

DEMOCRACY AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

International IDEA's Handbook on Participation, Representation, Conflict Management, and Governance

The world is experiencing an urban revolution. Today, more than half of the world's population lives in cities; by the year 2025 this proportion is estimated to grow to two-thirds. The number of "mega-cities" (more than eight million in population) has grown from two in 1950 to 21 in 1990; by 2015 they are expected to number 33, with 27 in developing countries. This rapid urbanization is placing immense pressure on cities, while at the same time offering challenges for improved health, education, and environmental management.

No city remains immune from the impact of globalization, from increasing refugee flows to the spread of infectious diseases or organized crime. Yet cities are the engines of the new interdependent global economy.

More than ever, cities need new tools for democratic governance to manage the challenges and respond to the opportunities that arise from urbanization and globalization. They need to grapple with issues that were once the responsibility of national authorities; learn how to accommodate new and diverse populations; and promote active citizen involvement to ensure their community's health and spirit. Governing effectively at the local level is all the more urgent as vigorous local civic engagement builds the foundation for a strong and more enduring national-level democracy.

Democracy at the Local Level responds to the need for a more creative and flexible approach to today's challenges by providing essential tools to enhance local democracy. Organized in six chapters and written by experts from around the world, the handbook offers:

- ✓ Practical suggestions for designing systems of local governance;
- ✓ Principles and policies for managing culturally diverse cities;
- ✓ Choices for enhancing local elections and representative democracy;
- ✓ Options for expanding citizen participation; and
- ✓ Recommendations for the international community to enhance local democracy.

One of the key approaches to improving the quality of local democracy is to increase the *participation* of citizens in decision-making processes. The handbook outlines a variety of methods to promote collaborative decision-making— issue forums, public hearings, sample surveys, citizen juries and peace committees – and it highlights the advantages and disadvantages of each approach.

In addition, as cities become increasingly diverse and feature a range of ethnic, religious and racial groups, *managing conflict* at the local level becomes all the more critical. The handbook focuses on how democratic tools and processes can be used as a system of community conflict management. For example, in war-torn societies such as Kosovo and East Timor, the handbook provides lessons on how the international community can promote local elections and democracy building as a first step and essential building block to reconciliation.

The handbook is intended for policymakers from the international to local levels, journalists, local authorities, civil society leaders, national parliamentary members, official administrative authorities, and citizens. It includes real-life examples to provide ideas and options as well as case studies, checklists, and other tools to make information more accessible.

Sisk, Timothy D, [ed. or et.al.] Democracy at the Local Level: International IDEA's Handbook on Participation, Representation, Conflict Management and Governance. International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance. Stockholm, Sweden. 2001. pp. __ ISBN _____ ; ISSN: _____ Price _____

Content

Chapter One: Concepts, Challenges and Trends

- Defines local governance and discusses challenges and trends.

Chapter Two: Designing Systems for Local Democracy: Three Case Studies

- Outlines criteria to consider in designing systems for local democracy and discusses decentralization and cooperative governance.
- Three case studies on decentralization in the Philippines, fiscal decentralization, and trans-border partnerships on the US-Mexican border.

Chapter Three: Diversity and Democracy: Three Case Studies

- Analyses how democracy can be used as a tool for conflict management.
- Includes case studies on deeply divided cities, peace commissions, international migration, and peace building in ethnically divided cities.

Chapter Four: Enhancing Electoral Democracy

- Discusses types of democratic institutions at the local level.
- Provides options on electoral systems and the particular concerns for local democracy.
- Includes discussion on political organizations and parties.

Chapter Five: Expanding Participatory Democracy

- Discusses the importance of collaborative civic engagement and the issues relevant for consensus decision-making.
- Evaluates participatory approaches and outlines advantages and disadvantages.
- Emphasizes the importance of communication and "virtual" democracy.

Chapter Six: Promoting Local Democracy in the 21st Century

- Provides an overview of the democracy promotion network.

Reviews

"[The handbook] contains useful information for all those charged with the task of introducing or reinforcing methods of popular participation and conflict management at the local level."

Jacques Jobin, Office of the Secretary General, International Union of Local Authorities

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