Moving the State:
The Politics of Democratic Decentralization
in Kerala, South Africa, and Porto Alegre

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Decentralization and Democracy

Over the past decade, a large number of developing countries have made the transition from authoritarian rule to democracy. The rebirth of civil societies, the achievement of new freedoms and liberties have all been celebrated with due enthusiasm. But now that the euphoria of these transitions has passed, we are beginning to pose the sobering question of what difference democracy makes to development, or to be more precise, whether democracy can help redress the severe social and economic inequalities that characterize developing countries.

Two separate problems are involved here. The first parallels the western European literature on the rise of the welfare state and is centrally concerned with patterns of interest aggregation, and specifically the dynamics and effects of lower class formation. This literature has convincingly argued that political rights can be translated into social rights, and procedural democracy becomes substantive democracy, only to the extent that lower class demands are organized and find effective representation in the state.

In the developing world however, uneven capitalist development, resilient social cleavages and various forms of bureaucratic authoritarianism have blunted lower class collective action. The three cases examined here, however, break with this pattern. In South Africa, Brazil, and the Indian state of Kerala, working-class

mobilization has driven political transformations and democratization has increased the overall political clout of popular sectors.[1] Working-class politics in all three cases exhibit a high degree of organizational capacity and cohesiveness marked by the presence of strong labor federations and influential left-of-center political parties (although this is less true of Brazil). But working-class political power does not necessarily cumulate into transformative capacity, especially in an era when globalization has weakened the ability of nation-states to deploy the regulatory and redistributive instruments through which European states expanded labor's share of the social surplus. Equity-enhancing reforms in both South Africa and Brazil have been frustrated.[2] And even in Kerala, where working-class mobilization has a longer history and has wielded significant redistributive results, disappointing economic growth, the pressures of liberalization, and the declining service efficiency of the state have all combined to threaten earlier gains in social development.

This leads us to the second problematic of democratization, namely the institutional character of democratic states. Even where formal democracy has been consolidated, the question arises as to just how responsive these democracies are. Developing states have become politically answerable through periodic elections, but have the bureaucratic institutions they inherited from authoritarian or colonial rule become more open to participation by subordinate groups? Have they really changed their modes of governance, the social partners they engage with and the developmental goals they prioritize? Is the reach and robustness of public legality sufficient to guarantee the uniform application of rights of citizenship? The state has certainly been transformed, but has it, in the language that now dominates the posttransition discourse on development, become closer to the people? There are of course many dimensions to this particular problematic, but none that is more central, and that has garnered more attention, than the challenge of democratic decentralization.

Across the political spectrum, the disenchantment with centralized and bureaucratic states has made the call for decentralization an article of faith. Strengthening and empowering local government has been justified not only on the grounds of making government more efficient but also on the grounds of increasing accountability and participation. But to govern is to exercise power, and there are no a priori reasons why more localized forms of governance are more democratic.

Indeed, the history of colonial rule was largely a history of decentralized authority in which order was secured and revenues extracted through local despots. And in its contemporary incarnation, decentralization in the developing world, especially when driven by international development agencies, has more often than not been associated with the rolling back of the state, the extension of bureaucratic control, and the marketization of social services.[3]

The purpose of this article is to explore the conditions under which a distinctly democratic variant of decentralization—defined by an increase in the scope and depth of subordinate group participation in authoritative resource allocation—can be initiated and sustained. Because such a project is tantamount to fundamentally transforming the exercise of state power, it requires an exceptional, and in most of the developing world improbable, set of political and institutional opportunities. In South Africa, the Indian state of Kerala, and the Brazilian city of Porto Alegre, new political configurations and underlying social conditions have converged to create just such a set of opportunities. Most visibly, left-of-center political parties that were born of popular struggles have come to power and inherited significant transformative capacities. The ascendancy of the African National Congress (ANC), the Communist Party of India–Marxist (CPM), and the Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT) have all been associated with the formulation of clear and cohesive transformative projects in which the democratization of local government was given pride of place. Although the parties in question have captured power at different levels of the state—the national, provincial, and municipal, respectively—they have all enjoyed, and indeed used, their authoritative powers to initiate fundamental reforms in the character of local government.[4]

If a committed political agent is a necessary ingredient for administrative and fiscal devolution, the *democratic empowerment* of local government is critically dependent on the associational dynamics and capacities of local actors. Again, the cases examined here are quite exceptional. All three boast a rich and dense tapestry of grassroots democratic organizations—the historical legacy of prolonged mass-based prodemocracy movements—capable of mobilizing constituencies traditionally excluded from policy-making arenas, and dislodging traditional clientalistic networks.

But the building of local democratic government, even under the most favorable of conditions, is anything but linear. It requires not only that a favorable political alignment be maintained but that a delicate and workable balance between the requirements of institution building and grassroots participation be struck. Subtle differences in political configurations and relational dynamics can thus produce divergent trajectories. In the cases of Kerala and Porto Alegre, initial reforms that increased the scope of local participation have been sustained, and have seen a dramatic strengthening of local democratic institutions and planning capacity. In contrast, in South Africa a negotiated democratic transition that has been rightfully celebrated as one of the most inclusive of its kind, and foundational constitutional and programmatic commitments to building "democratic developmental local government" have given way to concerted political centralization, the expansion of technocratic and managerial authority, and a shift from democratic to market modes of accountability. If democratic decentralization in Kerala and Porto Alegre has been conceived as a means of resurrecting socially transformative planning in an era of liberalization, local government in South Africa has

become the frontline in the marketization of public authority. Given the similarity of favorable preconditions—capable states and democratically mobilized societies—we are confronted with an intriguing divergence in outcomes.

Taken in isolation, South Africa's failure to deepen democracy might readily be ascribed to the pressures of globalization, and specifically structural pressures to submit to a neoliberal strategy of economic development and its attendant managerial vision of local government. While it is indeed the case that the ANC has, since 1996, embraced a surprisingly orthodox strategy of growth-led development, a capital-logic argument carries little weight. Unlike most African countries, South Africa has not been subjected to a formal structural adjustment program, and its relatively low level of external debt, high levels of domestic investment capital, significant foreign currency reserves, diversified manufacturing base, and natural resource endowments have made it much less dependent on global financial and commodity markets than most developing economies. If anything, India and Brazil have come under far more pressure to liberalize their economies.

An explanation for the sustainability of democratic decentralization in Kerala and Porto Alegre and its unraveling in South Africa must instead be located in domestic configurations, and in particular in the relational dynamics that have governed state/civil society and party/social movement engagements. The comparison developed in this article highlights two analytical clusters. The first concerns the nature of the political project of local government reform and specifically addresses how critical differences in the broader political context, as well as key internal political party dynamics, have led what are otherwise quite similar parties to develop dramatically different visions of the role of the state in deepening democracy. In the case of South Africa, an electorally hegemonic party, that for historical reasons has developed an instrumentalist understanding of state power, has succumbed to insulationist and oligarchical tendencies. In Kerala and Porto Alegre, subnational parties operating in more competitive environments have broken with their vanguardist traditions, become critical of bureaucratic state-led development, and have committed themselves to building democracy from the bottom up. The second set of variables begins with the recognition that civil society and social movements are critical to any sustainable process of democratic decentralization. In both Kerala and Porto Alegre, social movements that have retained their autonomy from the state have provided much of the ideological and institutional repertoire of democratic decentralization, and party-social movements relations have generated functional synergies between institution building and mobilization. In South Africa, a once strong social-movement sector has been incorporated and/or marginalized by the ANC's political hegemony, with the result that organized participation has atrophied and given way to a bureaucratic and commandist logic of local government reform.

Strategies of Decentralization

If making a democratic state has been difficult, making the state responsive has been even more so. Although decentralization has become the centerpiece of the modernizing-democratic discourse of developing world state elites and the international development community, shifting decision-making, allocative, and implementation functions of the central state or provincial states to local governments has proven to be difficult for three reasons. The first and most obvious is that most states—and those who control them—have little interest in decentralization. To move the locus of public authority is to shake up existing patterns of political control and patronage. The second is that there is much institutional inertia to overcome. The postcolonial state was born in the heyday of developmentalism. Central and commandist states were the anointed agents of development. The political imperatives of unifying ethnically fractious nations, whose boundaries were the shaky legacies of colonial rule, only heightened the imperative of political centralization. Vast organizational resources have thus been invested in highly centralized and often insulated modes of governance. Though top-down planning has lost much of its luster in the past decade, it remains a powerful organizational reflex. The third is that even when state elites commit themselves to decentralization, the task at hand is Herculean: new laws and regulations have to be passed, personnel have to be redeployed, resources have to be rechannelled, and local administrative capacities have to be built up. In other words, much institution building and training must take place before local government can work effectively.

The challenge of decentralization is thus formidable and has given rise to two diametrically opposed transformative visions. The first and the most influential is the technocratic vision. Here, decentralization is equated with the task of designing appropriate institutions, the structure of which can be derived from an accumulated corpus of (mostly Western) knowledge of public administration, finances, and planning. The technocratic view is informed by an unbounded faith in the ability of experts to apprehend and transform the world. This utopian rationalism has deeply depoliticizing and autocratic impulses. The agent of transformation, as Centeno has written of Mexico's technocratic neoliberal elites, becomes a "state elite committed to the imposition of a single, exclusive policy paradigm based on the application of instrumental rational techniques."[5] This requires that decision makers be insulated from the noisy world of politics. Democracy, to borrow Centeno's words, must be kept "within reason," and the transformative thrust must of necessity come from above.

At the other end of the spectrum one finds what Bardhan has called the anarcho-communitarians (hereafter ACs).[6] Here the problem is not too much, but too little democracy. The ACs argue persuasively that the advent of liberal democracy does little to change the overly centralized, and elite-controlled character of postcolonial states. Democracy, they argue, can only achieve its full potential when its formal representative institutions are supplemented by a vibrant and participatory

civil society. The anarchical element comes in the rejection of traditional vehicles of popular mobilization, namely parties and unions, as oligarchic and too-beholden-to-state–centered models of development. The communitarian element comes from their faith in the capacity of local actors to know and express their interests. Decentralization for the ACs must be driven by the prefigurative actions of social movements—building up local capacity, grassroots institutions, and extraparliamentary arenas of participation.

Both the technocratic and AC view suffer from utopianism. As a form of what James Scott has called high modernism,[7] the technocratic view has unbounded faith in science, and argues that its only a matter of getting the institutions right. In this telos, the answers moreover are there for all to behold with the good governance and best practices of the west to be emulated. With their postmodernist impulses, the ACs of course reject the means-end rationality and utilitarianism of the technocratic vision, and place their faith instead in the emergent qualities of civil society. Implicit in this view is that all forms of association contribute to democracy and that the resurgence of civil society is self-sustaining. If the technocratic vision understands but reifies institutions at the expense of mobilization, the ACs understand and reify mobilization at the expense of institutions.

The technocratic view is certainly correct when it points to the need to develop the necessary managerial, organizational, and technical capacities to make local government work. Three technical/organizational problems must be addressed. First, any successful planning process requires certain technical inputs. Data must be gathered, plans drawn up, and budgets made. Second is the problem of coordination between levels and the provision of public goods. Not all governance functions can be decentralized. The provision of public goods requires central authority and capacity. Successful planning must be integrated. This calls for effective and constant coordination between levels of government. Decentralization thus requires building a delicate balance of division of authority and competence between levels while creating structures and avenues for coordination. Third, as Weber always insisted, democracy requires bureaucracy. Because participation can never be comprehensive or continuous (capacities for participation are uneven and cannot be sustained throughout the planning and implementation process), there is a need to routinize and formalize the process through which participatory inputs are translated into outputs; hence, the technical requirement for rules of transparency, accountability, representation, and decisional authority.

Where the technocratic vision is lacking is in its impulse to sanitize decentralization of everything political. For starters, any effort to move the state requires redistributing political power. Democratic decentralization is a political project. The idea that governance is largely a technical/organizational proposition also suffers from two critical flaws. On one hand, no technical or organizational process is ever immune from power and politics. Speaking of what he calls the

pragmatic (vs. political) school of thought on decentralization, Schönwälder writes that

This preoccupation with the practical aspects of decentralization reflects a fundamental belief on the part of the pragmatic school that it is flaws in the planning and execution of decentralization programs, and not the social, economic, cultural or political environment in which these programs are set, which ultimately determine their success or failure.[8]

There is of course an institutional logic to such discourses. Technocratic rationality produces universally applicable blueprints, and decentralization-by-design promises smooth implementation. This appeals to donors and international development organizations because a legible world, cleansed of messy political and social issues, is a world ripe for expert interventions.

But successful decentralization has been the exception to the rule. Technocratic visions have failed because they suffer from an exaggerated sense of the rational mutability of the world (the fiction of induced development) and because their apolitical and frictionless visions of the world are invariably frustrated by politics and friction. Blueprints developed in the West are hardly appropriate to Third World contexts of uneven economic development, pervasive social inequalities, cultural heterogeneity, large-scale social exclusion, the resilience of predemocratic forms of authority, and weak state capacity. The technocratic view is symptomatic of what Foucault called governmentality, "the idea that societies, economies, and government bureaucracies respond in a more or less reflexive, straight-forward way to policies and plans."[9] This hubris reaches its apogee in the technocratic belief that increased participation can be engineered through appropriate policy design.

An important corrective to the technocratic view is the AC idea that democracy can only be nurtured from below. Social movements can help democratize society by mobilizing previously marginalized actors and by promoting horizontal solidarities. Social movements can moreover nurture grassroots democratic institutions such as civics, shop-floor democracy, and women's groups. But social movements and community initiatives confront two problems. To begin with, most "communities" are inflected with power relations and fragmented by social divisions. In those rare moments that communities have solidarity and are mobilized, the balance of power nonetheless remains weighted against them. And even when historical conjunctures create unique opportunities for transformation from below—such as South Africa's democratic transition—the mobilizational momentum required to effect institutional transformation is notoriously difficult to sustain. The life cycle of associational efforts often depend on the success with which they can scale-up and institutionalize their demands.[10] A critical question, then, is how civil associations can coordinate their activities with state agencies without compromising their associational autonomy.

If the sustainability of popular participation is problematic, so are its effects. Increased associationalism can promote narrow and parochial interests, resulting in the "mischief of factions" and demands for state patronage (rents), just as much as it can result in the promotion of the public interest or broad-based reforms that benefit the majority.[11] Here the issue of creating linkages with more aggregated forms of interest representation—political parties or states—that can check parochial or narrow interests, becomes critical. Moreover, because the capacity of collective action and resource mobilization is unevenly distributed, decentralization runs the risk of aggravating spatial and social inequalities. Contrary to the AC view that emphasizes the need for entirely decentralized units, there is both the need on one hand for "coordinated decentralization" in which articulation between levels allows for resource coordination, the diffusion of innovation, and information feedback[12] and on the other hand for the maintenance of a bounded aggregated authority—the state—to provide nonlocal public goods (including regulatory frameworks) and to aggressively redress regional inequalities. And given the race-to-the-bottom regional competitive pressures unleashed by globalization, central authority remains critical to defining and enforcing basic minimum standards of social citizenship.

Between these bookends of the debate, it is possible to carve out a more balanced analytical position that for want of a better term can be labeled the *optimist-conflict model*. Conflict, because it recognizes both the tension between institutions and demand making that the technocratic vision emphasizes, and the tension between mobilization and institutionalization that the AC framework highlights. It is optimist however, in that it rejects the notion that these conflicts are of a zero-sum nature. High levels of demand making need not necessarily result in institutional overload and ungovernability, much as some routinization of movement dynamics need not result in demobilization. Instead, the optimist-conflict model views the dynamic tensions of development in a more relational and contingent perspective, a view that specifically recognizes the transformative potential of politics. It also recognizes the potential, through such politics, of forging recombinant institutions that can creatively manage a delicate equilibrium between representation and participation, public goods and local preferences, and between technocracy and democracy.

Comparing Kerala, South Africa, and Porto Alegre

To understand the possibilities for decentralization, we need a configurative model that identifies the institutional and sociopolitical parameters of decentralization and a processual model that explores the dynamic interplay of these configurative elements. There are three necessary, but not sufficient, preconditions for decentralization. The first is a high degree of central state capacity. Because any effective decentralization effort requires coordination between levels of government and calls for more, not less, regulation to guarantee basic trans-

parency, accountability, and representation, weak states cannot successfully pursue decentralization. Indeed, when a weak state devolves power, it is more often than not simply making accommodations with local strongmen—creating what Mamdani has labeled *decentralized despotism*[13]—rather than expanding democratic spaces. A second requirement is a well-developed civil society. This is true not only because it enables the participatory dimension of decentralization but also because it can potentially provide new sources of information and feedback, as well as the constructive tension that theorists have argued is an essential ingredient of democratic governance. The third is a political project in which an organized political force—and specifically non-Leninist left-of-center political parties that have strong social movement characteristics—champions decentralization.

Kerala, South Africa, and Porto Alegre meet all three of these preconditions. All three are consolidated democracies in which the basic institutions of democratic rule are firmly entrenched. By regional standards, all three countries enjoy significant state capacity, and in particular have well-developed administrative and bureaucratic structures. Because democracy in all three cases resulted from sustained prodemocracy movements, civil society in comparative terms is highly developed. Kerala has a long and celebrated history of social mobilization and boasts by what is by all accounts a dense and vibrant civil society. In the course of the liberation struggle, South Africa evolved a rich network of community-based organizations that in the last decade of apartheid were closely linked to the labor movement. Similarly, social movements played a catalytic role in Brazil's democratic transition.

The political parties in power are strikingly similar in their historical origins and social bases. The ANC, CPM, and PT were all born of revolutionary and mass-mobilizational politics, with strong support from the working class. In their respective poststruggle stages, they have all extended their support bases to middle-class constituencies and have evolved into pragmatic social democratic parties. The ANC, CPM, and PT have all moreover explicitly recognized that in an era of fiscal constraints and liberalization, more proactive and participatory local governments have a critical role to play in equity-enhancing development. In each case they played the catalytic role in shifting significant developmental responsibilities and resources to the local level. In Kerala, the return to power of the CPM in 1996 saw the launching of the People's Campaign for Decentralized Planning (hereafter the Campaign), which stands out as the boldest and most comprehensive decentralization initiative yet to be undertaken in India. In 1989, the PT began experimenting with the practice of "popular budgeting," which has since developed deep institutional roots and has received world recognition for the success with which community groups have been integrated into the process of shaping municipal budgets. And in South Africa, the transition to democracy was marked not only by national-level negotiations, but also by sustained concertation at the local level.[14] To a degree that probably has no precedent in newly founded democracies, South Africa's constitution and subsequent legislation has explicitly

sought to empower local government and task it with the pressing mandate of redistribution and service delivery.

Decentralization contributes to democratic deepening if and when it expands the scope and depth of citizen participation in public decision making. Expanding the depth means incorporating previously marginalized or disadvantaged groups into public politics. Expanding the scope means bringing a wider range of social and economic issues into the authoritative domain of politics (shifting the boundary from the market to the demos). Democratic decentralization in other words means redistributing power (the authority to make binding decisions about the allocation of public resources) both vertically (incorporating citizens) and horizontally (expanding the domain of collective decision making). Empowered local governments deepen democracy on both counts because they facilitate a better alignment of decision-making centers with local preferences and local sources of knowledge and information, and because it creates loci of participation that reduce the costs and unevenness of collective action.

When measured against these two axes of democratic decentralization, the outcomes of local government reform in all three cases can be briefly summarized.

In Porto Alegre, the institutional achievements of popular budgeting, that is, the extent to which new channels and fora of participation have been created since the PT first came to power in 1989, are impressive. The making of the municipal budget in Porto Alegre today is in effect a bottom-up process. The key innovation has been the creation of district and citywide budget councils constituted of delegates elected in open assemblies at the neighborhood and district levels. Over the years, the councils have come to play an increasingly significant role in negotiating both the broad objectives and the details of budgetary allocations.[15] The sustained interfaces between council representatives and municipal administration has produced a synergistic relationship that most significantly has helped breach the divide between technical knowledge and participation. The Porto Alegre administration has addressed the problems of technical skills and capacity by aggressively educating council participants and making the details of the budget the responsibility of council representatives.[16] Government officials interviewed by Abers commented on how quickly participants had become proficient is mastering the details of the budget and explained that constant scrutiny and questioning had forced officials to rationalize and upgrade the budgeting process. If popular budgeting has clearly increased participation, it has also had an important spillover effect. Baiocchi has shown that since its inception, the number of civil society organizations in Porto Alegre has significantly increased.[17] Decentralization has in other words created new opportunities and incentives for associational life.

With respect to expanding the scope of democracy, the results in Porto Alegre have been equally impressive. Before popular budgeting (PB), allocations mostly reflected patronage interests and were more or less fixed from year to year. With

the introduction of PB, the principle of community-defined priorities has been introduced, and each year adjustments have been negotiated to address redistributive criteria and expand representation at every level of the budget-making process. The range of services now provided by the municipality has widened significantly. Of particular interest is the innovative way in which PB has addressed the problem of reconciling local needs—as expressed by vociferous community organizations—with citywide needs. In addition to expressing local demands, district councils have also been charged with establishing priority lists of citywide demands. Through a complex formula that takes into account intra-city disparities, the preferences are then aggregated to create the citywide component of the budget. To ensure that representation is not exclusively regional moreover, the administration has also created sectoral fora, in which teachers for example can advise on education policy.[18]

Although the Kerala experiment in decentralization is much younger than Porto Alegre's, its achievements are in many respects similar. The most remarkable feature of decentralization in Kerala is the simple observation that it has been conducted in a campaign mode. The Planning Board (the pilot agency of the campaign) has played the key role in designing new structures and processes for local participatory planning and the Department of Local Administration has actively formulated and implemented a host of new regulations and oversight structures to ensure transparency and accountability of local government. But because the Campaign was first and foremost a political project (more on this later), the incremental reform strategy of the technocratic vision was explicitly rejected in favor of a "big bang" approach: in a single legislative act, money was devolved to Panchayats (35 to 40 percent of the plan expenditures) and popular assemblies were convened even as institutional and administrative reforms were being implemented.[19] The rationale for decentralization was presented and actively popularized as a means of facilitating "local level development by mobilizing both people and resources." The campaign's architects consciously banked on Kerala's celebrated history of popular movements, including the strategic support of the mass-based Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP—Kerala People's Science Movement) to mobilize participation. Local-level planning, it was argued, was to be used "as an instrument of social mobilization" and as a means of creating a "new civic culture."[20]

The campaign's participatory structures are multilayered. The first level of participation takes place in ward-level general assemblies—Grama Sabhas—presided by elected local Panchayat officials.[21] Here citizens express and define developmental priorities and then elect sectoral development committees to prepare a development report. In 1996, the Planning Board estimated that more than 2.5 million participated in the Grama Sabhas.[22] Specialized task forces appointed by the Panchayat and composed of an elected official, the relevant local government official, and community activists then design a shelf of projects. In the first

year of the campaign, some 12,000 task forces with 120,000 members pro-
duced around 100,000 projects.[23] While traditionally marginalized groups such
as women and dalits have predictably not participated as much or as effectively,
compared with the previous top-down bureaucratically driven system, subordi-
nate group engagement has certainly increased.[24] The campaign has also created
and empowered an intermediate layer of actors that form the critical transmission
belt between direct (but necessarily intermittent) citizen participation and govern-
ment action. Thus, more than 100,000 trained volunteers have played active roles
in development committees, task forces, and technical review committees, and some
14,000 elected Panchayat officials have seen their powers, resources, and respon-
sibilities vastly expanded. New procedures and mechanisms of accountability
have moreover increased the overall representativeness of not only Panchayats
themselves, but also of the critically important beneficiary committees.

What is somewhat less clear is the extent to which these new institutions of
local government have created new spaces and opportunities for civic associa-
tions. In contrast to the Porto Alegre case for which we have longitudinal data that
point to an increase in organized civic life, no such comprehensive data are yet
available for Kerala. Field visits did reveal that local development planning had
seen a dramatic increase in the number and activities of women's self-help
groups, an observation confirmed by an in-depth case study.[25] There is also abun-
dant evidence that nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) associated with or
generally sympathetic to the LDF (the ruling Left Democratic Front) have seen
their influence and role increase substantially. This is clearly the case of the KSSP
for example, whose members account for a majority of the campaign staff within
the Planning Board as well as for the housing NGO Costford, which has become
the partner of choice in Panchayat low-cost housing projects. On the other hand, in
Kerala's highly polarized and partisan political environment, NGOs associated
with the opposition have been less active. This probably however has less to do
with CPM control and partisanship in the process—as the opposition maintains—
than with the historical animosity of opposition affiliated NGOs—in particular
those of the church and of caste-based organizations—to any initiatives of LDF
governments.[26] While this remains an important topic of future research, what
nonetheless can be safely asserted at this stage is that the devolution of planning,
financial, and authoritative resources to Panchayats has certainly shifted the locus
of decision making downward and has dramatically increased the range of formal
and informal grassroots groups that participate in policy formulation.

With respect to expanding the scope of decision making, the changes have
been equally dramatic. With the devolution of untied funds to local governments,
decisions that were once the prerogative of line departments are now being made
in Panchayats and their task forces. Thus, the one-size-fits-all schemes of state
departments have been partially replaced by projects devised, designed, and bud-
geted for at the local level. While many of these projects replicate the planning
templates of the past, there has also been a profusion of new and innovative pro-

jects. The learning curve, much as in the case of popular budgeting in Porto Alegre, has been steep. With each year, the time for plan preparation has shrunk, the number of projects rejected on grounds of technical feasibility by the district-level committees has declined, and fund utilization (which was very sluggish in the first year) has increased. The effect of autonomous local decision making is most evident in the shift in allocative priorities. There have thus been notable increases over the past in allocations for housing schemes, sanitation, and drinking water.[27] And in marked contrast to both the Porto Alegre case and South Africa, a remarkable result of the campaign has been the mobilization of local resources, both in the form of financial and labor contributions. That citizens are parting with their time and income to contribute to local government initiatives suggests that institutional reform has created new incentives and opportunities for local action.

The South African case is the hardest to comment on. On one hand, democracy is newly minted in South Africa, and the final shape of local demarcations only came into effect with the December 2000 elections. On the other hand, the staggering inequities of apartheid and its perverse and disarticulated economic and social geographies, the result of decades of determined and brutal racial engineering, has presented the ANC with what might arguably be the greatest transformative challenge ever faced by a democratic government. State apparatuses that were singularly dedicated to enforcing racial segregation through control, surveillance, repression, and "orderly" development are now tasked with social transformation and economic redistribution through consultation and inclusion. If the challenges have been great however, so have the opportunities.

The infrastructural reach of the apartheid state was extensive and its technical capacities those of a first world state. With respect to a wide range of state infrastructural powers—including tax collection, pension disbursement, and service delivery—the ANC government has inherited capacities far greater than those of Indian states and its managerial and planning capacities—particularly in urban areas—are also much more developed. Local democracy in South Africa has particularly strong roots. In contrast to most liberation movements, the struggle against apartheid developed especially militant and organized social movements at the local level.[28] The township-based civics movement of the 1980s not only cultivated a democratic politics of opposition but also in the dying years of apartheid provided a range of community services. The drawn out negotiations between the ANC and the National Party that marked the end of apartheid were accompanied by equally extensive and engaged local negotiations that brought together municipal authorities, unions, civics, parties, business groups, and other stakeholders into loosely corporatist bargaining structures. "Local forums became the schools of the new South African democracy."[29] And as Hindson and Ngqulunga succinctly note, "The inheritance of negotiation has strongly influenced the evolution of institutional transformation."[30]

South Africa's powerful urban social movements also spawned a network of NGOs that are far more organized, professionalized, and politically effective than their developing world counterparts. These NGOs played a critical role in shaping local government policy papers and legislation. Most notably, Planact, which was created by the civic movement, has provided many of the key personalities in the Johannesburg transition process, which itself has become the model for local government transformation in South Africa.[31] Finally, decentralization in South Africa has met with political consensus. All opposition parties support it as a means of countering ANC control of national government. The ANC supports empowering local government out of political commitment (a legacy of its ties to grassroots organizational structures) and out of pragmatism (as a means of tackling the backlog of service delivery). South Africa's constitution, government policy, and accompanying legislation specifically conceives of local government as developmental, and as having a key role to play in redistribution, the promotion of local democracy through citizenship participation, and the empowering of marginalized groups.[32]

Assessments of local government reform in South Africa are complicated by the legacy of high variance in administrative capacities and local financial resources across municipalities as well as the flux and uncertainty that has accompanied the administrative and institutional merging of historically under-resourced black townships with wealthy white municipalities. Nonetheless, local governments in South Africa were mandated by law to engage in two separate, but overlapping planning exercises—the preparation of Land Development Objectives (LDOs) under the Development Facilitation Act, and the preparation of Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) under the Local Government Transition Act. Both processes were designed to be consultative and to directly engage civil society formations. While no countrywide assessments have been carried out, existing case studies show that these planning processes have served largely as instruments for exerting political and bureaucratic control and as vehicles for marketization, rather than as institutional spaces for democratic participation.[33]

The case of Johannesburg, which has pioneered local government transition in South Africa, is especially instructive. When local councils submitted their LDOs in 1997, those that had adopted a technocratic approach were accepted, whereas those that had relied on more participatory approaches were rejected.[34] Bremner concludes that "because [the process] is seen as imposed by both political and administrative officials [it] has been left to the planning departments of the metropolitan and local councils to co-ordinate and manage."[35] Interviews with branch level officials of the South African National Civic Organisation (SANCO), the formal successor to the civics movement, paint a picture of the complete disengagement between local government and community structures.[36] SANCO officials routinely complain that local development forums have fallen into disuse,

that local government officials rarely consult with civic organizations, and that most local councilors account to the ANC rather than to their communities.

The controversial elaboration of Johannesburg's overall strategy for long-term development—iGoli 2002—has been a classic case of top-down technocratic reform. Though peak-level consultations were initiated, public employee unions and SANCO withdrew in protest over the municipality's unilateral decision to privatize a wide range of public services. The organizational blueprint that informed the organizational restructuring of the city was prepared by private sector consultants. The resulting off-the-shelf document drew explicitly on a neo-Thatcherite model that called for reducing the municipality's role to "core" functions and the expansion of private sector provision based on a "purchaser-provider" contract management model "that rests purely on the assumption that everything can be managed by contracts, financial controls and performance management."[37] With local government thus reduced to coordinating outsourced service delivery, and the fiscal principle of cost recovery firmly entrenched, citizens have in effect been reduced to clients.[38]

The downsizing of the state to its neoclassical incarnation as night watchman marks a clear rupture with the vision of integrated local development laid out in the Constitution and the Local Government White Paper.[39] Because this process has been driven by the ANC's abandonment of its initial redistributive transformative program (RDP—Reconstruction and Development Program) in favor of an orthodox neoliberal strategy of growth-led development (GEAR—Growth, Employment, and Redistribution), the trend toward marketization and managerial insulation has been nationwide. There are however some interesting departures from the trend that point to the importance of local political configurations and institutional histories. The transformation process in the industrial city of Durban was marked by greater institutional continuity and less-conflicted relations between city official and politicians. A multiparty governing coalition has blunted the power of the ANC and necessitated ongoing negotiation, with the result that the Durban Metropolitan Council is noted for having engaged civil society organizations more directly. Hindson and Ngqulunga, for example, provide evidence that the IDP process in Durban's local councils has successfully built on the legacy of the Peace Forums established in the mid-1990s to produce more inclusive forms of consultation.[40] Yet, even here the picture is a mixed one. One study notes that while one of the local councils brought a number of NGOs directly into the process of formulating the IDPs, most of the councils farmed out the preparation of the document to highly paid private consultants.[41] Another report concluded that community participation had been a perfunctory "once-off process" that in some councils consisted of little more than inviting comments on IDP drafts.[42] And in sharp contrast to popular budgeting and Panchayat Development plans, IDPs are not institutionally integrated into the budgetary process.[43] Final budget decisions remain the prerogative of the council,

and community accountability as such is strictly a matter of situational or political considerations.

Thus, despite a transition that was marked by extended and expansive negotiations and brought to power a broad coalition of mass-based democratic forces, and was initially accompanied by significant legislative and institutional efforts to promote local democratic government, the process of local government reform has been subverted by market forces and attendant managerial ideologies. There have been three distinct patterns at work. As part of the ANC's embrace of neo-liberal orthodoxy and the accompanying public administration doctrines of "new realism," the government's efforts have largely been devoted to streamlining management systems, cutting costs, and emphasizing administrative performance rather than mobilizing participation, training ordinary citizens, and engaging in sustained consultation, much less deliberation. Second, because of the emphasis on product rather than process, and overall technocratic creep (which I discuss later), the government has come to rely increasingly on private sector consultants. The resulting specializing and escalation of technical knowledge and control has predictably frustrated participation from below. (The contrast with Kerala and Porto Alegre, where private consultants have played no role and where thousands of ordinary citizens have participated in detailed planning, is telling.) Third, the government has pushed outsourcing, privatization, and public-private partnerships. While this is certainly warranted in some cases, it has been practiced across the board as a matter of government doctrine, with little actual assessment of the comparative advantages. Thus, outsourcing of water delivery to private consortia has proven to be much more expensive than working through the existing government agencies.[44] And while it is the case that government has worked closely with NGOs in both shaping the institutional design of local government and in delivering some services, because many of these NGOs are not membership based and as such lack independent support, their close association with government has compromised their autonomy and innovative capacity. By their own admission, the practice of competitive tendering has reduced many NGOs to simple instruments of government policy. To win government contracts, NGOs must increasingly mimic the managerial style favored by the government and compete with the private sector in meeting performance targets. As one commentator has noted, "The push towards technical expertise has resulted in struggling NGOs and mass-based organizations losing their previously clear political direction."[45] In sum, the ANC's technocratic concern with getting the institutions right has all but obviated efforts to build local democracy and mobilize participation. In a context of fiscal constraint and tighter regulatory frameworks, outsourcing, and increasing technocratic dominance, community-driven and politically negotiated initiatives have been marginalized.[46]

How has decentralization affected the scope of democracy? Insofar as the IDPs have been prescriptive and state led, they have not allowed for the kind of creative

input, innovation, and learning that popular budgeting and the Campaign generated. IDPs have allowed for a sophisticated degree of interdepartmental coordination, planning integration, and technical input, but only as deliberated within a fairly small circle of experts and politicians (Durban appears to be an exception). Given the extraordinary service backlog South Africa faces, this has been rationalized on the grounds that delivery must take precedence over process. The delivery results have however been mixed. While the government has achieved some fairly impressive delivery targets, the quality, cost-effectiveness, and sustainability of service delivery are increasingly in doubt. In the case of water delivery, it has been estimated that two-thirds of the projects put in place since 1994 have, in the absence of effective community participation, fallen into disuse.[47] In the case of housing, delivery has been of poor quality, plagued by inflated costs, rampant corruption (often involving high-placed government officials), and poorly integrated with other developmental objectives such as spatial desegregation. And while the counterfactual in which more attention to process might have increased delivery cannot be tested, the poor quality of its process has done little to cultivate the culture of citizen participation that is at the heart of the stated objectives of local developmental government.

Fiscal restraint and fiscal determinism has also quite clearly impaired the autonomous developmental efforts of local government. Because the bulk of local expenditures are earmarked for mandated services, local governments enjoy limited financial discretion. Moreover, at least one critic has noted that budgetary directives and regulations issued by the Department of Finance has overdetermined the relationship between local and higher levels of government and short-circuited politically negotiated and community-driven local development.[48] To the extent that Community Development Forums have initiated development projects, they have done so largely by successfully lobbying individual departments and ministries, NGOs, or the private sector for financial support. Such cases depend on exceptionally high levels of local organization and require investing in time-consuming and extralocal networking, and have as such been the exception to the norm. In sum, in the absence of effective local budgetary autonomy, locally integrated development planning has been a nonstarter.

Explaining Variation

How then can we explain that within what are otherwise broadly similar conditions, Kerala and Porto Alegre have initiated and sustained local democratic government, whereas South Africa has retreated from democratic decentralization? A ready answer, and indeed one that the ANC often invokes in justifying increasing reliance on technocrats and appointed, rather than elected representatives, is to point to the limited capacities and democratic competencies of ordinary citizens. Because the vast majority of South Africans have until recently never

enjoyed the fruits of representative democracy, most citizens have yet to develop the basic competencies, especially those of interfacing with representatives and state bureaucracies, that allow for effective participation. The civics movement under apartheid did prefigure many democratic practices, but these were largely those of internal democracy and oppositional politics, not the mundane but critical practices of engaging accountable authorities. The civics did develop significant self-help skills, and provided a range of community services. But many of the resulting skills and organizational capacities have been depleted by the absorption of community leaders into government positions and the rapid demobilization of popular movements that has accompanied the ANC's rise to power.

In contrast, local democratic practices in Kerala are far more mature and developed. While it is the case that state bureaucracies have been marked by limited direct access and accountability—a problem that the Campaign specifically seeks to redress—Keralites have a long history of effective demand making in general and of making representations (both through conventional parliamentary as well as extraparliamentary channels) that can now be fully exploited with more responsible and accountable local government. Similarly, because bureaucratic authoritarianism in Brazil was far less exclusive and insulated than apartheid, restrictions on democratic politics did not foreclose the practices and strategies of interest-based politics, and social movements and community organizations have had time to develop a full repertoire of demand-making skills.

Yet even if we accept the proposition that democratic capacities in South Africa have had less time to mature and that this has adversely impacted the performance of local government, any such argument must be understood in dynamic terms. The capacity of citizens to collectively engage the state is not a stock variable rooted in ingrained cultural predispositions (as per some social capital arguments). Such capacities are constructed both from below—through particular patterns and trajectories of mobilization—and from above, in the artifactuality of group formation, that is, the ways in which states create and structure channels, opportunities, and incentives (or disincentives) for collective action. Citizen capacities are as such highly malleable and forged in and through state-society engagements. Given the extraordinarily high levels of mobilization that the antiapartheid movement achieved as well the proliferation of national- and local-level negotiation forums that were created in the course of the transition, conditions were, if anything, comparatively propitious for institutionalizing local-level participation. To explain why South Africa failed to capitalize on the circumstances of the transition to deepen democracy, whereas both Kerala and Porto Alegre have successfully initiated and sustained democratic decentralization, we turn to two more crucial variables: the nature and circumstances of the political project of state transformation and the dynamic of party-social movement interactions.

The Political Project

To be successful, decentralization requires politically orchestrated action from above. Powers must be shifted, monies devolved, laws and regulations promulgated, and groups opposed to decentralization—recalcitrant bureaucrats, opposition parties, patronage politicians—circumvented or neutralized. Decentralization requires the agency of a programmatic, ideologically cohesive political party that has significant ties to grassroots organizations. As left-of-center transformative parties, the ANC, PT, and CPM are all good candidates.

Given the ANC's very recent history of mass mobilization and its uncontested position as the leader of the national democratic revolution (to use its own parlance), it has enjoyed both the power and the legitimate authority to proactively reform the state. Yet, as we have seen, decentralization in South Africa has to date been a largely top-down and bureaucratically driven process. In contrast, both the PT and the CPM have actively promoted far more participatory structures of local government. The difference, I believe, can be located in the relationships of these political parties to civil society and social movements (a point I take up in the next section) but also the political environments and historical contexts in which each party has taken up the challenge of decentralization.

Historically, the Kerala CPM has not had a particularly strong affinity to decentralization. Although there has always been a strong grassroots democratic faction in the party (what I call the social movement faction), the party's historical roots in organized class struggles produced internal structures characterized by hierarchical command structures (democratic centralism) and an orthodox state-led and top-down vision of development borrowed largely from Soviet planning. Three developments help explain why the CPM—or at least key elements of the party—have now embraced decentralization and accepted a more independent role for civil society. First, the party has come to recognize the limits of its electoral appeal, and in a context of competitive party politics has identified democratic decentralization—with its attendant principles of nonpartisanship, debureaucratized government and sustainable development—as the key to appealing to new postclass struggle constituencies. Second, the embrace of decentralization marks a tacit recognition that the redistributive capacities of the developmental state have exhausted themselves. The broad-based social movements that saw the expansion of social citizenship have been displaced by more narrow and sectoral interests, most notably industrial unions in the public sector and public employee associations. These distributional coalitions have captured significant nondevelopmental rents (the bulk of nonplan expenditures goes to propping up grossly inefficient public enterprises and paying the salaries of a nonperforming state bureaucracy) but have also blocked necessary state reform (and indeed remain quite hostile to the Campaign). If a strong, centralized, and interventionist state did secure many of the benefits associated with the Kerala model (high levels of social development, extensive public infrastructure, basic

institutional reforms), the second generation developmental challenges Kerala faces (the quality, rather than the quantity of public services) call for a fundamentally different mode of governance. Third, despite a recent growth spurt, Kerala's continued economic problems—in particular the lack of dynamism in commodity-producing sectors—has underscored the failures of the dirigist state, and has prompted the recognition, at least within a faction of the party, for the need to develop more flexible and decentralized forms of state intervention, designed to nurture rather than regulate and control economic activity.

The strategic position and evolution of the PT is comparable. As an oppositional party whose strongest support base is at the municipal level, the PT likewise views decentralization as the most effective means of expanding its influence. The unlikelihood of coming to power at the national level and of wielding legislative and macroeconomic tools as instruments of social reform has led to a strategic reconceptualizing of political objectives from capturing and controlling the state to promoting democratic governance. Moreover, in a context where corporatism has been associated with authoritarianism, and narrow distributional coalitions have captured the bulk of state resources, the devolutionist politics of the new Left have become increasingly attractive.

For both the CPM and the PT, moving the state has thus become the key strategy for recapturing public authority from oligarchic elites and for redirecting developmental resources from rents to development. In sharp contrast to the technocratic vision, decentralization has been explicitly conceived off as a political strategy for challenging entrenched powers of patronage and bureaucratic fiefdoms. This moreover has been accompanied by a sustained critique of command-and-control bureaucracies and of the transformative capacities of the state. The traditional Left political goal of capturing state power has given way to a strategy of devolving state power and reinvigorating civil society. Mobilization for power has made way to mobilization for development, which has been cast in the new social movement language of localism, sustainability, deliberation, and grassroots participation.

Such discourses, which were prominent during South Africa's negotiated transition, and were integral to the transformative vision enshrined in the RDP, have become increasingly rare. Not only has the language of managerialism and cost recovery displaced the language of participation and social justice, but the ANC has rapidly disengaged itself from civil society. These autocratic and insulating tendencies can be readily attributed to the ANC's dominant party status. Commanding as it does more than two-thirds of the vote, and with no serious sources of party opposition, the ANC is not particularly preoccupied with the need to build the party from the bottom up. In fact, the ANC, unlike the PT and the CPM, has never been a cadre-based party. At its highest levels the party is dominated by the exile faction of the liberation movement, a faction much more comfortable with policy formulation than with grassroots organizing. In contrast to domestic resis-

tance movements, most notably the United Democratic Front (UDF) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), which had to cultivate mass support through responsiveness and accountability, "democratic politics was not possible among [exile] leaders separated perforce from their constituents."[49] And if the CPM and PT have found it politically expedient to reach out to new constituencies and cultivate support from civic organizations, the ANC's virtual monopoly of black majority support and its tight control over mass organizations requires no such engagement of civil society. A compounding factor is the ANC's historically informed understanding of state power. Because apartheid precluded black civil society and ruled out legitimate contestation, opposition to apartheid became singularly focused on capturing state power. The capture of state power was in turn uncritically equated with acquiring the means to transform society. In the ANC worldview, the postliberation state enjoys both the interventionist capacity (inherited from the formidable powers of the apartheid state) and the (recently renewed) national mandate to assume the central role as agent of transformation, a view that has proven to be increasingly hostile to an independent civil society and one that has left little room for the mobilization-centered views that have informed decentralization in Kerala and Porto Alegre.

Circumstances have of course given the ANC a number of plausible rationales for centralizing control. The first is that those most capable of effective participation are privileged, white interests. The second is that redistribution in a context of pronounced inequities certainly calls for some degree of centralization to integrate white and black areas into a single tax base and to breakdown the spatial boundaries and exclusions that marked apartheid era planning. Third, devolution might be counterproductive given the persistence of traditional forms of authority—in particular chiefs, but also urban strongmen. The need for certain centralized coordination functions, and most significantly those of redistribution, the provision of extralocal public goods, and affirmative interventions for empowering historically marginalized communities, do not however preclude vigorous and autonomous local government. In both Kerala and Porto Alegre, the design of decentralization has explicitly reserved critical functions to higher level authorities and institutionalized redistributive criteria. If in South Africa the relationship between national or provincial government and local government has been closer to one of suffocating tutelage rather than cooperation (as originally envisioned in the White Paper on Local Government), the reason lies in the ANC's determination to consolidate its political control and in its dominant technocratic ethos of state-led transformation in which process has been sacrificed to product.

Party–Social Movement Dynamics

To assume that the state or a political party can be agents of a sustained transformative projects is to overestimate the instrumentalities of formal hierarchical

organizations and to underestimate the obstacles thrown up by vested interests. A project that specifically seeks to nurture more democratic participation requires what Evans has labeled an *ecology of agents*—"an interdependent, interconnected set of complementary actors."[50] This is true both with respect to creating the opportunity for reform as well as securing its effectiveness and sustainability.

Because democratic decentralization threatens existing patronage networks and introduces significant uncertainties, political parties are most likely to support reform when the internal balance of power shifts from traditional party brokers to more grassroots factions. Social movements can play a critical role in occasioning such a shift not only by mobilizing public support for reform, but also by popularizing more participatory institutions and processes through prefigurative actions. Moreover, because democratic decentralization goes beyond legislative acts and resource reallocations, its effectiveness and sustainability requires far more than the capacities of the state. Much as the ACs argue, civil society organizations and social movements have a critical role to play in making the state more democratic. First, because community-based organizations (CBOs) and NGOs are more deeply rooted in society, they can engage in innovative community-based initiatives and can provide vital information about social needs. Second, the associational networks of civic organizations and movements can provide a vital mobilizational infrastructure that under the right institutional conditions can help nurture and coordinate participation in local government. Finally, civil society organizations, be they rotating credit schemes or oppositional social movements, help develop and nurture the democratic and technical capacities of individuals, and often promote forms of demand making that are far more deliberative than those of more hierarchical organizations.

The potentially synergistic relationship between a political party project and civil society requires comment. Social movement theorists have often argued that the organizational structures, repertoires, and mobilizational tactics that characterize movements stand in opposition to the formal practices and hierarchical forms of political society and that engagement with the state (or political parties) invariably threatens movement autonomy. Much of the literature on civil society also has a tendency to view any increase in state intervention as inimical to the vitality of associational life. The technocratic worldview, albeit for different reasons, also favors creating distinct boundaries between governance and participation. While these tensions are indeed very real, they are by no means inevitably of a zero-sum nature. Under certain political and institutional circumstances, the organizational modalities and forms of demand making that differentiate the state from civil society, and political parties from social movements, can be dynamically coordinated and can become the basis for developmentally functional complementarities.[51]

The Campaign is a good illustration. Decentralization in Kerala has come from above. It has been conceived and orchestrated by a relatively autonomous state

agency, the Planning Board, backed by the political support of a programmatic and ideologically disciplined political party, the CPM. But this breakthrough from above, and the mobilizational character of the campaign, can only be grasped when one explores underlying party-social movement dynamics.

Historically, the CPM has been a Leninist party, characterized by top-down organizational control over its mass organizations and local units and strategically preoccupied with the capture of state power. Because it has also been concerned with the dangers of factionalism in a heterogeneous society, it has always been weary of an autonomous civil society. How then does one explain that the present CPM-led government has become the champion of decentralization and has done so largely by aligning itself with civil society organizations? Understanding begins with the recognition that the corporatist and centralizing elements of the party have always coexisted with a more democratic and mass-mobilizational element, the social movement wing.[52] In the intensely competitive environment of Kerala's electoral politics, the CPM's comparative advantage has always been its activist and mobilizational capacities, a tendency reinforced by its periodic exclusion from government. Tendencies toward organizational sclerosis and machine politics have thus been kept in check by recurrent episodes of mobilization, and have repeatedly given new life to transformative projects.[53]

Second, social movement dynamics in Kerala have had a continuous and independent effect on public affairs. On one hand, the early mobilizational successes of the Communist Party created a bandwagon effect in which all major parties in Kerala developed mass organizations. With the rotation in power of Congress and Communist-led fronts, opposition parties have kept mobilizational politics alive and well. Nowhere else in India have the contentious repertoires of social movements become such an intrinsic part of routine politics. On the other hand, despite the high level of political party influence, the social and cultural heterogeneity of Kerala and its high-density citizenship (both in terms of basic individual capabilities as well as the overall strength of rational-legal authority) has allowed for a vibrant and independent civic associationalism. This in turn has spawned many independent social movements including the fishworkers movement and numerous KSSP-initiated environmental and educational campaigns. These points help unpack the dynamics that have paved the way for democratic decentralization in Kerala.

If the political opening for decentralization was created from above, its civil society provided the critical informational and mobilizational resources for the Campaign.[54] This becomes very clear when one examines both the official discourses of the Campaign as well as the practices that have rapidly become the bread and butter of Panchayat-level planning. To attack state-led development and "departmentalism" and to celebrate autonomy, local initiative, transparency, and accountability, is to speak the language of social movements, not technocrats or Leninists.[55] Most of the techniques and favored projects of the campaign—rapid

rural appraisal, local resource mapping, community water management, rotating credit schemes, self-help associations—come from a repertoire of practices that NGOs and some of the more proactive Panchayats have been developing for years.[56] These pilot projects have not only popularized grassroots planning and sustainable development strategies but have also provided much of the practical knowledge in the Campaign's design.

The mobilizational resources civil society has provided in Kerala have been equally critical. The Campaign has involved a massive amount of institution and capacity building as local officials have had to learn how to design projects, evaluate costs, manage finances, gather data, and implement programs. Although department personnel have been redeployed, they have often been reluctant partners. Elected officials have thus had to rely substantially on the input of trained volunteers. With the help of specialized NGOs, the Planning Board has provided training to Panchayat officials and has also brought some 6,000 volunteer engineers, doctors, and other experts out of retirement to provide technical expertise to Panchayat task forces.[57]

The role of the mass-based KSSP has been especially critical. Although an autonomous association, most of its members are from the teaching community and have long shared the mass mobilizational and democratic empowerment politics of the CPM's social movement wing. In contrast to the antistatism that is popular among many NGOs, the KSSP has been willing to work with the state on particular initiatives, most notably the highly successful 1991 mass literacy campaign. It is precisely this willingness to engage the state and political organizations that has underscored the KSSP's most significant contribution to the Campaign—the creation a policy reform network that has bridged the CPM/state and civil society and served as the incubator of the Campaign. Co-membership in the KSSP provided an arena in which CPM reformers could experiment with ideas outside the somewhat doctrinaire straightjacket of the party itself. And the presence of a KSSP cell within the Planning Board has helped embed this state agency in social movement structures. On the political front, the CPM's interface with a vibrant social movement sector has occasioned a critical shift from its historical preoccupation with working-class politics and distributive struggles to a broader and more inclusive agenda of democratization and social transformation that has most notably given explicit recognition to the problems of gender inequality (historically subsumed to class analysis) and environmental sustainability. Confronted with a stagnant electoral base and the increasing assertiveness of civil society (that is, forms of interest representation outside the political system), the architects of the Campaign have argued that democratic structures must be extended beyond the party's structures and mass organizations to include new nonpartisan institutions of participation that build on civic associationalism.

The PT's support for democratic decentralization can also be located in its close association with autonomous movements. From its very birth (1980), the PT

was a *social movement party*, having been formed as an alliance of progressive elements of the Church, unions, peasant associations, human rights groups, and an array of revolutionary organizations. Created as an instrument of struggle against an authoritarian regime and its corporatist structures, during its first decade of existence the PT "constantly sought to maintain ties to a multitude of grassroots social movements" and developed highly decentralized internal structures.[58] Brazil's political opportunity structure and the circumstances of the democratic transition have moreover preserved social movement autonomy. The comparison with Chile and Spain (and as we shall see, South Africa) is instructive: in both cases centralized states and strong party systems, coupled with prolonged transition negotiations in which the politics of protest were strategically reigned in, resulted in the rapid demobilization of what had been strong urban movements.[59] In contrast, Brazil's federal structures and strong municipalities, and its fragmented political party system have afforded social movements more room for maneuver and greater political leverage.

When the PT first came to power in Porto Alegre in 1989, it was committed to using state power as a partisan instrument of working-class mobilization.[60] Having evolved from a culture of confrontational politics honed during the years of the democracy struggle,

there was little agreement as to what, exactly, the "PT way" of governing would look like, beyond a broad agreement on democratizing and decentralizing the administration, reversing municipal priorities toward those who needed it most, and increasing popular participation in decision making.[61]

These priorities directly reflected demands first presented to an earlier administration by the Union of Neighborhood Associations of Porto Alegre (UAMPA) which had called for popular, community-based "control of the definition of the city budget."[62] Being as it was poorly equipped to tackle these challenges, the PT administration engaged in broad-based consultations with a wide range of community organizations. With each year, the PB process evolved as the institutional design and the redistributive criteria were fine-tuned through iterated negotiations. What has emerged, in de Sousa Santos's words, is "an institutional constellation designed to function as a sustained, regularly functioning meeting place for the popular movement and the municipal government" that "draws its strength from the permanent tension between conflict and negotiation."[63]

Party-social movement dynamics in South Africa have evolved along a very different trajectory. To explain why a party born from the most broad-based mass democratic movement since the Congress party in India has so quickly shed its mobilizational origins in favor of centralized control, one must point to how the conjuncture of party-state power and neoliberal ascendancy has combined to produce an increasingly technocratic and autocratic strategy of transformation that is by definition hostile to participatory local development.

Properly understood, the ANC has always been more of a political organization than a social movement. As a banned political organization that operated primarily from abroad, the formal structures of the ANC existed independently of domestic struggle organizations. And although struggle organizations mobilized wide-based support and developed an impressive range of oppositional tactics, they did not nurture the political and organizational pluralism generally associated with prodemocracy social movements. The reasons for this are not difficult to identify. The limited political space that existed under apartheid and the National Party's tactics of divide and conquer called for organizational structures in which the formal accountability of leadership was limited, internal dissent was seen as divisive, and claims to speak for "the people" or the "community" were measured by spontaneous rather than formal mechanisms of representation.[64] The political exigencies of uniting a diverse set of associations against apartheid—churches, civics, student associations, and women's groups—required subordinating movement autonomy over strategic issues to the overarching authority of the ANC.[65] The drawn-out negotiation process only exacerbated these tendencies. Much as in the case of Chile, and in contrast to Brazil and India, the very real danger that apartheid hard-liners could derail the transition, coupled with the internecine violence of the early 1990s, convinced the ANC to moderate direct action in favor of institutionalized participation.

Thus, although the ANC was brought to power by a broad-based popular liberation movement, it has consolidated its power through the negotiation phase as the singular representative of the liberation struggle and subsequently through its control over the state. As the electorally mandated agent of national democratic transformation, and as a party in power, the ANC has squarely rejected mobilization and protest politics as instruments of democratic deepening and development. It has accordingly acted quickly to co-opt or distance itself from its social movement partners, or to transform them into service delivery agents. The UDF, the network of grassroots organizations that was in the frontline of the antiapartheid struggle, was disbanded when the ANC was legalized. SANCO has seen its national and provincial structures co-opted by the ANC. By its own admission, SANCO has little independent influence on government policy and though many of its branches remain active, in the absence of participatory institutions, branches have had only limited success in securing accountability from local government.[66] South Africa's powerful and independent labor federation, COSATU, which is part of the ruling alliance, has also seen its influence wane, mostly as a result of the ANC's determination to pursue a market-friendly and proinvestor strategy of economic development. And while the party's commitment to formal democracy remains beyond question, its relationship to civil society organizations is deteriorating rapidly.[67] If consultative forums played a critical role during the transition, they have largely fallen to the wayside since, and the government's actions have been increasingly characterized by unilateralism. A

wide range of commentators have moreover pointed to the ANC's increasing hostility to independent civic organizations and its increasing intolerance for dissent both from within and outside the party. In sum, in the absence of countervailing forces either in the form of viable opposition parties or autonomous social movements, the ANC has succumbed to the centralizing and autocratic tendencies of the iron law of oligarchy.[68]

These tendencies have been reinforced by political affinities between technocratic domination and neoliberal reform. Having adopted a fairly orthodox neoliberal strategy of economic development, albeit with some redistributive elements, the ANC has also embraced the technocratic vision that informs the neoliberal model of economic transformation. In this view, the high social costs that accompany market reforms call for minimizing political interferences (which inevitably introduces unnecessary friction and "populist" demands for redistribution and increased social expenditures) and maximizing the decision-making autonomy of technocratic elites. In a society racked by crime and social tensions, state managers bent on creating a business-friendly and orderly environment have become mesmerized by the technocratic utopia of frictionless and unilinear transformation. As Friedman notes, in following international development paradigms of good governance—"conceptualised as government without democratic politics"—the ANC has committed the vanguardist fallacy of reducing politics to administration.[69]

The ANC view that change must be orchestrated from above has a clear historical genealogy. Its understanding of apartheid fed the belief that the key to transformation lies in the instrumentalities of the state. Marshaling the material and authoritative powers of the state has in turn been equated with centralizing and rationalizing bureaucratic powers. This rationalist view of planned emancipation bears ironic affinities to the modernist views that informed planned oppression under apartheid.[70] At the heart of this paradigm is the notion that rational planning must emerge from a center—where technical and managerial resources and talent are concentrated—and radiate outwards and downwards through lower tiers of government. In this modernist hubris, local government becomes an extension of the central state and both are governed by bureaucratic fiat and market exigencies.

Conclusion

To understand how and why genuine democratic decentralization has been comparatively successful in Porto Alegre and Kerala, I want to return to the two views of democracy and development that dominate the literature. In contrast to the technocratic view that sees state reform as a technical proposition that can be handled through appropriate institutional redesign, decentralization in both these cases has been messy, nonlinear, and driven by distinctly conflictual processes.

The form that decentralization has taken has not flowed from a blueprint and an insulated decision-making body. It has been instead shaped by a continuous pro-

cess of learning and feedback, made possible by policy networks that have blurred the boundaries between state and society. Because of their movement character, the Campaign and popular budgeting have benefited from constant negotiation and renegotiation of methods and goals, and have thus captured many of the synergies that can result from blending the institutional capacities of the state and the associational resources of civil society. In both cases, political initiatives have been spurred on and indeed inflected by competitive party systems and vigorous party-movement dynamics.

The extent to which local-level initiatives and a resurgent civil society have become an integral part of the PB and the Campaign clearly reaffirms the anarcho-communitarian's vision of building democracy from the bottom up. The ANC's drift toward centralized control and technocratic domination can only be explained by the demobilization of popular sectors and the state's disengagement from civil society. What does not fit comfortably with the AC vision however is that grassroots democratic impulses in Kerala and Porto Alegre were given life and successfully scaled up only because they were underwritten by a political project and were given state support. Breaking through the logjam of political and bureaucratic interests opposed to decentralization required the political initiative of a programmatic party and the instrumentalities of a pilot agency that could successfully circumvent traditional powerbrokers and build direct political ties with local forces.

Moreover, the fact that the strategic reorientation of the CPM and the PT and their embrace of new visions of democratic governance were shaped by their immersion in a larger social movement sector highlights how social movements can transform politics and how political projects can provide focus and institutional expression to social movement dynamics. The synergies that can result from a state's partnership with social movements can be summarized in several dynamics: engaged and sustained state-society negotiations in which conflict is carefully accommodated creates new associational incentives and spaces, it allows for a continuous and dynamic process of institutional learning, it promotes deliberation and informed compromise over zero-sum interest bargaining, it helps promote innovative solutions to the classic tensions between representation and participation, and it bridges the knowledge and authority gap between technocratic expertise and local involvement. Just how delicate the balance between organized political forces and social movements must be to ensure this kind of synergy is illustrated by the South African case. Despite the rise to power of broad-based movement committed to democratic deepening, circumstances in South Africa have conspired to tilt the balance in favor of state power.

If the task of making the transition to democracy has been difficult, the task of making democracy matter, that is of moving the state, has proven to be even more difficult. In South Africa, Brazil, and India, the circumstances of democratic consolidation are quite similar, and compared with their neighbors, quite favorable.

Yet, subtle differences in political configurations have produced significant variations. Indeed, we are presented with the irony of an increasingly Leninist party defending neoliberal economic orthodoxy in South Africa, and in Kerala and Brazil of two de-Leninizing parties defending people's planning. If we are to understand the conditions under which democratic governments can challenge both the structural and discursive hegemony of neoliberalism, and reinvent social-collective projects of transformation, we need to part company with deterministic models of both the Left and Right that leave little room for agency, and romanticist views that pin all their hopes on resurgent civil societies. Instead, we need to develop models of analysis that explicitly unpack the configurations and conditions under which social forces and political actors become agents of transformation.

NOTES

1. For a comparative discussion of the role of labor movements in the democratization process in South Africa and Brazil, see Gay W. Seidman, *Manufacturing Militance: Workers' Movements in Brazil and South Africa, 1970-1985* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994). For a discussion of the Kerala case, see Patrick Heller, *The Labor of Development: Workers in the Transformation of Capitalism in Kerala, India* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999).

2. For Brazil, see Kurt Weyland, *Democracy without Equity: Failures of Reform in Brazil* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1996). For South Africa, see Hein Marais, *South Africa: Limits to Change* (London: Zed Books, 1998).

3. For a particularly illuminating case study, see James Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine: "Development," Depoliticization and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

4. Even if the regimes in question are not commensurate as political units, the fact that each is, within its own context, empowered to effect the reform of local government, and in particular to promote greater participation in the process of allocating resources, serves as the basis for comparison. In South Africa, the recent transformation of the nation-state and the political imperative of undoing the spatial and social segregation of apartheid has of course made national government and legislation the critical agent of local government reform. In India, as E.M.S. Namboodiripad famously remarked, since Independence, relations between the center and the states have been governed by democracy, but the relations between the states and local government have been governed by bureaucracy. This however changed with the passage in 1993 of the Seventy-third and Seventy-fourth Amendments to the Constitution that granted local governments new democratic powers but left most of its developmental functions to the discretion of state governments. In Brazil, federalism and a long history of party fragmentation and oligarchical politics have made municipalities critical sites of interest aggregation and patronage. In the postauthoritarian period, the Partido dos Trabalhadores's (PT) efforts to build participatory democracy have thus focused on cities. Porto Alegre represents only one, but by far the most carefully documented, of successful PT-led initiatives to institute "popular budgeting."

5. Miguel Centeno, *Democracy within Reason: Technocratic Revolution in Mexico* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 1997).

6. Pranab Bardhan, "The State against Society: The Great Divide in Indian Social Science Discourse," in Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal, eds., *Nationalism, Democracy and Development* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), 184-95.

7. James Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998).

8. Gerd Schonwalder, "New Democratic Spaces at the Grassroots? Popular Participation in Latin American Local Governments," *Development and Change* 28, (1997): 757.

9. James Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine*, 194.

10. Jonathan Fox, "How Does Political Society Thicken?: The Political Construction of Social Capital in Mexico," in Peter Evans, ed., *State-Society Synergy: Government and Social Capital in Development* (Berkeley, CA: International and Area Studies, 1996), 119-49.

11. Joshua Cohen and Joel Rogers, "Secondary Associations and Democratic Governance," in Erik O. Wright, ed., *Association and Democracy* (London: Verso, 1995).

12. Archon Fung and Erik Olin Wright, "Deepening Democracy: Innovations in Empowered Participatory Governance," this issue.

13. Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).

14. Mark Swilling and Laurence Boya, "Local Governance in Transition," in Patrick Fitzgerald, Anne McLennan, and Barry Munslow, eds., *Managing Sustainable Development in South Africa* (Cape Town, South Africa: Oxford University Press, 1997), 165-91.

15. Rebecca Abers, "From Ideas to Practice: The Partido dos Trabalhadores and Participatory Governance in Brazil," *Latin American Perspectives* 23, no. 4 (1996): 39.

16. Ibid., 45.

17. Gianpaolo Baiocchi, "Participation, Activism, and Politics: The Porto Alegre Experiment and Deliberative Democratic Theory," this issue.

18. Gianpaolo Baiocchi, "Decentralization of Government in Brazil—Perils and Prospects" (paper presented at the International Conference on Democratic Decentralisation, Thiruvananthapuram, 23-27 May 2000).

19. For the most authoritative account of the Campaign presented by the key architect and member-in charge of decentralization in the Planning Board, see Thomas Isaac, *Local Democracy and Development: People's Campaign for Decentralised Planning* (New Delhi: LeftWord Books, 2000).

20. Thomas Isaac, *Local Democracy and Development*, chap. 1.

21. There are 990 village Panchayats and fifty-eight municipalities in Kerala with an average population of 29,580. Each Panchayat has ten to twelve wards, with a single councilor for each ward elected on a first-past-the-post system.

22. Government of Kerala, *People's Planning: Towards a Handbook* (Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala State Planning Board, 1999), 20.

23. Ibid., 23.

24. See T. N. Seema and Vanitha Mukherjee, "Gender Governance and Citizenship in Decentralised Planning" (paper presented at the International Conference on Democratic Decentralisation, Thiruvananthapuram, 23-27 May 2000).

25. See B. Manjula, "Voices from the Spiral of Silence: A Case Study of Samatha Self Help Groups of Ulloor" (paper presented at the International Conference on Democratic Decentralisation, Thiruvananthapuram, 23-27 May 2000).

26. The head of an important nongovernmental organization (NGO) coalition did note that while many NGOs have expressed lukewarm support for the Campaign, they have played an active role at the local level, particularly in supplying expertise to task forces (interview, T. A. Varghese, Inter-Cooperation, Trivandurm, 16 August 1999).

27. K. N. Harilal and Mariamma Sanu George, "Prioritisation in Local-level Planning: The Kerala Experience" (paper presented at the International Conference on Democratic Decentralisation, Thiruvananthapuram, 23-27 May 2000), 6-7.

28. Mark Swilling and Laurence Boya, "Local Governance in Transition," 193. The strength of the civic movement is most dramatically reflected in the wide-based support for rent and service boycotts. In Soweto, for example, 80 percent of formal rent-paying households withheld payments for four years (ibid., 181).

29. Ibid., 174.

30. Doug Hindson and Bongani Ngqulunga, "Local Development Strategy in Durban" (paper presented at the International Conference on Democratic Decentralization, Thiruvananthapuram, 23-27 May 2000).

31. Jo Beall, Owen Crankshaw, and Susan Parnell, "Local Government, Poverty Reduction and Inequality in Johannesburg," *Environment and Urbanization* 12, no. 1 (April 2000): 118.

32. Most notably, see Government of South Africa, Provincial Affairs and Constitutional Development, *White Paper on Local Government* (Pretoria: 1998).

33. See references below as well as Patrick Bond, "Privatisation, Participation and Protest in the Restructuring of Municipal Services," *Urban Forum* 9, no. 1 (1998): 37-75; Caroline Kihato, "Critical Perspectives on Decentralization in South Africa" (paper presented at the International Conference on Democratic Decentralization, Thiruvananthapuram, 23-27 May 2000).

34. Lindsay Bremner, "Participatory Planning: Models of Urban Governance: Porto Alegre and Greater Johannesburg," *Urban Forum* 9, no. 1 (1998): 117.

35. Ibid., 118.

36. Interviews conducted for the Centre for Policy Studies by the author and Libhongo Ntlokonkulu with fifteen branch-level officials between 1 May and 22 August 2000.

37. Mark Swilling, as quoted in Richard Tomlinson, "Ten Years in the Making: A History of the Evolution of Metropolitan Government in Johannesburg," *Urban Forum* 10, no. 1 (1999): 27.

38. Ebrahim-Khalil Hassen, "Moving Targets: Public Sector Transformation," *Indicator* 17, no. 1 (2000): 20-26.

39. Richard Tomlinson, "Ten Years in the Making: A History of the Evolution of Metropolitan Government in Johannesburg."

40. Doug Hindson and Bongani Ngqulunga, "Local Development Strategy in Durban."

41. Nanine Kruger, typescript report prepared for the Centre for Community and Labor Studies (Durban, South Africa: 1999).

42. See Urban Sector Network, Case Study on Community Participation in Local Government in South Africa (1999). In rural areas, Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) have generally failed to materialize, either because of completely inadequate local capacities and/or because of the bifurcated nature of rural power in which the representative authority of elected officials is subordinated to the official as well as unofficial powers of so-called traditional chiefs.

43. Beall et al., "Local Government, Poverty Reduction and Inequality in Johannesburg," 120.

44. David Hemson, "Beyond BOTT? Policy Perspectives in Water Delivery" (report on the NGOs and the BOTT Program in the Eastern Cape and Kwa-Zulu Natal prepared for the Rural Development Sector Network, February 1999).

45. Shamin Meer, "The Demobilisation of Civil Society: Struggling with New Questions," *Development Update* 3, no. 1 (October 1999), 112.

46. Firoz Khan, "A Commentary on Dark Roast Occasional Paper No 1: 'Developmental Local Government: The Second Wave of Post-Apartheid Urban Reconstruction' " (Cape Town, South Africa: Isandla Institute, 1998).

47. David Hemson, "Beyond BOTT? Policy Perspectives in Water Delivery."

48. Firoz Khan, "A Commentary," 3.

49. Steven Friedman, "An End in Itself: Democracy and the Building of Post-Apartheid South Africa" (unpublished manuscript, Centre for Policy Studies, Johannesburg, 2000).

50. Peter Evans, "Looking for Agents of Urban Livability in a Globalized Political Economy," in Peter Evans, ed., *Livable Cities? The Politics of Urban Livelihood and Sustainability* (Berkeley: University of California Press, forthcoming).

51. Peter Evans, "Government Action, Social Capital and Development: Reviewing the Evidence on Synergy," *World Development* 24, no. 6 (1996): 1119-32.

52. Olle Tornquist distinguishes between "state-modernizers" and "popular developmentalists," Tornquist, "Making Democratisation Work: From Civil Society and Social Capital to Political Inclusion and Politicisation: Theoretical Reflections on Concrete Cases in Indonesia, Kerala, and the Philippines," Research Programme on Popular Movements, Development and Democratisation, University of Oslo, (March 1997). Marked as they are by cross-cutting alignments and constant repositioning, the exact boundaries of such factional groupings are difficult to identify. The divisions do however roughly parallel the oft-noted, if often exaggerated, difference between old and new social movements. The corporatist faction (known locally as the CITU faction, after the CPM labor federation) has its power base in the larger industrial and public employees unions and subscribes to the view that popular struggles can only be advanced through the party's disciplined organizational structures. The redistributive thrust of class struggle remains primary, with the state viewed as the principle locus of power, and state capture as the principle strategic objective. The social movement faction retains the concern for redistributive struggles, but specifically recognizes other sources of domination, including gender and bureaucratic power. The significance of democracy is located less in the concept of working class power and its organizational expressions (party and state), than in the nurturing of democratic practices, both through institutional reform (making the state more responsive) and nurturing democratic capacities (participation and empowerment at all levels of governance).

53. Patrick Heller, "Degrees of Democracy: Some Comparative Lessons from India," World Politics, 52 (July 2000), 484-519.

54. For an extended discussion, see Olle Tornquist, "Of New Popular Politics of Development: the Kerala Experience," in Govindan Parayil, ed., The Kerala Model (London: Zed Books, 2000).

55. M.P. Parameswaran, a prominent KSSP leader, notes that as early as 1972, the KSSP was promoting the concept of sustainable development well before it became fashionable in development circles (personal communication, May 23, 2000, Thiruvananthapuram).

56. For a detailed discussion, see Thomas Isaac, Local Democracy and Development, Chap. 4.

57. If the Campaign has produced significant complementarities, there have also been cases of disengagement. Many NGOs perceive the campaign as a largely political exercise and have kept their distance. Party-based mass organizations have been conspicuous by their inactivity. In the case of the Communist Party of India–Marxist (CPM) organizations, this reflects the unresolved divisions between the corporatist and social movement factions, a division that appears to be much less pronounced in Porto Alegre.

58. Rebecca Abers, "From Ideas to Practice," 37.

59. Patricia Hipsher, "Democratic Transitions as Protest Cycles: Social Movement Dynamics in Democratizing Latin America," in Sidney Tarrow and David Meyer, eds., *The Social Movement Society* (New York: Rowan & Littlefield, 1998), 152-72.

60. "The conception which prevailed during the first year of the Workers Party administration was deeply influenced by the idea that politics always involves the representation of particular interests and that the Workers Party should only change which particular interests prevailed within the local administration," Leonardo Avritzer, "Public Deliberation at the Local Level: Participatory Budgeting in Brazil" (paper presented at the Experiments in Deliberative Democracy Conference, Madison, WI, January 2000), 16.

61. Gianpaolo Baiocchi's article in this issue of *Politics & Society,* 42-71.

62. Ibid.

63. Boaventura de Sousa Santos, "Participatory Budgeting in Porto Alegre: Toward a Redistributive Democracy," *Politics & Society* 26, no. 4 (December 1998): 479, 497.

64. As Friedman has pointed out, apartheid's exclusionary structures precluded building civil society and emphasized instead struggles for capturing state power. See Steven Friedman, "Bonaparte at the Barricades: The Colonisation of Civil Society," *Theoria* (May 1992).

65. The contrast with the labor movement is telling. Well before the African National Congress (ANC) asserted its hegemony over the national movement, unions had established powerful strongholds built largely on the strength of shop-floor democracy. As membership organizations with formal structures of representation, unions thus had an independent and sustainable organizational base, which explains the far more autonomous position the labor movement continues to enjoy.

66. The ANC's hegemonizing impulse is reflected in its equation of state power with people's power and its strategy of subordinating independent arenas of popular action to political control. A leading young party theorist has thus recently deplored the "dichotomy between political and civic matters" that is implicit in the very existence of South African National Civic Organisation (SANCO), and has called for ANC branch committees to supplant SANCO by engaging directly in civic activities. See David Makura, "The MDM, Civil Society and Social Transformation," *Umrabulo*, no. 7 (1999): 17.

67. President Mbeki's much publicized support for the "dissident" view on AIDS (which rejects the link between HIV and AIDS) and the government's refusal to provide antiretroviral drugs (including for rape victims and HIV-positive pregnant women) has been maintained in the face of vociferous criticism from health professionals, AIDS activists, the media, and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU).

68. These tendencies are reflected in a number of recent developments. Internally, the power and scope of the President's office has increased dramatically under Mbeki. Provincial premiers and Megacity mayors are now directly appointed by the ANC high command. Recent reforms in the demarcation of local government—which were presented as a strictly administrative process of rationalization—have dissolved local city councils in favor of unicity structures and much more centralized forms of representation. In the run-up to last year's local government elections, the ANC has exercised even tighter control over the selection of candidates by providing central oversight of local nominations and sidelining alliance partners (SANCO and COSATU). The standard rationale for this it that it allows the ANC to weed out "populist" and "opportunist" party elements and select more professional and capable candidates.

69. Steven Friedman, "An End in Itself," 17.

70. See Alan Mabin and S. Parnell, "Rethinking Urban South Africa," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 21, (1995): 39-62.