another insight put forward by Alcantara (1998), involves criticizing the tendency of international financial institutions to use the term governance rather than ‘state reform’ and ‘political change’ to avoid severe criticisms for undermining the sovereignty of aid recipient countries. Technical, rather than social and political considerations, have been used in implementing these institutions’ neoliberal economic programs more efficiently (Alcantara, 1998:107). Alcantara continues that this focus on efficiency contributes to the difficulties faced by borrowing countries in implementing specific initiatives. The emphasis on promoting more efficient government institutions and on improving the capability of government creates the standardization of models of political institution building (Alcantara, 1998). The World Bank, she notes, has used the concept of good governance in relation to a purely technocratic issue of governing which provides no analysis of the existence of vested interests within and outside the state. Thus it has neglected the political side of development.

Larmour (2000:8-9) argues that good governance is a blend of the universal and particular. Larmour specifically explains that ‘although there are similarities of the state - a set of similar looking organizations, legislatures, departments, local governments which carry out a similar set of tasks there is also country specificity in implementing governance since the meaning differs among countries’. Therefore Larmour suggests that middle level theories about good governance, between arguments for the universality of good governance and the peculiarity of countries, are needed in discussing good governance.

These critiques lead us to question the universal applicability of governance and good governance. The governance concept points to the creation of a structure or an order which cannot be externally imposed but is the result of the interaction of a multiplicity of governing and other influencing actors (Kooiman, 1993). As the consequence of governance as process, which is determined by actors, who are bound and influenced by their social, political, and historical environment, the definition of good governance should be sufficiently diverse to be responsive to different needs and concerns of different societies/groups, who define good governance for themselves. This concept of good governance should be defined and applied within the specific
history and social context of the society in which the concept is being implemented. The concept, strategies and methods of good governance should be derived from and based on local knowledge, circumstances and experiences.

Several reasons can be proposed in arguing for the urgency to relate the interpretation of governance and good governance to the diversity of the national and local environments within countries. Social values and histories of countries are diverse. There are particular conditions in developing countries that may contribute to the inappropriateness of implementing models of governance and good governance, which derive from Western countries. Good definitions of good governance must therefore be sensitive to, and acknowledge, the diversity of nations. The concept of good governance cannot be perceived and implemented as universal ideas with universal application. It must be adjusted to ‘concrete social settings’ in diverse countries (Alcantara, 1998:113).

More attention and emphasis need to be given to the political/cultural aspect of good governance, such as the strengthening of the capacity of community organizations (civil society) that look more at the involvement of the society in governing rather than merely focusing on enhancing the technocratic capacity of government as applied by international development agencies in promoting good governance. Larmour (2000) also found that a government’s performance may depend as much on civic associations as on institutional design; simple, incremental reforms that are consistent with policymakers’ values are easier to transfer; policies adopted by developing countries are vulnerable to reversal at many subsequent points, depending on whether resistance erupts in the public arena, or remains within the bureaucracy (Larmour, 2000:12).

These critiques raise significant issues for good governance which need to be explored in examining the applicability of good governance in developing countries. These concerns relate to: universality, ethical issues regarding the sovereignty of countries with their norms, values and historical experiences (qualitative aspect of good governance); and debates on management/technocratic and political aspects of development. Governance needs are based upon embedded values and norms of the people. The concepts of governance and good governance as the measurement of governance should be anchored locally, based on local knowledge and norms in order to best serve the needs and interests of the people. This critique needs to be elaborated upon from a gender perspective if the good governance aim of enhancing popular participation and influence in all aspects of development is to be achieved.

Exploring Governance and Local Governance from a Gender Perspective

The concept of governance suggests the need for transformation of interactions between government and society based on participation, transparency, accountability and human rights. Thus, it offers participatory and accountable management of society. However, gender and governance, which both emerge in political debates on the role of women in society and in governing, are terms that have contested meanings and are politically loaded. Yet, the assumption of gender neutrality of governance and government institutions contributes to the neglect of gender in governance debates. In fact, governance is not gender neutral. Governance institutions have the tendency to be more responsive to men’s interests. Although not publicly acknowledging gender differences, government structures and processes reproduce gender inequality (Lahti and Kelly, 1995; Goetz, 1997; Scott, 1999; Taylor, 2000; Bhatta, 2001). Governance has been defined in favor of men in control of social and political institutions. Norms in governance are formed by males and tend to serve their interests (Bhatta, 2001). Thus, gender is crucial in understanding the construction of governance and local governance.

The existing debate on governance is yet to address gender equity adequately. Whilst discussions on governance focus on how to ‘get institutions right for development’, strategies to make the institutions right for women in development are rarely addressed (Goetz, 1997). The emphasis on the formal and instrumental concepts of power and participation contributes to the neglect of women in governance. As Prins (1993:85) argues:

The governing and governance of the question of emancipation has [sic] been reduced to choices of pursuing sector and integrated policy in instrumental terms. This provides an explanation of why emancipation policy has turned out to be
insufficiently effective so far. It is the consequence of the lack of a strategy which operates both from the inside out and from the outside in.

While in the 1990’s feminists attempted to include feminist concerns in good governance discussions (Molyneux, 2001:196), gender aspects of local governance remained ignored. It is interesting to note that despite their strong argument for the significance of locality to women’s lives and empowerment, feminists tend to neglect local governance as a crucial focus in discussing development. The importance of the local level and both gender concerns and good local governance began to attract attention in the “Earth Summit” in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, which focused on sustainable development. By recognizing local government representatives as members of national delegations, this summit perceived local government as partners and not merely as an extension of the hand of central government (IULA, 2001).

However, achieving gender equity in representation has always been a complex and painful process. Even with the existence of affirmative action women in developing countries still experience difficulties in gaining seats in local government. Notwithstanding diversity among women in developing countries, cultural and structural issues have been major obstructions to women in realizing gender equity in representation at the local level. Culture and traditions which perceive women’s primary role and responsibility as being based in the home are the main barriers which sometimes make women vulnerable (UNESCAP, 2000; Ofei Aboagye, 2000; UNESCAP, 2002).

Perceptions of politics as male, and as a dirty area and women’s perceived lack of knowledge and interests in the processes and structures of local government strengthen the marginalization of women in local governance. Besides these obstructions, poverty and illiteracy play an important role in obstructing women’s participation in local governance (Narayanan, 2002:295). Also, the high cost involved in attending elections obstructs women’s achievement in competing in them. In Sri Lanka, for example, during the period 1991-1997, the already marginal representation of women dropped even lower because of intertwined factors such as women’s reluctance to compete with men of different political parties, the expensive nature of the present system of proportional representation, and a cultural background where women are reluctant to be involved in conflicting political situations (UNESCAP, 2000). A study on India showed that a variety of reasons that include the existence of vested interest groups, lack of party support, the criminalization of politics, women’s lack of mobility, education and resources have obstructed the enhancement of women’s political participation (Narayanan, 2002:295). Other concerns about the significance of reserving seats for women, as in the case of South Asia, is that marginal groups including women remain at the bottom of local government agendas since local government is mostly dominated by upper and powerful castes (UNESCAP, 1998).

The interlocking of private and public patriarchy in Third World countries increases the complexity of achieving gender equity through reservation seats at the local level. Walby (1996) uses private and public patriarchy to distinguish dimensions and sites of patriarchy which have exploited women. Private patriarchy occurs in the household where men, whether as fathers or husbands, directly and individually control and oppress women for their own benefits. Restrictions preventing women from entering the public sphere are used to maintain women’s subordination. In public patriarchy, women are not restricted from entering the public sphere, but they are subordinated within public arenas. Men, collectively rather than individually, exploit women (Walby, 1996:5-20). In Third World countries, it is difficult to separate private and public patriarchy since they frequently interlock in subordinating women. For example, in the case of Tamil Nadu, the achievement of state policy in empowering women through reserved seats for women has been obstructed by the interlocking of private and public patriarchy:

The failure of the state to endow women with economic and social entitlements, and a state bureaucracy which is trapped within a patriarchal worldview, are both reasons for the lack of active participation by women in local structures of governance... The non-state domain often achieves this [obstructs women’s participation] by locking together private and public patriarchies, and by
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The complexity of intertwining factors which obstruct women in equalizing processes at the local level means that measurements frequently used in addressing women’s issues through the improvement in women’s representation, such as reserved seats, is inadequate in ensuring women’s effective participation or in ensuring that women’s interests are considered in the policy and programs of local government. This measurement should be accompanied by additional measures such as awareness raising, training programs for female candidates and representatives, the cultivation of links and networks between women working within local government and women in NGOs, and the timing of meetings and provision of childcare to fit in with women’s schedules (Byrne and Laier, 1996).

Interactions and relationships between women’s movements outside government bodies with women working from within determine successes in engendering local governance. Cases of engendering local governance reveal that transforming the agenda of local government cannot rely solely on women working within local/national government, but depends also on a constant and constructive relationship between women working in bureaucracy and grassroots women’s collectives (Rosario, 1997; Mauclay, 1998; SSP, 1999). Structures and mechanisms, such as decentralization procedures, are required at the local level to ensure consultation with women’s organizations and that women’s needs and interests are taken into account in policy decisions and the allocation of resources. In order to ensure local level implementation of gender policies and to increase accountability of service provisions to women, gender units or women’s committees within local government are required. Along with these strategies, local level bodies which invite participation from civil society organizations should ensure that they include representation from women’s organizations and ensure that participating institutions take measures to increase female representation and voice in their organizations (Byrne and Laier, 1996).

The comparison between Chile and Brazil suggested that political parties which are committed to gender equality and initiatives from local communities, such as in Brazil, are more successful in empowering women than is the imposition of a central government program by the Chile government (Mauclay, 1998). Experiences of several countries in Latin America reveal that the increasing participation of civil society and the deepening of democracy are crucial components in altering the political terrain to be more accessible to women in participating in as well as determining local government agendas. In Brazil, the Worker’s Party through direct and indirect strategies provides new spaces for women as political subjects. It responded to women’s practical and strategic needs by decentralizing municipal services, and a gender-alert approach to city planning including commitment to desegregate the city (Mauclay, 1998). Whenever political parties are committed to gender equality and the implementation of initiatives from local communities, and collaborate with NGOs, the church and well-organized feminist groupings, such as is the case in Brazil, then local government will provide an entry point for women’s empowerment.

Prins (1993) points out that this interaction provides women with room for manoeuvre in which options and constraints to action are determined by organizational structures and the political climate. Analyzing the case of women’s emancipation in the Netherlands she argues for strategies which focus more on strengthening the relationship between women inside and outside government. Since too much attention has been given to institutional questions on emancipating women, strategies aimed at strengthening the interaction between women’s movements and policy makers should become crucial means in empowering women.

CONCLUSION

Despite diverse definitions of governance, there seems to be an agreement that good governance means the involvement of women and men not only in implementation of development programs but most importantly in decision making processes. In other words, participation in local governance means both active involvement as well as control by both women and men in determining local government agendas. Good governance, with its emphasis on civic engagement and participation, can only be properly understood with reference to the prevailing constructions of gender (Beal, 1998; Bhatta, 1998).

Since women are diverse in their interests and needs, all parties involved in women’s
empowerment should have concepts of governance and good governance which are sensitive to this diversity. The imposition of a Western version of good governance as a condition in giving aid to a national government, for example, will result in the ignorance of the local context since the national government will impose this version on local governments. Local governments then also impose this at their level, thus ignoring the specificity of women’s needs in policy making. A definition of good governance must take into account the social, historical, cultural, and political diversity among nations and also be sensitive to the diversity of needs within groups and between individuals in any location, with gender equity standing high on the governance agenda.

Local governance, thus, is about not only formal process and structures but also informal processes and spaces, in which actors and factors interact with each other in their daily lives. At this point, ‘a consciously political approach which views local government as a site of political action with the state at the local level rather than a technocratic, bureaucratic, managerial, or welfarist approach which strategically placed conduits of welfare policy aimed at family and community is more beneficial in approaching local government’ (Mauclay, 1998:105). As Phillips (1996:128) succinctly argues ‘any politics that seeks to subvert existing agendas will get its first breaks at the local level’.
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