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## The Political Deficit of Substantial Democratisation

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There is wide agreement that the essence of democracy is ‘popular control of public affairs based on political equality’. In addition democracy is characterised by the qualities of participation, authorisation, representation, accountability, transparency, responsiveness and solidarity (Beetham 1999). The challenging question is what instruments and actors can promote these aims.<sup>1</sup> This chapter is about problems of substantial democratisation. What kind of democracy is that? Definitions matter. Substantial democratisation is when important actors with popular constituents find that the best way of affecting matters of common concern in a society is to fight for and develop significant pro-democratic rights and institutions that citizens have both the possibility and the capacity to make use of.

This is in sharp contrast to the argument by many concerned scholars that democracy will be only formalistic unless its substance also includes (a rarely specified degree of) social and economic equality in the society at large. Such wide definitions are rejected here. This is because they are deterministic, closing our eyes to the possible importance of political democracy *in the promotion of* social and economic equality. In this respect, we rather agree with mainstream political studies that it is analytically most fruitful to limit the core instruments of democracy to human rights and basic judicial, administrative, political and civil–society institutions.<sup>2</sup>

There is also a need to qualify, however, the standard assumption that it is only these rights and institutions as such that are intrinsic to a substantial democracy. Aside from performing well, they must also be spread beyond the metropolis and cover vital issues of public concern. Otherwise democracy would indeed be a formality by only covering a limited territory (excluding, for instance, indirectly ruled ‘tribal’ areas),

only including a narrowly defined public sphere (excluding, for instance, gender issues), and being 'choiceless' (because of excluding, for instance, public control of fundamental economic regulation). Finally and just as important, the instruments of democracy do not work by themselves. People in general must possess sufficient powers and other capacities to access and make use of the tools. This is not to say that substantial democracy presupposes social and economic equality – only that people must be resourceful enough to be present in vital parts of the political system, politicise their basic interests and mobilise broad support, so that they stand a fair chance of using the rights to freedom of speech and organisation as well as the free and fair electoral institutions. Otherwise, democratisation and democracy will not be substantial enough to constitute a meaningful way for people to try to solve common problems and build a better life.<sup>3</sup>

What are the problems of fighting for and promoting substantial democracy? The focus of this chapter will be on three sets of obstacles and solutions. The *first* set is that the standard theories of democratisation take it for granted that 're-accommodation between authoritarian and democratic elites' is more feasible and favourable for democracy than popular mass action. There are good reasons for questioning this assumption and for avoiding it as a premise for further work. The *second* dilemma is that no alternative theory and strategy has grown out of the more promising popular efforts at democratisation like those of Porto Alegre and Kerala. As indicated in the introduction to this book, the usual explanations for why these impressive showcases were possible are insufficient. In this chapter, we shall analyse why the experiments in Kerala were not only possible but also destabilised, and why similar efforts in the Philippines and Indonesia have been less successful. The root of the problem seems to lie in the *political deficit* in new forms of popular democratisation, especially with regard to the weakness of the links between civic and political action. The *third* challenge is the need to develop an analytical tool to 'test' the general validity of such case study-based results and provide more conclusive arguments in discussions on effective politics of democratisation. This is tried out in the case of Indonesia.

### **Elitist vs popular democratisation**

The currently dominant school of thought about democratisation in developing countries grew out of earlier empirical generalisations about the positive role of liberal modernisation and the middle classes. While

this positive role had been held back in countries such as those of Latin America, the new school of thought added the 'intuitive assumption' (Whitehead 2002: 63), that it was both possible and necessary in this context to proceed directly by way of peacefully negotiated transitions towards democracy in the way that happened in Spain in the 1970s.<sup>4</sup> The first argument for this assumption is that alternative democratisation by left-oriented mass based actions is unrealistic and undermines the immediate importance of democracy. Such politics is presumed to come with demands for radical socio-economic change that would be stubbornly resisted and blocked by the dominant forces. Radical change would then call for the employment of quite drastic means, including violence and riots, interventionist states and Machiavellian parties, which would weaken democracy.<sup>5</sup> The second argument, then, is that the prospects for democratisation are more optimistic by way of the internationally supported negotiation of pacts between moderates among the authoritarian and democratic elites as well as by the crafting of the fundamental institutions related to human rights, rule of law, 'free and fair' elections, 'good governance' and civil society. The underlying belief is that the incumbents will be prepared to accept and adhere to the most fundamental rights and institutions in exchange for protection of their assets and businesses.

While positively stressing the importance of politics against structural determinism, these mainstream perspectives not only refute the view that extensive modernisation and radically altered power relations are a precondition for democracy but also the more modest requirements of substantial democratisation. Is that convincing? Should substantial democratisation be ruled out at the onset? There are three major reasons for questioning the dominant assumptions: their dubious historical perspective, the poor outcome of their own projects, and the fact that popular efforts have often proved more genuine and promising.

First, the poor reading of history. While radical structural modernisation has often been associated with turbulent upheavals, quite a few of these have also been recognised as having been fundamental to democratisation, including the French revolution and the anti-colonial liberation struggles. A trustworthy analysis may not start, therefore, by excluding the possibility that such radical transformations might be essential for democratisation in certain contexts. Besides, several leftist mass organisations have managed to combine demands for structural change and peaceful political democratisation, including in Scandinavia. It is true that many post-colonial states turned authoritarian, 'patrimonial', and predatory, but it is not clear whether this was mainly because of the

states as such, or because of the actors and forces that hijacked them in the midst of the cold war and in the context of poorly reformed agrarian and other power relations. Further, of course, Marxist theories and mass based organisations have sometimes been associated with this authoritarianism. Their democratic deficit is undisputable. Yet, the same goes for the conservative architects of the Asian developmental state and the liberal middle class politicians who are in favour of Samuel Huntington's thesis (1965, 1968) that there is a need for top-down 'politics of order', if necessary with the active support of the army, before ordinary people may be allowed to participate. Moreover, the common commitment to democracy on the part of radical labour organisations and sometimes even by significant communist parties points to the importance of contexts and of specific analyses and strategies rather than there being something inevitably destructive in Marxism and radical mass organisation (cf. Törnquist 1989 and 1991a; Rueschemeyer *et al.* 1992, see also Beckman's chapter in this book).<sup>6</sup>

Contemporary history lashes back as well. The end of the cold war removed some of the devastating tendency to subordinate vital issues such as democratisation to the struggle against an externally imposed main enemy, as well as the possibility for various rulers to substitute foreign backing for popular support.<sup>7</sup> It is true that global neo-liberalism has undermined much of the previous attempts at promoting democracy through citizens' education, basic social and economic independence, popular mass organisations, and programmatic political parties, but it has also helped to do away with a good deal of harsh statist repression, thus creating more liberal public spaces. Similarly, the worldwide expansion of capital not only promotes transnational business but may also pave the way for a more unified left-oriented struggle over democracy, including, as pointed to in Beckman's chapter, among labour. This is partly because economic expansion undermines *both* the old Communist argument that since capitalism has been impeded by imperialism there must be enlightened political shortcuts to progress, *and* the Social Democratic thesis that since modernisation is delayed, but remains a precondition for democracy, there may have to be middle-class coups and technocratic engineering to pave the way for modern development. At any rate, for the last two decades or so, those sections of the Left that have been engaged in the re-thinking of old orthodoxies, and new generations of activists, have made use of the wider space both to fight neo-liberalism, and to substitute self-management and networking groups and movements for the old top-down driven efforts by party and state. One may well problematise the democratic character of these

new spaces and reactions (as has been done in several of the preceding chapters and as will be done in this one as well), but it would be premature to negate their potential and vitality by holding on to outdated assumptions.

The second case against the dominant democratisation project is based on its own poor results. Liberties and rights have often been expanded but many observers question their substance for ordinary people and mention the high number of 'illiberal' (electoral) democracies' (Bell *et al.* 1995). 'Semi-authoritarian' regimes seem to come back (Ottaway 2003). There are strong indications that democratic advance requires that the old forces should be defeated before they are accommodated (McFaul 2002). Actually existing civil society does not match up to normative expectations. Much of the social capital that is supposed to 'make democracy work' flourishes instead within ethnic and religious communities. Delegation of authority through 'free and fair' elections is rarely supplemented by representation of basic interests and ideas. The limited capacity of people to make use of various means of democracy is often accompanied by a similarly limited capacity of politicians and institutions to take independent decisions and implement them. These are the conditions of so-called 'choiceless democracies' (Mkandawire 1999; Abrahamsen 2000). Scholars and practitioners trying to 'consolidate' democracy give priority to the timing and crafting of best possible institutions but lack convincing answers as to what interests, powers, and actors are able to enforce and implement their recommendations (cf. World Bank 1997; UNDP 2002). Others focus on how the old oligarchies manage to adjust their old interests and practices to new and supposedly democratic institutions rather than being disciplined and transformed by them. On reflection, O'Donnell (1994, 1996, 2002) argues that institutional changes have proved insufficient. New or restored democracies are often characterised by popular delegation of power to populist and clientelist leaders within formalised institutions, including 'free and fair' elections. These delegative practices come close to what scholars on Africa (and Asia) have labelled neo-patrimonialism (cf. Clapham 1985; Chabal and Daloz 1999). The basic dynamics of such undisputable tendencies, however, are mainly explained in terms of long-term cultural patterns within the elite, such as the Latin American *caudillo* leader who is deemed capable of almost magically taking into account all contradictory interests that back him. This thesis obscures the processes through which such practices are upheld and reinvented; processes which are more fruitfully analysed in the literature on the legacy of indirect rule (Mamdani 1996 and see Nordholt in this book), the links

between state and society (Migdal *et al.* 1994) and on the *ménage à trois* between primitive accumulation, liberal elections and bossism (see Chapter 3 by Sidel in this book). In Indonesia, for example, the standard recommendation to exchange protection of private property and business for political democracy and the rule of law is not misplaced for special cultural reasons but because of the simple fact that business remains in critical need of partisan intervention by politicians, bureaucrats, judges and officers who themselves are engaged in primitive accumulation of capital (see Törnquist 2003b).

The third development that speaks against the 'transition' theories is that even if popular efforts at democratisation have rarely been decisive they have certainly proven increasingly important and genuine. The list could be extended and include examples from local peasant, labour, women's and environmental groups, to activists against neo-liberal globalisation. Previous chapters in this book (by Stokke and Oldfield, and Sidel) have drawn attention to the consistent popular efforts of democratisation in spite of the ANC's semi-authoritarian tendencies and the subordination of the Philippines middle class to elitist democracy. Other chapters (by Schönleitner and Tharakan) have analysed the currently available showcases – which happen to be leftist participatory practices in Brazil and attempts to renew the widely acclaimed Kerala model of human development by way of democratic decentralisation and a People's Planning Campaign.<sup>8</sup> Even poorly organised pro-democrats made a difference in the 1986 velvet revolution against Marcos in the Philippines as well as in the 1998 dismantling of one of the most effective and longest serving dictatorial regimes, that of Soeharto in Indonesia. By now, moreover, the core of these 'old' activists is among the few who consistently try to deepen the 'actually existing' elite democracies.

### **The political deficit**

While the basic assumptions of the dominant school of thought, therefore, have not proven solid enough – but rather have obscured analyses and support for some of the most promising tendencies and efforts at democratisation – this does not mean that the hopeful popular experiments are sufficiently strong and well organised as to constitute a full-scale alternative. In view of the poor outcome of the standard 'transition' projects, it is true that popular efforts seem to be necessary for *substantial* democratisation, but there is comparatively little interest in and knowledge of the politics of fighting for and

implementing such changes. This is the *political deficit* of the new forms of popular democratisation.

As discussed in the introduction and in several chapters of this book, there is a strange convergence between institutions like the World Bank and the 'radical polycentrists' within NGOs and new social movements in their ideas about overcoming the drawbacks of standard democratic politics of elections, parties and mass based interest organisations by way of citizen participation as users, consumers and members of civil society associations, and through the nourishing of communitarianism based on customary law.<sup>9</sup> One of the major assumptions is that people may thus come to trust each other (or enjoy 'social capital'), put an end to struggles amongst themselves over their different interests, resist state interventionism, and so promote 'good governance' and economic development. Alternatively, in the view of radical students of 'post-industrial capitalism' and globalisation like Michael Hardt and Toni Negri (2000), power has been so localised that there is no decisive central unit left to fight, and the dominant producers are regulating social relations themselves, so that strong parties and representative democracy are unnecessary. In short: a depoliticised and unconstitutional form of democracy that negates conflicts over ideas, interests and power relations.

The more balanced left-oriented thinkers and campaigners behind the significant cases of popular democratisation in Brazil and Kerala, on the other hand, realise, as was also noted in the Introduction to this book, the need to link new polycentric activities in civil society with local government and political activism and to generate common agendas. They promote, therefore, 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. The major dilemma, however, is that much of the political deficit still applies. Little is said and done about how such links and public spaces emerge, endure and further develop. The argument of this chapter is that the popular experiments have called for *political* intervention, and that their further development is not only a matter of institutional design by committed intellectuals but also of peoples' capacity to develop new forms of interest organisation and political work, including the combining of direct and representative governance in order to withstand various clientelistic practices, whether rightist or leftist.

## The political foundations

In Porto Alegre, the formative neighbourhood committees, for instance, largely stand out as the products of long political struggle against and attempts to survive dictatorship and lack of proper public services, rather than as a result of citizens' passionate desire to spend hours in meetings and 'participatory' activities in order to get access to basic services such as clean water. The importance of the winning of the mayoral elections by the *Partido dos Trabalhadores*, (PT) – which has a history in itself about the importance of 'old' forms of trade union activities and political organisations in addition to 'new' movements – is hard to exaggerate. The capacity then to use the executive powers of the mayor and his staff to facilitate and institutionalise the public spaces and specific principles and practices of participatory budgeting, was partly driven from the top down, and partly depended on the politics of decentralisation in Brazil as a whole. Further, is it possible to reconcile the ideal principles of democracy with the fact that PT and the mayor and his staff seem to have bypassed the majority of the anti-PT city councillors by way of centralisation, in order to introduce the practices of not always constitutionally regulated and accountable direct democracy? It is true that the councillors were products of clientelism, but they were also elected, partly by middle class voters who may not always appreciate (or be appreciated within) participatory processes. As pointed out in the chapter by Schönleitner in this book, 'deliberative participation is embedded in rather than autonomous from local power dynamics, which it is meant to transform'.

Moving on to the popular experiments in Kerala,<sup>10</sup> history did not exactly start in 1996 with the launching of the celebrated People's Planning Campaign.<sup>11</sup> The usual argument is that the campaign depended upon a strong and democratic civil society. But how did that society come about? It did not emerge on its own but was shaped within the context of state and radical politics. One of its roots is in the late 19th century socio-religious reform movements against caste oppression, which demanded equal rights and favourable policies from the relatively autonomous princely states in south and central Kerala. Another pillar is the class based socialist and communist movement with its deepest roots in north Kerala, where the onslaught of indirect colonial rule was most directly felt. Within the framework of the nationalist struggle against the British and for a unified Kerala the class based movements then merged with subaltern civic organisations in southern and central parts of Kerala. These joint forces succeeded in mainstreaming ideas of



politically negotiated and balanced development based on political and social equality, social security, labour rights and land reform. Then much of the reform thus fought for was implemented through strong unions, political movements and a comparatively well developed state and executive government.

Does this mean that the Left Democratic Front and its leading party the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) was the propelling force behind the launching of the People's Campaign in 1996? In fact, this is only part of the story. It was essential that the CPI-M approved of the Campaign, but it is also important to recall the background. After the land reform, by the late 1970s and 1980s, the established Left stagnated. The initiation of the People's Campaign rested instead with those who opted for reforming the Left, not by abandoning it (as several NGOs, intellectuals and ultra radicals did) but by increasing their bargaining power through the shaping of a wider public space outside conventional politics and through the generation of dynamic democratic activities within that sphere. The People's Science Movement, KSSP,<sup>12</sup> was their main organisational vehicle. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, until the Left was voted out of power in 1991, the reformists began to gain the initiative in the public discourse on how to rescue the Kerala model, as well as to prove themselves capable of implementing practical solutions outside the seminar rooms. The background was the struggle to protect the Silent Valley rainforest against reckless developmentalism. By the end of the 1980s, four new campaigns followed suit. One was for full literacy, thus addressing wider and immediate popular concerns and reaching out to many of the underprivileged groups that had not been included in the mainstream Kerala reforms. Second was the promotion of group farming, which not very successfully aimed at stimulating production among the many atomised beneficiaries of the land reform, and generating more jobs and better pay for the agricultural workers. Third was resource mapping with popular participation that aimed at sustainable development through the promotion of 'land literacy'. Fourth was the continuous lobbying of politicians to implement democratic decentralisation.

Was the launching of the People's Campaign in 1996, therefore, merely the concerted revival of these earlier efforts, once the Left was back in power? No, because the first generation of campaigns had come up against serious political problems that now had to be addressed in order to move ahead. The Left had not followed up the literacy campaign among the strategically important subordinate groups. Dubious non-productive interests among farmers,<sup>13</sup> who used to vote for the Left, as

well as centralist policies of the Left's own state ministers, undermined group farming. The lack of a broad social base (similar to that for land reform) was a major drawback of the participatory resource mapping. Hardly any politician gave priority to decentralisation. The reformists themselves proved politically much too weak to make a difference in these matters. Their campaigns did not even generate new votes. For those reasons, the campaigns petered out after 1991 when the Left Democratic Front could no longer provide government support.

During the intermediate period of non-leftist government rule, between 1991 and 1996, the reformists tried to make up for several of these problems. Left-oriented politicians in opposition were made to commit themselves publicly to decentralisation. Various issues and proposals were aggregated into fresh agendas in huge conferences with scholars and experienced activists – who thus gained the upper hand in the public discourse. Models were tried out on how to include various groups and interests on the ground, and for generating broader agendas by combining local governments and a series of participatory councils on different levels. The lack of a social movement for the alternatives and commitment among most of the established Left was not subjected to scholarly studies and public debate but was compensated for in three ways. First because of enjoying the leadership of the leftist patriarch E. M. S Namboodiripad, with his long term commitment in favour of decentralisation, thus making it impossible for the established Left, and especially the CPI-M, openly to oppose the new initiatives.<sup>14</sup> Second, (and again with the backing of EMS) by favouring de-(party)politicisation of efforts at promoting popular oriented development, and the forming of a broad front that would include sympathetic non-leftist politicians as well as KSSP activists.<sup>15</sup> Third, by gaining top-level political support for the shock therapy of massive disbursal of funds to local governments in order to generate popular expectations and engagement (rather than starting by designing proper legal institutions – a process that, history suggests, would most probably have turned into a battlefield for the established elite and its clients).

Before the 1996 elections, therefore, the reformists not only had some ideas and strategies on how to move ahead, but their models also stood out as the only fresh alternative policy. Yet, this was still not enough to launch the People's Campaign. First, the established part of the Left had to win the elections, something that the reformists would have been unable to do. Then it was essential that politically well-placed reformist leaders were also the best qualified scholars-cum-professionals to direct the State Planning Board, through which they were able to reach out widely

and stand up against centralist ministers, party apparatuses and local bosses. Only thereafter was the Peoples' Campaign a viable proposition.

### The politics of mixed results

Thereafter, what were the major factors behind the implementation and outcome of the Campaign? Much of the discussion of it has focussed on institutional design and management, but there are questions about context as well. Where were the roughly one fifth of the *panchayats* that did well? Some point to the strength of civil society, others add the role of social capital, but the successes were clustered neither in the south, where civil society is most deeply rooted, nor in the north, where there may be more social capital within communities. Neither does there seem to be a clear correlation between successful outcomes and the local dominance of Left Front- or Congress led coalitions (Heller and Chaudhuri 2002). The 'good cases' seem rather to be associated with fruitful co-operation between civic activists, usually related to the KSSP, and positive, dynamic politicians in command of local government.

So when and how did that co-operation come about? And why was it so relatively difficult to achieve? Knowledge is limited. Very few have studied the experience closely and talked about it seriously in public. This political deficit, as we shall see, boils down to four major problems of (a) combining different activities in the political system; (b) replacing party-politicised clientelism with more fruitful re-politicisation rather than de-politicisation of ideas and socio-economic issues; (c) preventing powerful actors from conquering potentially progressive institutions such as those related to decentralisation, by combining the practices of direct and representative governance; and (d) of studying and deliberating publicly the politics of democratisation. Moreover, how specific was this for Kerala? While analysing the Kerala experience, we may also compare it briefly with a series of similar efforts over time in two quite different contexts. On the one hand, Asia's Latin America, the Philippines – where democratic middle-class and NGO-led uprisings made Maoist revolutionaries irrelevant. On the other hand Indonesia – where three decades of anti-leftist mass repression and quick modernisation with middle-class consent collapsed in 1998 and thus generated some space for democratic aspirations in the ruins of 'liberal despotism'.<sup>16</sup>

First, the combining of different activities in the political system. The Kerala reformists were good at combining actions at local and central levels but failed to generate a viable alternative to neo-liberalism by overcoming the dualism between, on the one hand, their own new

efforts at participatory development 'between state and market', and, on the other, the traditional and still dominant leftist preoccupation with state, service and industry. This conflict did not resemble the controversy between the two main organised factions of the dominant leftist party, the CPI-M. It is true that the trade union, civil service and industry related faction has been particularly negative in its attitude towards the ideas of popular development, deeming it communitarian and 'greenish', while the at times ideologically more principled, conservative, rural worker-oriented group, with one of its roots in the *Ezhava* caste community, occasionally (until recently) came closer to some of the reformists' positions.<sup>17</sup> In the main, however, the reformists have not received committed backing from any faction but have rather aimed at distancing themselves from party infighting, trying to present instead an alternative development perspective in co-operation with civil society activists, primarily from non-party arenas within an extended public space. Yet, this did not enable the reformists to overcome the division between their own participatory development projects at the local community level and the old leftist organised interests, particularly with regard to the public sector and 'modern' service and industry. Rather, a *modus vivendi* evolved, according to which both sides agreed to fight neo-liberalism and reactionary communalism and then to work according to an informal division of labour. The 'etatists', to begin with, have monopolised the commanding heights of mainstream politics and government, including finance and industry, in such a way that they have had to compromise with various party groups and organised interests among labour as well as business. They have consequently been unable to present a viable agenda for the revitalisation of the economy or for rescuing government and the public sphere as major arenas for democratic decisions on public affairs.<sup>18</sup> Meanwhile the reformists, on their part, have largely been confined to their popular participation campaigns at the local level, in addition to seminars and the expert-oriented State Planning Board, trying, then, to mobilise popular engagement behind alternatives from below. Their impressive experiments, however, have not proved sufficiently forceful as to have enabled potentially interested community development activists to make decisive inroads into mainstream politics and government, create linkages with dynamic sectors of the economy, and develop a comprehensive non-'etatist' alternative to neo-liberalism.

Their Philippine and Indonesian counterparts, by contrast, rarely managed to relate central and local actions and never came anywhere near to a dualistic *modus vivendi* between their renewal-oriented efforts

and previous leftist priorities. The legendary founding father of the Philippine New People's Army, Bernabe 'Dante' Buscayno, for instance, was marginalised when he sought to keep both old Maoists and new civil society activists at bay and to start anew with peasants' co-operatives. The Horacio 'Boy' Morales – Isagani Serrano – Edicio de la Torre faction of the reformist 'Popular Democrats' slipped twice. First they failed to convince the dominant Maoist Left to supplement traditional guerrilla struggles and mass-movements with self-management in civil society. Second, they rallied masses behind the alternative populist patron and President Joseph Estrada but failed to affect people positively and became instead prisoners of Estrada's abusive governance. The most interesting combination between new civic action and 'old' interest based struggles has rather come about when many activists finally distanced themselves from both the old Left and populist shortcuts in favour of building a new Citizen Action Party/*Akbayan*. This is a joint venture of dissident 'popular democrats', former Maoists, radical socialists, related NGOs and popular organisations, and a new generation of younger leftists. *Akbayan's* comprehensive organisation, however, has mainly been related to central level institutions (including party-list elections) and it remains to be seen whether its new engagement in local government (which is further explored in Joel Rocamora's chapter in this book) will facilitate the aggregation of priorities at that level as well (see also Stokke and Oldfield's chapter on the South African experience.).

Efforts in Indonesia at combining different activities at various levels have been even less successful, suffering still from the suppression since the 1960s of all mass based progressive organisations. Civic associations are not even moderated via general NGO-consortiums (as in the Philippines), but only by loose and temporary networks, and through popular and/or resourceful leaders. After the fall of Soeharto, the first priority of popular oriented groups was to escape from old repressive organisations rather than to favour better co-ordination. We shall return to this in the final section of the chapter.

The second element of the political deficit is the general de-politicisation rather than re-politicisation of socio-economic conflicts. The Kerala reformists bravely argued that one of the major problems in the state was party-politicisation of most aspects of government and society. As discussed in more detail in Tharakan's contribution to this book, narrow and clientelistic party-politics had come to dominate even at the village and hamlet level, within co-operatives, public administration, and, for instance, education. Their alternative model was the extension and institutionalisation of local public spaces within which people

themselves would be able to deliberate and negotiate welfare and development priorities and control implementation of various measures. According to the same argument, the less rigid class differences following land reform would not prevent people from participating as reasonably independent and equal citizens.

While practising this, however, the reformists had to handle resistance not only from conservative groups but also from the organised interests and the political parties of the Left, at the central as well as local level. Favourable statements by a few veterans like EMS were not enough (especially after he passed away in 1998). The reformist argument that there would still be ample space for politics in the form of competition among various parties on how to facilitate the best possible welfare for all people, was deemed to be naïve by party activists who had to sustain organisations and win elections under the present conditions. The reformists, therefore, had to compromise with the mainstream Left in order to win some space and support to propel their own alternative project – which, they hoped, would then gain enough popular backing to convince the leftist establishment of altering its way of working.

In addition, the reformists might have spoken out about the character of the current form of party-dominated clientelistic politicisation and combined their project work with the mobilisation of popular support behind demands for change. But the reformists gave priority to general de-politicisation rather than to alternative, non-clientelistic re-politicisation of socio-economic conflicts. The latter would have called for hard debates in the public sphere on whether the problem was really politicisation as such, or rather that the Left had embraced the politics of clientelism by catering to close sympathisers instead of broad interests of wide sections of the population, especially, as pointed out in Tharakan's chapter in this book, after the land reform struggle. In that context, after land reform, the reformists would also have had to discuss publicly whether the interests of these party-sympathisers carried a potential for transforming Kerala in a progressive direction, or, as also indicated in Tharakan's chapter, if one should rather include marginalised sectors of the population, and emphasise gender equality and production oriented policies, at the expense of people who made use of various monopolistic practices – regardless of whether they used to vote Left Front or not.

The Kerala activists' policy of institutionalising public spaces in relation to the existing local governments proved quite successful in tackling the fragmentation of single issue- and special interest related activities that continue to be endemic in the Philippines and especially Indonesia.

The Kerala failure, however, in re-politicising more productive and sometimes new conflicts in order to enforce such a new agenda seems to be universal. The Philippine ‘popular democrats’ whose civic projects were refuted by the Maoists got lost in trendy greenish civil society-cum-social capital perspectives and then tried to compensate their political futility by taking what proved to be devastating populist shortcuts behind President Joseph Estrada. Dissenting commander Dante, on his part, banked instead on idealised peasant interests in increasing production but was let down by contradictory interests within peasant households. And when he finally realised the need to rally people around a common political agenda, time was short and local elections were lost even in his old stronghold. *Akbayan*, by contrast, has developed slowly from its disappointing pre-party attempts in the early 1990s at generating an electoral agenda by summing up the demands of various cause-oriented groups, to more comprehensive perspectives based on alliances with broader popular movements, in addition to NGOs and other groups. *Akbayan’s* problems, however, (as also discussed in Rocamora’s chapter in this book) continue to include the questions of what and how issues and interests should be politicised and given priority. The idea of a social movement based party is fine but the crucial question – as also discussed in the chapter by Stokke and Oldfield in the context of South Africa – is how to link the two, without devastating party dominance or movement fragmentation.

In Indonesia, finally, most activists still argue against any politicisation of conflicts within civil society in order to uphold or build broad unity against the state, including the abusive politicians, bureaucrats and the military, and their business associates. Those who question the basis for such a unity, and who argue instead in favour of entering into politics, usually lack a clear social constituency, as well as strategies for promoting comprehensive movements, and so tend to end up within elitist shortcuts.

The third component of the political deficit is the unresolved challenge of combining direct democracy and self-management with representative democracy and professional administration in order to prevent powerful actors from conquering potentially progressive institutions such as those related to decentralisation and popular participation. During the first part of the Kerala Campaign, nothing drastic happened. The ‘etatists’ held on to the heights of state and government while the reformists pushed for decentralisation, discussed and trained cadres at the Planning Board, and then initiated popular participation in the *panchayats*. After about a year the Planning Board began to implement the decision to devolve one third of the investment

budget to projects to which people had given priority at the local level. At this point dominant groups became worried and tried to take advantage of the new local funds and powers. The Campaign was soon exposed, in consequence, to intense criticism for delays, irregularities, partisan priorities, and 'decentralisation of corruption'. While most central level politicians and administrators were dragging their feet, the committed reformists themselves were not powerful enough to defend the principles of the Campaign. The reformists relied instead on their cadres and on generating local enthusiasm and pressure. Locally, however, politicians and administrators were not always prepared to follow the principles that had been laid down by the Planning Board and enthusiastic Campaign experts and set in motion through various committees and popular forums.

The resistance was not limited to those who claimed that the entire experiment was a leftist conspiracy but spread also to left oriented parties (and related administrators) which were lacking a critical mass of strategically localised activists who could make a difference in the participatory practices. One of these parties was that of the minority communists (CPI). Their major argument was that the primacy of decentralisation, democratically elected representatives and accountable public administrators had to be respected as against various Campaign experts and various *ad hoc* committees which, the CPI claimed, were all appointed by the Planning Board and dominated by the CPI-M. It was quite possible to question the consistency of most of these worries, and to argue that since the CPI and others did not present any alternative way of fighting local abuses and corruption, they were putting the entire Campaign at risk. Yet the democratic and administrative principles were important in themselves. And so long as the reformists lacked good answers, all the other parties could join in the cause of bashing the Campaign and nailing the CPI-M.

By the first part of 1999, the situation was critical. Indeed, there was a serious lack of clear-cut rules and regulations and there was still no firm model for how the participatory practices would be reconciled with representative constitutional governance. There was also a lack of training of local administrators and politicians. The reformists had given priority to popular mobilisation in order to enforce changes that would be institutionalised when no more advances were possible. But now the dominant forces were already taking advantage of democratic decentralisation and the devolution of funds. They even managed to use good arguments about constitutional democracy to undermine the campaigners' ability to prevent delays, abuses and corruption.



KSSP leaders proposed a campaign for intensified popular vigilance but claimed that the Planning Board rather wanted them to give priority to the implementation of good local projects. Meanwhile, ironically, the big communist party, the CPI-M – whose major leaders had always been sceptical of the Campaign but who on principle never accepted any criticism from the CPI – negotiated a compromise with their political contenders, rescued the campaign and finally, during the second part of 1999, despite their earlier reluctance, came out in almost full support of it. The cost for the reformist campaigners, however, was very high. In reality, the party never fully accepted the principles of the Campaign, as designed by the reformists. In addition the reformists were unable to enforce the much overdue public rules and regulations; and the badly needed education of local administrators and politicians never really took off, despite some sincere efforts. Meanwhile the prioritising of the mobilisation and channelling of people's expectations and enthusiasm did not generate a social movement against those abusing decentralisation and the Campaign. The various problems of delays, irregularities, partisan priorities, and outright corruption seemed to increase and the public critique was snowballing.

The finale was tragic. In the selection of candidates for the local elections late in 2000 – in which committed and successful campaigners were widely expected to gain overwhelming support – the established leftist-party politicians gave priority to their own people instead of allowing activists with good record of accomplishment from work with the Campaign to run. Besides, many of the reformists do not seem to have been strong and/or willing enough to put up a fight. So the potentially favourite candidates could not harvest what they had sown, and the training and experience invested in them were lost. The defeat of the Left in the local elections was devastating, even in places where the campaign had really been successful. Moreover, while the reformists were thus stabbed in the back in the local elections, the established CPI-M cadres' own mismanagement of state and government also came to the fore in the 2001 Assembly elections. Their poor liquor policies, unfortunate handling of educational reforms, miserable financial management, and inability to counter both the affects of global neo-liberalism and the rise of local communal forces led to an electoral disaster for the Left.<sup>19</sup>

In comparative perspective, the Porto Alegre-activists have also not been able to synthesise new and old democratic practices. Hence it is tempting to conclude that their more successful participatory policies may be because the political Left around the PT had less deeply rooted stakes in party-clientelistic practices than the CPI-M – which in turn seems

to experience similar problems in relation to more or less independent civic associations and social movements as the ANC in South Africa (following the analyses of Stokke and Oldfield in this book).

The renewal-oriented activists in the Philippines have also relied on decentralisation, but in the absence of land reforms (like those in Kerala), and a broad established Left to relate to (as in both Kerala and Brazil), the activists have fought an uneven battle against local bossism, elitist traditional politics (within one-man constituencies), and rigid Maoist practices. Efforts to combine direct democracy and self-management in civil society with conventional electoral and administrative practices have therefore been as difficult as they are important. Initially, even the activists themselves did not vote for their own candidates; and conventional lobbying and pressure politics often remain more feasible than alternative interest- and policy based projects with regard to elections and governance, such as those initiated through *Akbayan* (and elaborated upon in Joel Rocamora's chapter in this book).

In Indonesia, by contrast, decentralisation emerged as a major trend only after the fall of Soeharto, and then, primarily, as a framework for re-organising privileged access to resources among the members of a more broadly defined elite. This has made it less easy for the democratic groups to unite against a visible enemy. The democratic movement remains too fragmented and socially as well as politically isolated to take advantage of the new spaces. It is true that the movement was influential immediately after the fall of Soeharto, and that local plebeian aspirations flourished around the country. This was based, however, on disjointed civic action, lobbying and pressure that had been loosely brought together by networks, leading personalities and patrons (*bapaks*). As soon as institutionalised representative politics in terms of elections as well as governance were brought onto the agenda, the broad democratic movement collapsed. The often committed but socially and politically 'floating' individuals and groups took shelter, again, behind principled NGOs and a few emerging popular organisations. There is a tendency to compensate the lack of a mass constituency with access to good contacts and the ability to carry out specific civic action. These practices, however, makes best sense in relation to personality oriented one-person constituencies. Ironically, thus, many of the Indonesian groups favour the kind of one-man constituencies that already (as convincingly argued by Rocamora in his chapter) prevent the growth of consistent and comprehensive democratic alternatives in the Philippines.

Finally, the fourth dimension: the lack of a scholarly and public discourse on the politics of popular democratisation. In Kerala it remains

to be established whether there have been significant self-critical discussions amongst the Left about the stabbing of the Campaign, as opposed to continuing squabbles between the different factions. In a rare moment of transparency after the elections, even reformists bound by party discipline spoke up about their frustrating experiences, at least privately and off record. This, however, is also an indication of the fourth dimension of the political deficit: the lack of a scholarly *public* discourse on the politics of democratisation. It is true that the reformists are critical of the conventional, centralised and non-transparent leftist politics and that they have stayed away from most of the politicking. It is also true that one of their major priorities has been the generation of wider public spaces. Leading reformist Dr. T. M. Thomas Isaac has written some of the best and often self-critical analyses of the campaigns. The sensitive and crucial political problems, however, remain non-issues. They still seem to be part of neither the scholarly nor the general discourse in the public space. This is not only a serious problem of transparency, integrity and democracy. It is also a political obstacle: how will it ever be possible to overcome the political deficit of substantial democratisation, if those who aim to reform the current priorities and practices of the mainstream Left (instead of abandoning and become isolated from it) are not actively studying, discussing, proposing alternatives and mobilising support for fresh perspectives within an open, and transparent, and democratic *public* space? The lack of clearly stated perspectives and public discussions may even have contributed to some of the bizarre accusations that the reformists and sympathetic foreign scholars are linking up with the participatory policies of the World Bank, the 'radical polycentrists', and even the CIA.<sup>20</sup>

In Indonesia, by contrast, it is rather the absence of knowledge about the historical importance and experiences of the earlier left-oriented movements that prevents a fruitful debate about how to proceed from the dominant practice under Soeharto of struggle in civil society against state and politics. A new track might imply giving primary attention to the support of people's organisations from below based on their common interests and ability to reform and make use of state and politics.

So far, it is instead in the Philippines that renewal-oriented scholars and activists have initiated critical analyses of both old leftist and new civil society activities.<sup>21</sup> Interestingly, however, most of the sensitive and crucial political problems only became part of the public discourse when the preparatory work for the Citizen Action Party/*Akbayan* was put on top of the agenda.

## Broader alternative assessment

What is the general validity of these case study results? The first round of a broader Indonesian survey substantiates the conclusion about the political deficit of substantial democratisation. The primary aim of the survey is to generate more conclusive background information for deliberations on a renewed agenda within the democracy movement (Demos 2004). It is also, however, a pilot-study to find a way of countering the four major weaknesses that we have identified (in the course of this chapter) of both the mainstream institutionalist as well as the alternative social movement-oriented approaches to democratisation. First, therefore, the alternative framework refutes the assumption that popular mass aspirations should be ruled out at the outset in favour of elitist solutions. The new approach is based instead on two rounds of extensive interviews with 400 experienced and reflective democracy activists, in each round, in 29 provinces and on some 13 issue-areas, to be followed by a re-study. In a country with a scarcity of reliable data, these respondents are deemed the best and the most important sources of grounded information about problems and options of substantial democratisation. Second, the new framework abandons the common tendency to identify democracy with its generally accepted instruments (like the right to organise and free and fair electoral institutions) in favour of examining the extent to which such rights and institutions (a) really contribute to the *aims* of democracy, (b) are widely spread in the country and (c) include the most vital public concerns.<sup>22</sup> Third, one needs to consider both institutional and human capacities to promote democracy. The focus on rights and institutions in ordinary democracy-barometers is supplemented, therefore, by the inclusion of the propelling forces of democratisation that are emphasised in social movement studies. The major factors in this respect are citizens' resources and powers actually to use and develop rights and institutions by combining activities in various parts of the political system, politicising issues and interests and organising popular support. As outlined in the Introduction and as further elaborated in the chapter by Stokke and Oldfield, this political capacity building, in turn, is conditioned by the opportunity structure, various sources of power as well as views and values. Similarly, and fourth, the alternative framework also rebuts the opposite tendency among social movement theorists to negate organised politics in favour of direct democratisation and self-management in civil society. The focus is instead on the problems of combining such practices with more conventional tools of democracy like major constitutional, representative and administrative rights and institutions.

In what way do the first round conclusions from this survey support and further develop the case study results? To begin with, the pro-democracy informants qualify the popular thesis that Indonesia's democracy has already collapsed. Exaggerating the situation may pave the way for authoritarian 'solutions'. A series of freedoms, and civil society, are deemed to function reasonably well, except, of course, in Aceh and Papua. This public space is vital and must be defended. The political violence continues, however, and the judiciary, the civil- and military administration, the central and local government and especially the representative political system are in a sorry state. The worst cases include not only the fact that the rule of law is defunct as well as the violence and corruption that have so far attracted most attention, but also the poor standard of socio-economic rights and, most essentially, the lack of representation of people's ideas and interests by way of parties, mass organisations and politicians. The gap, moreover, between the 'good freedoms' and those 'bad instruments of democracy' have widened since 1999. This is particularly serious with regard to the means for improving the conditions in a democratic way through good representation.

Not only do the strategic tools for building democracy need to be improved. People in general and pro-democrats in particular must also be better equipped to alter and make use of them. The persistent critical view of state, elections and parties is well taken, but at the same time, these fields are left wide open for the dominant forces. Two thirds of the democracy movement give priority instead to direct democracy in civil society, partly supplemented by lobbying and pressure politics. A majority of groups co-operate only through loose networks and suffer from lack of organised popular constituencies. Single issues and specific interests are most frequent and there is a shortage of ideologies (as opposed to given truths) about how various interests and issues might be aggregated in order to affect priorities for political programmes and alternative governance. The 'hottest' current campaign, for instance, focuses upon corrupt politicians without offering a constructive alternative. Activists who try shortcuts through popular leaders or established parties tend to be short of a clear constituency and strategy, thus being easy to co-opt or marginalise. Promising seeds for broader agendas, including a green left-of-centre agenda,<sup>23</sup> are not rooted in the broadening of the labour movement, combined with liberal middle class concerns, that has been so important in other processes of democratisation, most recently in Brazil.

The room of manoeuvre, finally, for 'crafting of democracy' during the post-Soeharto period of transition has been radically reduced. While

the 'international community' gives priority to the struggle against terrorism rather than democratisation, an extended Indonesian elite has taken over the means of democracy and makes use of them without promoting the aims of democracy. Even militia and paramilitary groups take part in this 'new game in town'. In Latin America and Southern Europe, former authoritarian rulers survived within an extended private sector by allowing others to take over a limited democracy. In Indonesia, it is not only the former rulers but also their linking of economic, military and bureaucratic power that survives – within the framework of a decentralised state and elitist democracy. Hence, suppression, the defunct rule of law, and corruption continue, and several of the major points in this respect made in the chapters by Nordholt and Sidel are thus confirmed.

### **Conclusions and the way ahead**

What overall conclusions on the problems of substantial democratisation can we draw? To begin with, the basic assumption of the dominant school of thought that popular action is democratically less fruitful than elite-compromises must be abandoned. Sound analyses should not start by excluding the need in certain contexts for radical transformation, by negating the possibility for leftist organisations to combine structural change and peaceful political democratisation, and by neglecting the democratic potential of the new series of civil–society driven efforts. In addition, the dominant project has not lived up to its expectations. In many cases it is rather the popular efforts at democratisation that have proven significant, genuine and promising, despite the efforts at side-tracking them.

At the same time, however, these hopeful experiments suffer from the comparative lack of interest in, and knowledge of, the *politics* of fighting for and implementing such changes. Balanced left-oriented thinkers and campaigners realise the need to link new polycentric activities in civil society with government and politics and to generate common agendas, but little is said and done about how such links and public spaces emerge, endure and further develop. The case study of the People's Planning Campaign in Kerala in this respect, and the brief comparison with similar efforts in the Philippines and Indonesia, clearly indicate that the popular experiments call for *political* intervention. In addition, the further development of such efforts is not only a matter of institutional design but rests with peoples' capacity to develop new forms of interest organisations and political work. This is the *political deficit* of the new

forms of popular-driven substantial democratisation. In particular, it relates – as I have argued – to the problems of (a) combining different activities in the political system, (b) replacing party-clientelism with re-politicisation rather than de-politicisation of ideas and socio-economic issues, (c) preventing powerful actors from conquering potentially progressive institutions such as those related to decentralisation, by combining the practices of direct and representative governance, and (d) of studying and deliberating publicly the politics of democratisation.

These and similar results from case studies should be controlled through broader surveys, designed to counter the fallacies of the mainstream assessments of democratisation and their tendencies to separate institutional and popular capacities for promoting democracy – thus generating more conclusive analysis to support deliberation about improved politics of democratisation. The first round of an attempt to establish such an alternative analytical framework in the context of Indonesia substantiates and expands the argument about the political deficit thesis. Experienced democracy-activist-respondents from around the country clearly indicate that while a series of vital freedoms as well as a reasonably functioning civil society have been introduced in many (though not all) parts of the country, the advancement of democracy is held back by the poor substantive rights and institutions related to justice and the rule of law. The largely defunct political representation of people's major ideas and interests through broad organisations and parties is particularly serious, as it prevents improvements in a democratic way. This has often been neglected in the public discourse, including that among international supporters but also within the democracy movement itself. Worse, the popular capacity to use and improve these strategic means of democracy is also not good. The pursuit of direct democracy in civil society, and the prominence of single issues, specific interests, loose networks, and shortcuts via popular leaders and strong 'traditional' movements, in addition to pressure and lobbying, reflect the pro-democrats' failure to develop ideologies to aggregate issues and interests and generate common programmes in tandem with the building of broad genuine organisations and representative political parties. Finally, these limitations cannot be adjusted by skilful engineering only of better institutions. An enlarged elite has put an end to the transition to substantial democracy by capturing and making use of the supposedly democratic means for its own non-democratic purposes of sustaining the old but now increasingly localised symbiosis of economic, military and political power. Substantial democratisation presupposes, thus, that the strategic tools of democracy are re-appropriated. This calls for giving absolute priority to the

improvement of political representation and, particularly, the enhancement of the pro-democrats' capacity to use and improve it, to make up for the political deficit of substantial democratisation.

## Notes

1. This implies that we object to the tendency to equate institutional instruments with their democratic purpose.
2. Hence, the other extreme in the form of Schumpeterian definitions that would also include 'electoral democracies' are also set aside. Rather we use instead Beetham's (1999) and Beetham *et al.* (2002) broadly accepted identification of some 80 essential rights and institutions. In an alternative assessment project that we shall return to, a few have been added and then all have been boiled down to 40, which relate to (a) law and judiciary, citizenship and human rights, (b) government, public administration, representation of citizen's ideas and interests and accountability, and (c) civil society (including instances of direct democracy and self-management) (Törnquist 2003a, 2004; Demos 2004).
3. This is, thus, despite the fact that an 'actually existing' democracy may have passed the test of Linz and Stepan (1996) of being 'the only game in town', since that game may be limited and only meaningful to an established elite.
4. The formative research projects were initiated in the 1980s, the best known of which were led by O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986), Diamond *et al.* (1988 and 1989), Huntington (1991), and Linz and Stepan (1996).
5. Even if the radicals, quite unexpectedly, had been successful on the battlefields.
6. Such communist parties have been active, for instance, in India since the early-1950s, and another was the world's third largest communist party in Indonesia after independence until 1957–59, when Sukarno and the army began to impose 'guided democracy'.
7. Even though some of this may now have been eroded in the 'war against terrorism'.
8. The Kerala 'model' gave birth to UNDP's alternative measurements and much of Amartya Sen's ideas of entitlements and public action.
9. Even old colonial classifications of various types of indigenous rule (while employing indirect rule) seem to have come to the fore again, not only in Afghanistan and Iraq (cf. Nordholt's chapter in this book.).
10. Which I have followed a bit more closely since the mid-1980s, see e.g. Törnquist (1991b, 1995, 2002a, b).
11. See especially Tharakan's chapter in this book and Törnquist (1995).
12. *Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad*.
13. For instance in land speculation and in getting rid of labourers rather than in developing more intensive agriculture.
14. E. M. S Namboodiripad (of the socially most prestigious Namboodiri cast) was one of the foremost and generally respected leaders in the Indian struggle for national liberation, a noted Marxist theoretician, historian and journalistic writer, one of the founding members of the Kerala communist movement, Kerala's first chief minister – thus also the head of the world's first indisputably liberally-elected communist government – and later on not



only the 'golden egg' of the Indian Communist Party-Marxist but also for many years its secretary general. E. M. S, as he was commonly known, had since long, but often in vain, argued in favour of decentralisation. At the time of the new initiatives in Kerala, E. M. S had returned to his home-state, though still being very active politically and intellectually. Namboodiripad passed away a few years later, in 1998.

15. Including those like M. P. Parameswaran who had turned green socialist Gandhians.
16. For the Philippine and Indonesian cases, see at first hand Törnquist (1990, 1993, 1997, 1998, 2002b) and Adi Prasetyo, *et al.* (2003).
17. For the time being, for instance, the latter group has closed ranks with sections of the trade union faction, as against rival and somewhat less conservative party leaders – in the process, then, rather taking the opposite position of strongly opposing the reformists: see *The Hindu* (Chennai) 15 February 2004.
18. Ironically, for instance, the 'old' organised interests and politics that constituted a basic pillar of the Kerala model have been restricted in the 'new' dynamic sectors, tourism and IT.
19. Just about the only exception was that the dynamic leader of the People's Campaign, Dr T. M Thomas Isaac, entered successfully into electoral politics.
20. See e.g. *Frontline*, 15 August 2003, pp. 40–45, and *The Hindu*, 18 July 2003 and 30 July 2003.
21. Primarily in relation to the Institute for Popular Democracy.
22. In the British audit, following the design of Beetham (1999), and in International IDEA's further developed general assessment scheme (Beetham *et al.* 2002), some 80 rights and institutions are identified as the means of human rights based democracy. To allow for additional vital questions, the alternative framework has aggregated them, considered some revisions and arrived at 1 plus 40. The first relates to the extent to which people identify themselves in political matters with the prevailing definition of the citizens, the *demos* or, for instance, ethnic or religious belonging. The following 40 relate to the standard of rights and institutions with regard to (a) law and judiciary, citizenship and human rights, (b) government and public administration, representation and accountability, and (c) civil society (including instances of direct democracy and self-management). For the details, see Demos (2004) and Törnquist (2003a, 2004).
23. Not green in terms of being Muslim-oriented but interested in 'sustainable participatory development'.