

Chapter 5

Globalization, Decentralization and Local Governments International Networking on Human Rights

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Abstract The generalised implementation of the structural adjustment programs (SAPs) and the ambitious State decentralisation programs, began to dissolve the severity of central governments over the international sphere issues and to be shared with other actors, inside and outside the national frontiers. This added to the proliferation of affairs of transversal nature – e.g. environmental care, human security, human rights, gender equality – which go along the different territorial levels, sometimes outside the initiative and control of the central government. Within democratic practice, the territorial political and administrative organisation arrangement of each State, allows certain degrees of local autonomy for the defense and promotion of their interest abroad, interacting through different ways in global issues. Latin America is illustrative about the transformations, since toward the end of the nineteen eighties almost all central governments had implemented decentralisation policies oriented to the contraction of the State and the embedding of the New Public Management.

Keywords Decentralisation • Globalisation • International cooperation • Structural adjustment programs (SAP) • United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) network

During the critical times of Cold War and the algid Welfare State cornucopia, it was recurrent the idea that the State had two realms, the high and low politics. Inside the national borders the low politics were performed (health, education, labor e.g.). The high politic evoked the basis of three strategic components: national defense, international cooperation policy and diplomacy (Merle 1978, p. 374) that composed then the hard core of the foreign policy. Today this is very different since is obvious the

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overlap between fields and tiers that used to be identified as differentiated grounds: the ‘domestic’ and the ‘foreign’ realm. Now, these categories seem to be diffuse and simplistic in its conceptual construction.

With the generalised implementation of the structural adjustment programs (SAPs) and the ambitious State decentralisation programs, the severity of central governments over the international sphere issues began to dissolve and to be shared with other actors, inside and outside the national frontiers. This, of course, added to the proliferation of affairs of transversal nature – e.g. environmental care, human security, human rights, gender equality – which go along the different territorial levels, sometimes outside the initiative and control of the central government. Within democratic practice, the territorial political and administrative organisation arrangement of each State, allows certain degrees of autonomy for the defense and promotion of their interest abroad, interacting through different ways in global issues.

Latin America is particularly illustrative about the transformations, since toward the end of the 1980s almost all central governments had implemented decentralisation policies oriented toward the contraction of the State, enhanced by the International Monetary Fund and World Bank for improving the performance in public expenditure, and other relevant government issues.

Mainly in urban areas, there was a tendency for constructing more open and fluent relations among citizens and authorities under the principles of local democracy. Along with the decentralisation other determining processes were set in motion in the majority of nation-states in the region. These included the reduction of public finance, the privatization of State companies, and the construction of new conditions for the participation of civil society on public issues, transparency and accountability. According to Selee’s research results, from 75 countries in the world with population around five million inhabitants, 63 (about 84 %) started major decentralisation processes since 1980 (Selee 2004, p. 3).

Also, the electoral competition at all levels of government as well as real possibilities for alternation triggered new potentialities for multilevel governance in Latin America. This concept category articulates the complex exercise of public positions with broad participation by civil society at different territorial dimensions under a multilevel perspective (Alfie and Diaz 2011). Decentralisation is also a relevant topic for the UN-HABITAT agenda. Since 1996, this international body promotes actively the empowerment, autonomy, and independency of the local government worldwide. The Habitat Agenda (ch. IV, pt. D, 2) states the need of increasing ‘local autonomy and participation on decision making, resources mobilization and use, and the strengthening of local cooperation directly with the UN and other international networks’ (Ljungkvist 2014, p. 39).

The Second Report on Decentralization and Local Democracy (2010) is an effective indicator for making a balance on the distribution of public expenditure in relation with the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per government tier. In general terms, there is a general trend to concentration of public expenditure by central governments. However, even when the situation varies consistently from case to case, since the beginning of decentralization processes in the last 30 years can be observed a

significant progress in the balance of fiscal collection and budget allocation for public expenditure regarding GDP among territorial governments and the central government (United Cities and Local Governments (UCGL) 2010).

Until now, local governments have progressively increased their responsibility on issues that are critical to the communities such as infrastructure and urban services (mobility, waste management, water supply, urban development) and the attention to the social sector (education, health, elder care). Frequently those new competences added pressure from the civil society for the democratisation at the local level, where communities use to perceive a higher proximity to public affairs. So the human rights respect, protection, promotion and education, appeared recently as a consistent issue in the local governments' agenda in most of the countries in this world region.

The first important multilateral positioning was in 1985 the European Charter of Local Self-Government in which national governments of the European Union are recommended to recognise the authority of the European local governments to associate and establish and develop cooperation actions and programs at the international level. This in strict accordance with interests of subnational governments themselves and under the self-government sphere.

The international presence of local governments has been gradually increased in intensity and has expanded its agenda in terms of new issues. During the Third High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness (2008) in Accra, Ghana, it was convened to work closer with local governments in order to reach better results from public policies aimed at human development since an important part of the functions of local governments corresponds to issues with a high impact on social welfare and its realisation.

At the Fourth High Level Forum (2011) that took place in South Korea, the document 'Busan Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation' sets the commitment from previous years for calling to the local governments of the five continents to foster the appropriation of democracy by their citizens. A year later, within the Post-2015 development Agenda elaborated by the Economic and Social Council of the UN, consultation processes with local governments on regional and other sorts of issues are contemplated in order to bridge the gap between international or global agreements, treaties and covenants, and their crystallization on the ground with proper appropriation by the target groups and the multilevel net of public policies, including a human rights-based framework approach. In this sense, at its 24th session, United Nations' Human Rights Council Advisory Committee adopted resolution 24/2 (A/HRC/RES/24/2) on local government and human rights, in which it took note of the research proposals, including:

to prepare, from within existing resources, a research-based report on the role of local government in the promotion and protection of human rights, including human rights mainstreaming in local administration and public services, with a view to compiling best practices and main challenges. (Human Rights Council Advisory Committee 2012)

Some time ago, Hocking and Keating pointed out toward two general multi-causal factors driving the incursion of local governments in the international sphere:

(a) The change in the internal sphere where public policies now must have a multi-level perspective, and redefine the intergovernmental relations; (b) the growing capacity of a wide range of interests and lobby groups to use the local and regional political arenas as a means to achieving objectives at the international level and vice versa (Hocking 1993, 1999; Keating 1999).

The economic, political and territorial reordering of the State's role had its initial stage in the crisis of the external debt in Latin America at the beginning of the 1980s. One of the main instruments for change in public policy that would result in a new order in the balance of the territorial distribution of political power were the international institutions created in Bretton-Woods – foremost the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. Multilateral development bank, under the conduction of the U.S. Presidency and Congress, promoted a shift from protectionism and paternalism to an economic model based on the market globalization. Those changes were based on slimming the State apparatus and mostly limited democratisation measures for ruling the procedures of political life, and decentralisation of political power toward the local governments.

The forces embodying globalisation evidenced that is a bidirectional tendency toward the internationalisation of domestic policy affairs, and at the same time a trend to the territorial localisation of international affairs. Is possible to verify the press of these forces to the fragmentation of the traditional foreign policy agendas (Rosenau 1997, pp. 25–52) through the increase of plurality in the terms of quantity and quality of the actors from the private, social and territorial government agencies participating on international relations, using frequently networks and associations support, which will be presented in next section.

Some structural forces have pushed continuously toward the fragmentation of international relations of national States to transnational economic agents, international or supranational organisations, civil society organisations, as well as territorial governments which have been legitimated by popular vote. With their interaction in economic, political or social sector they are contributing to the atomization of decision centers on international affairs and in the proliferation of other actors converging in international action to link under different association formulas.

In Latin America those structural forces were closely related to the new national and international conditions set by the change of economic and political model from Welfare State to free market neoliberalism. The shrink of the national States under the guidelines of the Washington Consensus (fiscal policy discipline, market barriers deregulation, liberation of the inward of foreign investment, tax reforms, subsidies elimination and redirection the public spending based on deep tax reform, among others). Decentralisation, democratisation, globalisation, Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and the generalised urban concentration tendencies are some of these forces that had propelled changes on the role of the local governments in the international stage and the assumption of a more dynamic relationship with the economic, political and social sectors of their communities.

Therefore, local governments may establish bilateral, multilateral or network international relations with traditional multinational organisations and their agencies like the World Bank, the European Union, or the United Nations Development

Programme. A local government might also be a counterpart for a given ministry of a foreign central government or other territorial governments or their associations. It is necessary to bear in mind that local governments use to convey the international interests and expectations of territorially located stakeholders.

This consideration should bring down the pressure on the foreign policy monopoly and lean toward accompaniment on international matters of different tiers of the State as a consistent actor. So far, international relations by local governments found favorable conditions for their development since the generic implementation of structural adjustment programs for the transformation of the economic and political model. In this regard, they have been shown to be an appropriate channel to drive some local public interests and commitments with other territorial entities abroad, and take the opportunities and challenges posed by the intensification of international relations worldwide, including public actors and their social engagement responsibilities, including human rights.

Networks and International Interaction

The diversity of the international relations headed by local and intermediate governments lead us to reflect upon the causes, consequences and limitations of the international projection by local governments that have developed by influence of globalisation of economic forces, generalised territorial decentralisation, ICTs, urban concentration, and a variable tendency toward democratisation of States and societies over the last decades (Diaz Abraham 2008).

In addition to the previous concept, the globalisation process is understood here as the economic restructuring under the form of free market, the reconfiguration of international labor division, the invigoration of ideas, goods and people's mobility, the accelerated scientific-technological change, and the formation of profuse networks for interchange (Friedman 2005). In this stage, intense international correlation of local governments turns out to be a component of the dynamics of transformation of world relations pushing globalisation and urbanization as phenomena unleashing a multiplicity of changes and the emergence of actors in an accelerated way (Hambleton and Gross 2007).

Under those circumstances, where local governments had a very limited experience constructing strategically links with other actors abroad, was a remarkable challenge. The decentralised international cooperation, also known as territorial cooperation, has a key role among the diversity of possible interactions that can perform the local governments nowadays. This approach to international cooperation started to intensify only a few decades ago, in the light of the aforementioned processes which provided it with a diverse complexity of forms and contents. One of them is the exercise of international relations by subnational governments through specific networks.

This relevant aspect is closely related to the transformation of conditions that surrounded their emergence as international actors with their own public agenda.

The post-Washington Consensus local governments' agenda generally considers the materialisation of a basic range of human rights applicable from the local sphere. Under the consideration that all the residents of the signatory territory, no matter what their nationality is, will be the beneficiaries of these rights. In this way local governments are able to play a key role on defending the human rights through its territorial regulations and to provide human rights education and raise awareness between the local officials, institutions or regulations that may violate the human rights of groups or individuals in the city, municipality, region or any other subnational territorial government.

The International Council for Human Rights Policy, organisation based in Switzerland, lead a research that suggests that local government reform contributed to definite progress in some specific areas. As a result of the transformation process, local governments tend to deliver more public services after reform – education, health, water supply, sewerage, housing, solid waste management for example. This evidence suggested that decentralisation increases the tendency to broaden the public access to services, and their availability, thereby increases the local governments' responsibility in promoting economic and social rights. Under a quantitative point of view, the poor and excluded groups also benefit. The research's record about the qualitative progress is less optimistic. It indicates that services are rarely adapted to meet local needs or cultural expectations and most local governments do not promote social participation, nor prevent actively discrimination or act about accountability and transparency as they should. These are key human rights values which the local governments must protect and promote. For sure there's a lot to work to do in this regard.

It concludes that after the reforms where participation increases because new opportunities are created. But there are specific groups and individuals often excluded or unable to make use of them. So the research reveals that is possible that the local government offers more and better basic services but there are certain groups that are not able to take advantage because most are not designed with them in mind. Also, according to the evidence collected by the research group on different continents the accountability topic reveals the clearest gaps. Just a few local governments hold themselves accountable to human rights norms. The enforcement is weak everywhere, concludes the report.

As is possible observe very clearly in Latin America, the public agenda in local governments have experienced a recent and considerable transformation in its relation with the citizenship and the national political power. This, considering actions for the integration of the international relations as a part of the local development strategy. This kind of public practice is a transversal component that impacts over several other public policies, as well as a subject to articulate the efforts of different levels of government and with other territorial entities abroad. This is a complex strategy planned and built by peer partners in order to extend economic, political, social and cultural nexuses toward the outside through the action of interinstitutional networks.

Additionally, it must place itself within a previous strategic framework, and at the same time be part of the territorial public policy agenda. The internationalisation must take into account the promotion of deliberation and appropriation processes with the different public, social and private actors involved. The participative process must focus on local reality and its potentialities, as well as on the possibilities afforded by the international context in that regard. During the Cold War period, the limited international relations of the local governments replicated partnerships schemes inspired on bilateral relations for cooperation between nations. That was the preponderance of the hierarchical 'donor-benefactor' vision, which eventually became more horizontal.

In the light of the new administrative reorganisation processes, formulas for international association of public actors tended to be more extensive and open. In fact, networks have represented a general, viable and alternative way for collective action (Milward and Provan 2000) under the principles of interdependence established on the basis of trust and reciprocity and some rules and agreements assumed by members or participants (Davies 2007). Concurrently to the conditions mentioned above, this kind of networks was created as part of the strategies for the incorporation of international affairs in the public action agendas of local governments. In coincidence with Stone (2004) networks themselves are agents for the transferring of experiences, ideas, public policies and models within the subnational, national and international spheres.

It is relevant to point out some fundamental characteristics that can be observed in intergovernmental networks in general and in international networks of local governments in particular. First of all, we can assert that the reach of the 'local' over the 'global' sphere, and vice versa, depends to a great extent on the conformation of networks on the weaving of multilevel relations established between actors in the public, private and social sectors.

Under these assumptions, is possible to stress some of the general and typical characteristics of international networks of local governments, which together make up a simple classification of their essential characteristics. In this sense, networks are not hierarchical organisations. In fact, they are rather horizontal organizing, productive, consultation or decision making organisations, without many levels or strata. Therefore, agreements, commitments and even rules applying to its members substitute orders, instructions or differentiated distribution of responsibilities that operate in hierarchical organisations. In this way, notions of 'top' or 'bottom' lose their sense and these formulas for uniform relations are built with only a couple of levels to management and organise the administrative tasks and agenda definition mainly.

As a non-hierarchical structure, the networks are formed by actors that share specific characteristics, conditions, values, interests or problems. That is, the community making up the network must have some common ground, which establishes a certain homogeneity within the organisation, even when actors may be local governments, public or private business enterprises, international organisations, groups of producers and other varied agents that converge in a given topic or particular territory with important issues that should be 'internationalised'. Here

appears as necessary the real political will and commitments from any local government with the human rights defend promotion and education in and outside of its territorial boundary.

So, as Kahler (2009) observes the actors are interconnected among themselves make up networks formed by nodes that can be people, groups, organisations or States and of course local governments, linked by democratic values and humanistic conception. The interconnections may be strong with repeated interactions and a constant flow of communication and joint action in attention to specific events or structural conditions (Watts 1999). This relevant aspect was quite different in the bilateral relations or by the international organisations inherited from the WWII Postwar and the Cold War periods, where relations were clearly hierarchically established. Their organisation springs from the distinction among their members and the compartmentalization of their agenda. An example of this may be the closed integration of the United Nations Security Council, which validates the great distinction between member States. Many relevant issues that involve the action of others states are discussed and settled by the Security Council where the great economic and military powers better defend their national and transnational interests. A mechanism that was inherited from the bipolar world's Era.

On the other side, there are some examples of international network created in a post-Cold War with an extended and inclusive spirit like the main local governments global organisation called United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG). This movement is a world network, which seeks to forge a common representation for issues pertaining to cities and local governments in the global arena and connect it with the local public agenda. According to their precepts, they try to increase local governments' relevance as well as representing them for the construction of global governance, while promoting conditions for the practice of democracy and exercise of the human rights on different territorial levels. Therefore UCLG has four basic axes for action: International Agenda, Local Governance, Cooperation, and Sustainable Urban Development, which in turn give way to other subtopics for the conformation of a network's own agenda in the short, medium, and long term.

The potentiality of local government networks for linking local events to regional, national, global contexts and vice versa is a relevant point to consider. They are super-ways for information, interaction and interchange, with repercussions at different territorial tiers. It is clear that networks, even though they may be international, are not exclusively local, as they are connected to other action categories and to territorial actors in other places under a multilevel perspective. In this way, network analysis must consider this structural characteristic they have as communicating vessels or bridges as an inherent characteristic for the understanding and evaluation of a network's action beyond its local context (Granovetter 1983). As is possible to observe, in contrast to what happens in international organisations with hierarchical orders, the network relations are based upon interchanges regulated by principles of reciprocity and equity. In this form, network evaluation by its members tends to focus on the quality of information and interchanges to which it provides access.

United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) network was established in 2004, in Barcelona, merging the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA), the United Towns Organization and the cities' network Metropolis. In the article 3 of its legal framework is explicit that the local governments play a 'vital role' in the human rights realisation as they are stated in international instruments. With a transversal perspective based on gender equality, cultural respect and other values related to the human rights realisation in a democratic framework based on the principles of good governance, sustainability and social inclusion. This relevant example illustrates how international networks tend to be open and accessible for membership. But it is essential share visions, values and interests by the assumption of a major role in global affairs and in the projection and confrontation abroad of the local governments' challenges and solutions.

For the local governments' international networks, the experience and knowledge transmission are determinant aspects for the implementation of public policies that have already been tried in some other city or municipality. One of the main characteristics of this kind of networks is the prompt identification of a common problem upon which it is convenient to establish a basis for the exchange of information and experience. Is important to exercise the debate, persuasion, and search for solutions and responses, in order to direct public policies for each given problem (Stone 2004).

To respond the pressure generated on territorial development, local government networks, unlike international organisations, have reacted in an intermittent way as their flow of interchanges, their expansion or contraction, are not continuous, they are subjected to institutional, legal, internal structure, reach and other types of limitations. However, a hierarchical organisation keeps a compartmentalized order, restricted to a vertical sense authority, while networks are more like flocks or shoals, in constant movement but with variant forms (Watts 1999).

Certainly the world actors' pluralisation in the flow of international interaction and interchanges has not meant the loss in the predominance of national States on global issues. But it is also rightful say that they are no longer the only actors, especially in some specific topics which the competence is shared with other territorial agencies, like the human rights education. For the local governments the international networks are useful for tackle new issues and include them in the local public agenda.

This way, the organisational structure of United Cities and Local Governments provide in the practice a transversal conception about problems and solutions that might we shared between key actors and stakeholders. Apart from the governing bodies, the network is divided into committees and working groups on one side and specific world's regions on the other. This way is possible to have different methodological and content approaches to common troublesome situations, so the public policy building can get some reference points and be enriched by the others' experience.

Since 2004 UCGL started the identification of the most relevant contemporary issues in cities' management and local public agenda. They proceed to the creation of committees for preparing and implementing the policies of the Executive Bureau

within the priority areas. Each Committee is able to create one or more working groups to 'develop proposals and/or cooperation initiatives between local governments and their associations in order to enrich the discussions within UCLG.'¹ The Human Rights Commission is under this two-layer network with a transversal scope in its interaction with the right holders and relevant actors in the field.

As part of a network based on the exercise of democratic values such as the human rights protection, promotion and education insures a common perspective and the awareness of their responsibilities regarding human rights under its authority, and about the right to the citizens to demand their human rights. In this sense, local governments play a key role in the protection and promotion of human rights since they are closer to people's everyday life and continuously carry out decisions that are linked directly to the human rights exercise.

Another remarkable effort for gathering the local governments on this sense is *Human Rights Cities Programme*. It is a specialised network implemented by The People's Movement for Human Rights Learning (PDHRE). This program is focus in leading to action for the realisation of human rights in the city, to benefit its inhabitants and particularly vulnerable groups. Also serve as a model for stabilizing democracy by building good governance from the bottom to the top of the institutional system. A human rights city is defined as a city or community where people try and let a human rights framework guide the development of the community's life (PDHRE 2007, p. 3).

Local government associations and networks at national, regional and international levels mean an alternative mechanism that local governments can use to share information about their experiences and learn about new approaches to different topics related to the territorial management and social engagement. On their own or in collaboration with external donors, they use to organise training sessions and tools aim to local government programming, evaluation, networking, advocacy and other activities related to the governing agenda.

In this sense, local government networks might be the key entry point for helping local governments throughout the world to understand and address the scope of their human rights authority and responsibilities. Undoubtedly, local government networks and their associations provide a vital point of communication outside the national territory. They can bridge the distance between local government and larger international processes. This point is pertinent in relation to human rights, which are increasingly mainstreamed at international organisation, influencing the environment in which national government operates, United Nations and its agencies represent a good example. In fact, local government associations and networks can help to articulate the scope of human rights obligations of their members and participants. Also they can impact on the capacity and relevance of local governments to protect human integrity under a preponderantly territorial perspective of the political power commitment with human rights principles and use.

¹ Source: <http://www.uclg.org/en/organisation/structure/committees-working-groups>.

Final Reflection

The action of structural forces have pushed continuously toward the fragmentation of international relations of national States to transnational economic agents, international or supranational organisations, NGO, as well as territorial governments. With their interaction in economic, political or social sector they are contributing to the atomization of decision hubs on international affairs and in the proliferation of other actors converging in international action to link under different association formulas. At the start, in Latin America those structural forces were related to the new national and international conditions set by the change of economic and political model from Welfare State to free market neoliberalism.

The shrink of the national States under the guidelines of the Washington Consensus impacted over fiscal policy discipline, market barriers deregulation, liberation of the inward of foreign investment, tax reforms, subsidies elimination and redirection the public spending based on deep tax reform, among others. Decentralisation, democratisation, globalisation, Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and the generalised urban concentration tendencies are some of those structural forces that had propel changes on the role of the local governments in the international stage and the assumption of a more dynamic relationship with the economic, political and social sectors of their communities.

Definitively the basic services that local governments provide are determinant to our quality of life. They may include health, education, water supply and sanitation, housing, labour, security, and policing among many others issues. Through the dissemination of the decentralisation tendency, most countries have recently devolved new responsibilities to local government, and their influence is growing gradually. Almost everywhere the local governments are elected directly by popular vote and have become a testing ground for the construction of innovation and political entrepreneurship for the implementation of policies to promote political empowerment of local level, social involvement and the provision of high-quality basic services. In some cases, the policy making and execution process has been successful and were spread across other countries through the international networks and associations of local governments.

All levels of government as well as other institutions to which States have devolved authority are primarily responsible for enforcing human rights. In date, human rights activists concentrated on the performance of all levels and agencies that exercise the State's authority, and not only national level like they did before. A human rights framework means a dynamic construction which is not only relevant to local government but, used thoughtfully, may improve the delivery of key services provided by them. The adoption of a human rights-based commitment provides an internationally agreed, legally binding, and a baseline for decisions in a range of specific areas. In this sense its practice can test and assess the quality of governance by local governments and it can be used during the planning, implementation and evaluation of social programmes.

As the above shows, it is possible to recognise local governments, specially cities and urban municipalities, as the hub for the protection and promotion of human rights, and for the learning and understanding of the human rights norms and, social and institutional mechanisms for its realisation. Some of the local mechanisms for protection and promotion of human rights are the creation of the figure of local ombudspersons, anti-discrimination agencies or complaints boards. Undoubtedly the human rights education is mainly an endogenous process, but is also true that the International cities' networks such as UCLG may accompany the local governments' efforts in developing toolkits for human rights education, foster research on this field, provide opportunities for peer-to-peer learning and create communities for action local and global (United Nations Human Rights Council Advisory Committee 2014).

In sum, the State-centered rationale, inherited from the Cold War and the Welfare State, is still predominant in a great portion of the diplomacy topics. However, the mundialization of economic forces, the pressure regarding democratisation of States and societies, the wide spreading of new technologies, the world-wide spread decentralisation processes, the constant trend to urbanization and economic interdependence have pushed in the direction of a series of structural transformations that have been exposed to this point and that have resulted in the fragmentation of the international relations in democratic States.

A human rights-based approach can be used to inform policy making by public officials, politicians and development specialists, enabling them to take certain decisions better and faster. Nowadays there are just a few local governments have adopted policies that explicitly draw on human rights. In 2007, 17 cities were developing the program and progressively fulfilling the objectives and goals that PDHRE had set forth Cities for Human Rights Programme. The program foresees the development of it in other 30 human rights cities and the training of approximately 500 young community leaders at four Regional Learning Institutions for Human Rights Education.

The international actions of the local governments led to some of them to have joined the Cities for Human Rights movement and probably are working towards the development of a Charter of Human Rights in the City. Others are developing local Charters, like Montreal did since 2003. Despite these explicit commitments, none at present use international human rights to inform their planning and programming in this sense. It is clear that the daily use of human rights is essential for living in sustainable cities, for exercising a participatory democracy and for having more inclusive societies indeed. It's highly relevant the political will and compromise of local governments for working for the human rights realisation in a broad conception.

So far, globalisation and decentralisation have produced mixed results. It has enabled good governments to do it better and bad governments to do it worse, increasing corruption in local elites. If they do it better it might be a chance for numerous people access to influence and to resources and opportunities that they did not have before. Local government can contribute seriously to empower citizens

and improve our chances for having better places to live and to participate in our communities.

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