

What role for mayors in good city governance?

SUMMARY: The last 10 years have brought more attention to the role of mayors in development. Mayors generally head the political and administrative parts of urban governments so what they do and think influences government policies and practices. Many mayors have been important for poverty reduction, as their attitudes towards or relations with low-income groups and their settlements influence the possibilities of these groups getting or building housing, being able to pursue livelihoods and having access to water, sanitation, health care and schools. Successful mayors have balanced the need to attract new investment and support business expansion with good social and environmental policies; many have made government agencies more responsive and accountable to citizens, with particular attention to allowing more voice and influence to low-income groups or other groups that generally have little influence. But many mayors remain hostile to the informal enterprises and settlements that provide the homes and livelihoods for much of their population; indeed they may view these as constraints on development. In many nations, mayors' capacity to act is severely constrained by higher levels of government and by long-established traditions of clientelism or corrupt practices within local government. In many low-income nations, it is constrained by very inadequate funds available for investment in relation to deficits in infrastructure and service provision. The nations where mayors have had positive roles in development are mostly nations where local government reforms have strengthened the capacities of city and municipal governments while also increasing their transparency and accountability to their citizens.

I. INTRODUCTION

MAYORS ARE MEANT to be guarantors of services, the public good and citizens' participation in local life.⁽¹⁾ So what role can mayors have in "good city governance" and is such governance "good" for those with limited or inadequate incomes? Clearly, good governance needs to combine economic policies that support city prosperity with good social policies. Environmental policies must address local environmental health risks (and most such risks are usually concentrated among low-income groups in informal settlements); now they are also expected to address global warming.⁽²⁾ Getting a balance between these is never easy (and external funding may encourage attention to the wrong issues). There is also the issue of what mayors cannot do. While the success of certain mayors is well established, it is also important to consider what they cannot do or what they can only do when other factors are present. As discussed later, the success of many mayors in Latin America would not have been possible without broader legal and institutional changes at state and national government levels.

It is difficult to know what creates and sustains "good governance" for those city dwellers with inadequate or limited incomes. But we know enough to realize that five aspects generally support this:

- elected city governments;
- city governments with the capacity to act, including the resources and powers to allow them to do so (often linked to decentralization);
- formal and informal avenues to allow civil society to influence what governments do and hold them to account;
- organized urban poor groups that can work at the level of the city, that are able and willing to interact with city government and to whom city government is prepared to listen (otherwise middle- and upper-income groups are likely to be the key civil society influences on city policies); and

1. See Diop, Mamadou (2007), "The role and place of mayors in the process of decentralization and municipal management in Senegal", in Dickson Eyoh and Richard Stren (editors), *Decentralization and the Politics of Urban Development in West Africa*, Comparative Urban Studies Project, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington DC, pages 197–208.

2. Bicknell, Jane, David Dodman and David Satterthwaite (editors) (2009), *Adapting Cities to Climate Change: Understanding and Addressing the Development Challenges*, Earthscan Publications, London, 397 pages.

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3. Perhaps most dramatically in the case of Harare, as described in Amin Kamete's paper listed on the back page.

4. See Brief 19.

5. See Julio Dávila's interviews with four Colombian mayors, listed on the back page.

6. Marcondes, Claudia and Richard Stren (2001), "A conversation with Raul Pont, mayor of Porto Alegre", in Mila Freire and Richard E Stren (editors), *The Challenge of Urban Government: Policies and Practices*, World Bank, Washington DC, pages 145–150.

7. See Brief 17.

8. See Kumar Karki, Tej (2004), "Challenges of managing a government town planning office in Nepal: a planner's experience", *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 16, No 2, October, pages 223–234.

9. Hordijk, Michaela (2005), "Participatory governance in Peru: exercising citizenship", *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 17, No 1, April, pages 219–236.

10. Kelly, Philip F (1998), "The politics of urban-rural relationships: land conversion in the Philippines", *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 10, No 1, April, pages 35–54.

11. Balala, Najib (2001), "Challenges of local government: the experience of one African mayor", in Mila Freire and Richard E. Stren (editors), *The Challenge of Urban Government: Policies and Practices*, World Bank, Washington DC, pages 81–89.

- a rule of law not too biased against low-income groups and their informal housing and enterprises. Of course, this rule of law must also protect community leaders and other citizens from arbitrary arrest (or worse).

This is not to claim that all five aspects need to be present to explain every example of a city government that has brought benefits to those with limited incomes. It is also difficult to generalize when the scope for what can be done and what needs to be changed is so rooted in local contexts and local political forms – as well as the extent of supportive laws and institutions at higher levels of government. But most of the examples given in this Brief of city governments with policies that benefit the poor (and/or work with them) exhibit most of these five aspects, whereas they are mostly or totally absent in most examples of anti-poor government policies or measures.⁽³⁾

City governments have important roles in addressing poverty and inequality. In cities where low incomes are a reality for a significant proportion of the population, their access to safe, secure housing, infrastructure, services and other resources is critical for avoiding poverty. In most cities, local government has some role in all of these, especially in providing basic services and in influencing access to land for housing and in what can and cannot be built. City governments generally influence the scope for livelihoods in the informal economy – for instance, whether and where street trading can take place. There are dramatic differences between cities in the scale of the deficit in infrastructure and services and in the investment budget available to local government (including a high proportion of cities with little or no investment capacity). But what is of interest is what makes the government of a city (or smaller urban centre) more, rather than less, responsive to the needs and interests of their low-income citizens and what role there is for mayors in this.

II. WHAT ROLE FOR MAYORS?

WHAT MAYORS DO and think is obviously an important influence in many cities. Mayors generally head the political and administrative parts of urban governments that are so important to low-income groups with regard to the potential for getting or building housing (or land for housing),⁽⁴⁾ being able to pursue livelihoods, having access to water, sanitation, health care and education, and often for the rule of law. Local governments are particularly relevant to people's daily lives as they manage the infrastructure and services that directly influence quality of life.⁽⁵⁾ Mayors generally have some influence on the form of the city's current and future development, including its success in attracting new investment. They are also likely to influence the form and extent of the urban centre's physical expansion (and whose needs are accommodated in this expansion) by the extent of their commitment to managing land use in ways that allow low-income groups to get land for housing.

In some contexts, mayors have considerable importance for the nature of the government's relations with urban poor groups – for instance, in opening and maintaining dialogue with these groups or other groups whose needs have been given inadequate attention (including women, youth or children), and in piloting institutionalized change that can transform the ability of an urban government to address the needs and interests of the poor – for instance, through introducing or supporting participatory budgeting⁽⁶⁾ or choosing to support representative organizations of the urban poor.⁽⁷⁾ Local democracy has been an important feature of most pro-poor city and municipal governments. In addition, most of the more innovative mayors have been directly elected by city voters (rather than chosen by elected city councillors). Perhaps mayors who depend on voters in their city or municipality are more likely to be responsive to the needs and priorities of these voters – although it might also be that such mayors are more visible and that their work and influence is noticed more than that of mayors or heads of city councils who are chosen by elected city councillors. In addition, elected mayors may focus their attention on the people and urban districts that helped get them elected or, once elected, become less responsive to civil society demands and pressures as they claim that their election gave them the right to make decisions.

It may also be that urban researchers are drawn to positive examples of mayors, so the literature does not fully represent the negative examples. But there are case studies that document what mayors are not doing; some also note how particular mayors are anti-poor, or are serving primarily the interests of the elite. Where corruption is mentioned in relation to mayors, it is most often about corrupt practices related to land use and development. This is hardly surprising in that land use regulations usually fall within the responsibilities of local governments, and land values are so influenced by what kind of development is allowed on this land; so there are examples of mayors providing permits to illegal builders,⁽⁸⁾ or illegally selling off plots,⁽⁹⁾ or who are involved in re-zoning decisions that support real estate development that involves bribery and kickbacks.⁽¹⁰⁾ There are also case studies that show the very limited powers and budgets available to mayors, which restricts their capacity to act; here, even elected, accountable city governments may have very limited capacity to act. There are also cases where mayors have no control over senior civil servants (as these are appointed by national government), even as these engage in land grabbing and graft.⁽¹¹⁾

12. See Stren, Richard (2008), "International assistance for cities in developing countries; do we still need it?", *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 20, No 2, October, pages 377–392.

13. Velasquez, Luz Stella (1998), "Agenda 21; a form of joint environmental management in Manizales, Colombia", *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 10, No 2, October, pages 9–36.

14. López Follegatti, José Luis (1999), "Ilo: a city in transformation", *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 11, No 2, October, pages 181–202.

15. Menegat, Rualdo (2002), "Participatory democracy and sustainable development: integrated urban environmental management in Porto Alegre, Brazil", *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 14, No 2, October, pages 181–206; also Souza, Celina (2001), "Participatory budgeting in Brazilian cities: limits and possibilities in building democratic institutions", *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 13, No 1, April, pages 159–184.

16. See reference 9.

17. Roy, A N, A Jockin and Ahmad Javed (2004), "Community police stations in Mumbai's slums", *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 16, No 2, October, pages 135–138; also Burra, Sundar, Sheela Patel and Tom Kerr (2003), "Community-designed, built and managed toilet blocks in Indian cities", *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 15, No 2, October, pages 11–32.

18. Boonyabancha, Somsook (2005), "Baan Mankong: going to scale with 'slum' and squatter upgrading in Thailand", *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 17, No 1, April, pages 21–46.

19. Hasan, Arif (2006), "Orangi Pilot Project: the expansion of work beyond Orangi and the mapping of informal settlements and infrastructure", *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 18, No 2, October, pages 451–480.

20. See the interview with the mayor by Florencia Almansi listed on the back page.

21. See the paper by Julio Dávila listed on the back page.

22. See also Campbell, Tim (2003), *The Quiet Revolution: Decentralization and the Rise of Political Participation in Latin American Cities*, University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh, 208 pages.

III. A GROWING RECOGNITION OF THE ROLE OF MAYORS?

PERHAPS THE MAIN reason why the roles of mayors (and local governments) in development have been overlooked is the lack of attention from aid agencies and development banks to "urban" and "local" governance, and this persists in many such agencies today.⁽¹²⁾ It also relates to the rather delayed recognition within development discussions of the importance of cities and urban systems in successful economies. But now, no international conference on development is complete without some mayors, and there are even conferences where most of the presentations are by mayors. Several international agencies work directly with mayors – for instance, the Cities Alliance, Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI) and United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG).

Mayors may be invited to give speeches at conferences but it is rare for them to be encouraged to reflect on what they have achieved and why – and what they have failed to achieve. Some case studies of particular cities show the important contributions of mayors – for instance in Manizales,⁽¹³⁾ Ilo,⁽¹⁴⁾ Porto Alegre⁽¹⁵⁾ and Villa El Salvador.⁽¹⁶⁾ In other instances, it is not mayors but senior civil servants who have had important roles in innovations that brought benefits to urban poor groups – community police stations and community-managed toilets in India,⁽¹⁷⁾ and the nation-wide "slum" and squatter upgrading programme in Thailand supported by the Community Organizations Development Institute.⁽¹⁸⁾ In Pakistan, the success of the Orangi Pilot Project–Research and Training Institute in getting much improved provision for sanitation and drainage in low-income districts of Karachi and other urban centres is in part due to senior civil servants who were prepared to support their new approach.⁽¹⁹⁾

An interview with Mayor Lifschitz, who is currently in his second term as mayor of Rosario (Argentina's third largest city), provides a mayor's perspective on what supported or constrained him.⁽²⁰⁾ The effectiveness of his first term depended on a mix of economic, social and political changes that brought benefits to large sections of the population. His policies combined support for Rosario's economic development and environmental improvement with pro-poor initiatives. But he also described the constraints that he faced during his first term, including the limited capacity of any city government to reduce unemployment (although the city government has done much to promote and support local economic development). Also, the larger political difficulty of having the provincial government, the national government and many surrounding municipalities controlled by a different political party – which meant that almost all initiatives in Rosario had to be funded from municipal sources. He highlighted the importance of a coherent strategic plan for a city, which draws in and supports private enterprises and urban planning with strong social dimensions (including expanding public space and improving infrastructure in peri-urban areas). He also stressed the need to control speculation, limit high-rise development and preserve architecture – but not in ways that inhibit good quality new buildings. At the same time, the city government needs to work with local businesses – including working with private landowners to create open spaces, pedestrian zones, public beaches and new parks. Many municipal services in Rosario were decentralized to district centres that provided community space and had sections for health services and customer service outlets for electricity, gas and water. A portion of the city's budget was divided between the six districts so that decisions on priorities could be made within each district; this also increased the scope for neighbourhood community organizations and their leaders to influence priorities.

Interviews with four mayors in Colombia⁽²¹⁾ highlighted their commitment to their city and the financial and personal drawbacks of being a mayor in a country where elected leaders are often victims of violence from illegal armed groups. All four mayors saw their task as breaking with bad political habits and putting local government on a sounder financial footing. All combined social agendas with attention to improving financial management. All saw themselves as political outsiders who opposed entrenched local political systems. Certainly in Latin America, many innovative mayors have come from outside the dominant political parties, and many were trained as architects, engineers and medical doctors – while several came from the staff of universities.⁽²²⁾ For most such mayors, urban planning and land use management is important, but within an alternative paradigm, supporting local economic development as well as social and environmental issues, but less focused on control and more on catalyzing and supporting development. There is also recognition of the importance of a pro-poor social and environmental agenda as well as support for economic development, especially in increasing the scale and quality of public space within the city and within low-income neighbourhoods.

IV. MAYORS' RELATIONS WITH URBAN POOR GROUPS

IN CITIES WHERE mayors have influence, the way in which the mayor views low-income groups and their organizations, the settlements in which they live and the work in which they engage is

important. Mayors often view the poor and their settlements and income-earning activities as “the problem”, even as the city economy depends on them. In many cities, there is a strong middle class that uses democratic processes to push city and municipal governments towards policies that Arif Hasan has noted are anti-poor, anti-vendors, anti-street, anti-pedestrian and anti-mixed land use. These policies are often closely associated with real estate interests. Perhaps it is more common for mayors in Asia to come from the private sector and to emphasize the need to focus on attracting new investment. Many mayors dream of transforming “their city” into a “world class city”. In doing so, they often look to successful cities that they have visited or read about – for instance, Singapore, Dubai or Shanghai. Mayors often want to support mega-projects that will be their “legacy” (and, they hope, get them re-elected or shifted to other political positions), with little concern for the evictions and displacements that these mega-projects can bring.

Singapore has long served as an example that captures the imagination of politicians and developers. But this is without any recognition of what has actually underpinned its success – one of the fastest growing economies in the world over a long period, a very small population with almost no rural population and thus no rapid rural–urban migration boosting the city’s population growth, and much of the land in public ownership. More recently, Shanghai and Dubai have been used increasingly as examples to which cities should aspire, but these are hardly models of participatory democracy. And, perhaps more worryingly, these images are used to justify projects or programmes and “partnerships” with powerful private interests that do little or nothing to address the key needs within the city and that may involve large-scale evictions.

Anti-poor attitudes within city governments may also be supported by the courts – as in Delhi where political and economic interests have reconfigured the politics of public interest to serve middle- and upper-income groups rather than protect low-income groups.⁽²³⁾ Informal settlers are seen as illegal encroachers who inhibit the city’s development rather than as city workers with no alternatives; as trespassers rather than citizens with rights and entitlements. The urban poor are also blamed for pollution they did not cause. One judge commented that: “...if they cannot afford to live in Delhi, let them not come to Delhi.” This is a reminder of how anti-poor approaches become possible even in a long-established democracy, by changing the discourse so that the poor are criminalized and blamed for being anti-progress.⁽²⁴⁾ Organized urban poor groups and the institutional measures that allow them (and other groups) to hold mayors and civil servants to account are important checks on such anti-poor policies; where organized urban poor groups can offer city government partnerships to address such issues together, the possibility of combining economic success with pro-poor measures is much increased.⁽²⁵⁾

There are examples of mayors with not only strong social commitments to those with low incomes but also a recognition of the need to allow them to engage in government – and even an acceptance of the need to work in partnership with them (co-production).⁽²⁶⁾ For some mayors, perhaps there was no alternative to this – for instance, one of the key innovations brought by Julio Díaz Palacios as the first elected mayor of Ilo was to make all citizens see that Ilo was their city and to use the municipal government’s very limited budget to work with and support community-led initiatives to improve living conditions.⁽²⁷⁾ The urban centres of Somoto (Nicaragua) and Villa el Salvador (Peru) have had mayors with strong commitments to working with lower-income groups, underpinned by a recognition of both the rights of urban poor groups and the legitimacy of their needs and priorities. But perhaps as importantly, beyond this was a recognition of the right of these groups to be at the table, discussing and influencing policies and initiatives.⁽²⁸⁾

Many mayors or civil servants judged to be “good” were judged so because they worked in partnership with organizations and federations of slum and shack dwellers. Urban poor organizations need to be organized in order to influence their local governments. Past experience suggests that they also need to develop their own agenda and proposals (to show local government their capacities).⁽²⁹⁾ They also need spaces and opportunities where local government will let them work.⁽³⁰⁾ For governments to sanction such partnerships depends on the recognition by senior politicians and civil servants of the legitimacy of the urban poor organizations (or other civil society organizations) and what they do and promote. Success will generally depend on urban poor organizations being prepared and able to deal with what is often a slow process that does not produce perfect outcomes. Urban poor organizations need to be able to operate at the city level and have institutions (both organizations and working practices) that help them to do this. This has to include a capacity to hold city governments to account.

For specific local groups, a mayor who is elected by citizens offers an additional point of engagement with the local government if the group is negotiating for access to resources and/or seeking protection against abuse. A further aspect may be the citywide election process that engages community groups to consider issues beyond the immediacy of their settlement and to look at how the municipal authorities can work in a way that is good for all citizens. The innovation of participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre came about when federations took on the challenge of making the city government address the interests of all low-income settlements rather than the particular inter-

23. See the paper by Gautam Bhan listed on the back page.

24. See the paper by Gautam Bhan listed on the back page.

25. This is the focus of *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 20, No 2, October; also of Brief 17.

26. Mitlin, Diana (2008), “With and beyond the state; co-production as a route to political influence, power and transformation for grassroots organizations”, *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 20, No 2, October, pages 339–360.

27. See Díaz, Doris Balvín, José Luis López Follegatti and Michaela Hordijk (1996), “Innovative urban environmental management in Ilo, Peru”, *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 8, No 1, April, pages 21–34; also see reference 14; and Díaz Palacios, Julio and Liliana Miranda (2005), “Concertación (reaching agreement) and planning for sustainable development in Ilo, Peru”, in Steve Bass, Hannah Reid, David Satterthwaite and Paul Steele (editors), *Reducing Poverty and Sustaining the Environment*, Earthscan Publications, London, pages 254–278.

28. See reference 9; also Stein, Alfredo (2001), “Participation and sustainability in social projects: the experience of the Local Development Programme (PRODEL) in Nicaragua”, *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 13, No 1, April, page 25.

29. See Brief 17.

30. See the papers by Tim Ndezi, Masako Tanaka, and Mariano Scheinsohn and Cecilia Cabrera listed on the back page.

31. See reference 15, Menegat (2002).

32. Racelis, M (2007), "Anxieties and affirmations: NGO-donor partnerships for social transformation", in T Bebbington, S Hickey and D Mitlin (editors), *Can NGOs make a Difference: The Challenge of Development Alternatives*, Zed Books, London, pages 196-219.

33. See the paper by Gautam Bhan listed on the back page.

34. See reference 15, Souza (2001).

35. See Fernandes, Edesio (2007), "Implementing the urban reform agenda in Brazil", *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 19, No 1, April, pages 177-189.

36. See reference 15, Menegat (2002) and Souza (2001); also Cabannes, Yves (2004), "Participatory budgeting: a significant contribution to participatory democracy", *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 16, No 1, April, pages 27-46.

37. Wampler, Brian (2007), *Participatory Budgeting in Brazil: Contestation, Cooperation and Accountability*, Pennsylvania State University Press, Pennsylvania, 280 pages.

38. See reference 37.

39. See the paper by Julio Dávila listed on the back page.

40. Gilbert, Alan and Julio Dávila (2002), "Bogotá: progress within a hostile environment", in Henry A Dietz and David J Myers (editors), *Capital City Politics in Latin America: Democratization and Empowerment*, Lynne Rienner, Boulder, USA, pages 29-63.

41. Fuentes, Patricio and Reiko Niimi (2002), "Motivating municipal action for children; the municipal Seal of Approval in Ceará, Brazil", *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 14, No 2, October, pages 123-133.

42. Miranda, Liliana and Michaela Hordijk (1998), "Let us build cities for life: the National Campaign of Local Agenda 21s in Peru", *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 10, No 2, October, pages 69-102; also Miranda, Liliana (2004), "Cities for Life revisited: capacity building for urban management through the National Campaign for Local Agenda 21s in Peru", *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 16, No 2, October, pages 249-262.

ests of individual, well-organized settlements. Participatory budgeting helped reverse the traditional patronage approach that characterizes public administration in most Brazilian cities, and encouraged citizens who were not active in political parties to become engaged in setting priorities for the city and for their neighbourhood.⁽³¹⁾

There is also the issue of whether mayors succeed in institutionalizing change. Although in recent years the social innovations in Ilo and Porto Alegre have been eroded after changes in government, they were sustained for many years and through different mayors. But it is common for innovations that a particular mayor introduces to disappear when they leave office; the innovations were not institutionalized at the local level. In some cases, mayors may be important because of the structural changes that they catalyze, drawing organized communities into discussions at the level of the city and helping those civil society organizations to understand new strategies and opportunities.⁽³²⁾ Political traditions, cultures, structures and processes influence the extent to which local democracy can secure lasting change and the importance of municipal leadership to such changes. This helps to explain why mayors are mentioned so much in some countries and not in others.

So can mayors be effective on what might be termed a pro-city agenda as well as a pro-poor agenda? In a globalized world, where any city's prosperity depends on its success in attracting and keeping private enterprise, no socially progressive mayor can afford to alienate private investors. Indeed, to do so would be anti-poor. Is it possible to combine these roles? Porto Alegre, when run by the PT (Partido dos Trabalhadores), remained an attractive place for corporate investment because it was a well-run city with the infrastructure, services and educated labour force that such investment seeks. Mayor Lifschitz gave priority both to enhancing Rosario's economy and promoting a strong social and public agenda. But we should not forget the numerous examples of cities with brutal, large-scale evictions that are justified as being in the interests of that city's development.⁽³³⁾

V. DO THE LARGER POLITICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURES SUPPORT EFFECTIVE MAYORS?

MOST EXAMPLES OF mayors judged to be successful in low- and middle-income nations come from Latin America. In Brazil, this is strongly linked to larger political and institutional changes, including democratization, the new constitution in 1988 (and support for political and financial decentralization) and the introduction of elected mayors.⁽³⁴⁾ Both the initial success of the PT in getting into power at the local government level and then its success nationally with Lula as president are key parts of the story; so too are the institutional innovations promoted by Lula's government at local and national levels.⁽³⁵⁾ Also important, of course, is participatory budgeting – and most participatory budgeting both inside and outside Brazil has been in cities where mayors and councillors are elected by direct vote.⁽³⁶⁾ In Brazil, the position of the mayor was important for the success, or not, of participatory budgeting, in large part because of the degree to which mayors control spending on new capital investment. The Brazilian legal framework is particularly favourable to mayors: legislative, budgetary and administrative authority are concentrated in the mayor's office.⁽³⁷⁾ The factors that supported participatory budgeting are similar to those mentioned earlier, which often underlie "good governance": elected mayors (willing to delegate authority to citizens); sufficient financial and human resources to ensure that investment decisions taken can be executed; and a vibrant civil society able to deliberate and negotiate – to cooperate and to contest. The more the direct participation of the poor was fostered, the better participatory budgeting functioned.⁽³⁸⁾ The prominent roles that mayors now have in Colombia, including many mayors regarded as successful, also depended on national changes that included the introduction of elected mayors, a new constitution, new laws and more financial resources available to local governments.⁽³⁹⁾ The quality of Bogotá's government certainly improved during the 1990s, helped by the introduction of elected mayors but also by larger changes, including a stronger revenue base and a succession of mayors who "...built on the achievements of their predecessors and made genuine improvements in the quality of urban management."⁽⁴⁰⁾

Some initiatives have sought to support pro-poor mayors:

- A UNICEF programme in Ceará (Brazil) encouraged municipalities to compete to obtain a municipal Seal of Approval, based on an external audit of their performance in meeting certain children's needs and rights. Perhaps surprisingly, given that there were no monetary rewards on offer, this motivated many mayors, local authorities and civil society groups to deliver measurable progress for children.⁽⁴¹⁾
- The Cities for Life Forum in Peru was a national network set up to support more accountable, democratic and effective local governance.⁽⁴²⁾
- The Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) had a programme to support participatory town planning in India that brought together civil society groups, politicians and civil servants; it also supported urban poor households to organize to make more demands on local govern-

43. Sheikh, Khatibullah and Shrinivas Rao (2007), "Participatory city planning in Chhattisgarh: a civil society initiative", *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 19, No 2, October, pages 563–581.

44. See reference 19.

45. See reference 11.

46. See the paper by Amin Kamete listed on the back page.

47. See also Fahmi, Wael Salah (2005), "The impact of privatization of solid waste management on the Zabaleen garbage collectors of Cairo", *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 17, No 2, October, pages 155–170; also Sabry, Sarah (2005), "The Social Aid and Assistance programme of the government of Egypt: a critical review", *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 17, No 2, October, pages 27–42.

ment, and provided training and technical advice for newly elected town councillors.⁽⁴³⁾

• The Orangi Pilot Project–Research and Training Institute (OPP–RTI) in Pakistan sought to help the mayors of the 178 urban councils in Karachi to plan development by preparing detailed maps of each mayor's constituency, documenting development needs and highlighting the role of the community and government in planning and delivering this development.⁽⁴⁴⁾

Thus one key influence on a mayor's capacity to act is how much do higher levels of government respect and nurture local democracy? And how do national or state governments respond when mayors and city councils are elected from different political parties? For Mayor Lifschitz, it meant no financial support from national or state government during his first term. In Mexico, in 1999, when Cuauhtémoc Cardenas, who at the time led the main opposition party to the government, was elected mayor of Mexico City, the ruling party that controlled the federal government could greatly curtail his effectiveness. Similarly, the national government in Kenya greatly curtailed the influence of Najib Balata when he was elected mayor of Mombasa, the nation's second largest city.⁽⁴⁵⁾

Where local democracy is not respected, the possibility of effective mayors is much reduced or even disappears, as elected city government is replaced by central government appointees – as when in 2004, the government of Zimbabwe replaced the elected city council in Harare.⁽⁴⁶⁾ In Egypt, the state does not want to engage with citizen groups demanding reforms, or indeed with the urban poor in general.⁽⁴⁷⁾ Examples of this are not confined to low- and middle-income nations; when Margaret Thatcher was the UK prime minister, the effectiveness of London's elected government, headed by Ken Livingstone, as a centre of opposition to her policies led to her shutting down the Greater London Council – here it was the entire structure that was replaced, not just the individual who was leader of the city council.

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Contents list of *Environment&Urbanization* Vol 21, No 1, April 2009

Editorial: What role for mayors in good city governance? – *David Satterthwaite*

Rosario's development; interview with Miguel Lifschitz, mayor of Rosario, Argentina – *Florencia Almansi*

Being a mayor: the view from four Colombian cities – *Julio D Dávila*
"For enhanced civic participation in local governance": calling tyranny to account in Harare – *Amin Y Kamete*

The limit of community initiatives in addressing resettlement in Kurasini ward, Tanzania – *Tim Ndezi*

Bloggers' street movement and the right to the city. (Re)claiming Cairo's real and virtual "spaces of freedom" – *Wael Salah Fahmi*

Social movements and the production of housing in Buenos Aires; when policies are effective – *Mariano Scheinsohn and Cecilia Cabrera*

"This is no longer the city I once knew." Evictions, the urban poor and the right to the city in millennial Delhi – *Gautam Bhan*

From confrontation to collaboration: a decade in the work of the squatters' movement in Nepal – *Masako Tanaka*

A participatory governance model for the sustainable development of Cumalikizik, a heritage site in Turkey – *Murat Tas, Nilufer Tas and Arzu Cahantimur*

Climate Change and Cities

Blaming cities for climate change? An analysis of urban greenhouse gas emissions inventories – *David Dodman*

Urban poverty and vulnerability to climate change in Latin America – *Jorgelina Hardoy and Gustavo Pandiella*

International funding to support urban adaptation to climate change – *Jessica Ayers*

Feedback

Getting the information base for Dharavi's redevelopment – *Sheela Patel, Jockin Arputham, Sundar Burra and Katia Savchuk*

The slowing of sub-Saharan Africa's urbanization: evidence and implications for urban livelihoods – *Deborah Potts*

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