

DEFINITIONS OF THE LEVELS OF DEMOCRACY BASED ON CULTURAL APPROACH

Democracy can not be "imported", it must grow from the local context and culture; local cultural practices should be respected. We must also understand the differences in urban and rural communities (e.g. in Africa). The level of democracy should not only be justified based on the existence of elections. There are also other features to be studied.

The vocabulary of "democracy" has been imported and thus may not be understood or implemented by local communities. Therefore it is important to study the system of governance in local languages.

"Ubuntu" – Omuntu – the person only exists in relation and in the presence of other people (*individual*)
It means humanness, being a person that can not be discriminated against race, gender or social status.

Omkunda – it has been discussed (*village*)
It means that these are the people who have agreed that we are here and

that the headman is our leader, executing the rules and regulations as it has been discussed and agreed by the village people.

Oshitopolwa – "The number of villages divided and grouped together for good governance" (*region*)
It means many villages put together because the King would not be able to discuss with them all together and thus he forms smaller groups to discuss with them more closely.

Oshilongo – it has been done – It has been worked (*country*)
It means all the villages combined together make up the country

Otjigwana – the people of Omukunda and Oshilongo united, forming one nation (*nation*)
The citizen of a certain geographical area(s) form the nation

CONCLUSION OF THESES ON DEMOCRACY, TOLERANCE AND RESPECT FOR ALL

- Intolerance and the lack of respect may endanger democracy and human rights
- It is related to human attitudes
- The more inclusive and transparent the political space becomes, the more the likelihood of sustaining the gains in democratic governance. (JAP between IDEA and the AUC 2008)
- Democracy & Tolerance is put forward by local communities and should be high on the agenda of Local Authorities.
- Tolerance may be instrument for economic and technological development as well as competitiveness and innovativeness of a region (by eg. Professor Richard Florida)
- Formal meetings and committees, traditional training, workshops or consultants may not be enough as instruments
- Promoting tolerance and respect needs dialogue which in turn requires innovative forums
- New kind of forums may be facilitated by narrative approach; mutual understanding requires more storytelling than theories!

PROPOSALS

1. UNDERSTANDING TOLERANCE AND ITS IMPACT ON DEMOCRACY AND DEVELOPMENT

- Basic research on Tolerance and Respect for All and their relevance to democracy and social and economic development
- Developing methodological tools for Tolerance and Democracy (T&D) research and practice, including narrative methodology

2. COLLECTING STORIES FROM LOCAL AUTHORITIES' INVOLVEMENT IN T&D PROCESSES

- Collecting a global database on local T&D cases available for all
- Learning about the culture of African traditional administration and searching for a proper understanding of sources of tolerance and of traditional African conception of "democracy"

3. ORGANISING KNOWLEDGE SUPPORT FOR T&D PRACTICES

- Identifying the key forums and institutes that contribute to T&D research and practice (UBUNTU Forum, International Tolerance Network, etc.)
- Establishing a permanent North-South forum for local authority staff and politicians to support tolerance-related dialogue
- Establishing The Centre of Expertise for Tolerance and Democracy and related global portal for T&D resources
- Involving educational institutions in T&D processes. Assessing the feasibility of establishing a research unit or network on democracy, tolerance and social innovations in African context, e.g. as a collaborative project of UNAM and Polytechnic of Namibia

4. SEARCHING FOR CONFESSONAL SUPPORT FOR T&D PROCESSES

- Assessing and enhancing the role of Churches or their ecumenical organisations in T&D processes with a special view to their collaboration with local authorities

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Partnership for Local Democracy, Development & Social Innovation (PLDDSI) www.lempo.fi/namibia
North-South Local Government Co-operation Programme: www.localfinland.fi/north-south



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"The bushmen say that an old person who doesn't know how to tell a story, doesn't exist"
- Ginger Mauney in the Air Namibia Magazine Flamingo, Oct 2008 -

DEMOCRACY. Tolerance & Respect for All

Case stories from Finland and Namibia about promoting tolerance in the society.



In cooperation with:
Ondangwa & Keetmanshoop municipalities in Namibia and Lempäälä & Kangasala municipalities in Finland

DEMOCRACY. TOLERANCE & RESPECT FOR ALL -THE THEORY

There are too many cases of true stories in which democratic society and even basic human rights have been endangered by insufficient tolerance and respect for all in a society. Challenges to tolerance often emerge from the tensions of politics, ethnicity or religion. Segregation of a society may be a consequence of such conditions. If these forces of segregation are stronger than the motivation of cooperating and searching for common good, even the models of democracy and good governance simply will not work.

Tolerance in most of its forms is related to personal attitudes. We can develop knowledge and skills but changing attitudes has different requirements. If attitudes are the challenge, we may not have capacity or courage to promote socially desirable change.

Tolerance is often discussed as a high level, national issue of a society.

There are various options for design of democratic institutions in respect to tolerance (International IDEA, Handbook, Democracy at the local level, 2001).

1. **Autonomy**, which allows an ethnic or other groups to have direct control over important affairs, which concerns them and gives right for larger entity to exercise those powers, which are the common interests of both sections.
2. **Power sharing: group security** refers to joint or consensus decision making by all major mobilized factions in society; it is widely viewed as a viable alternative to "winner-take-all" democracy.
3. **Power sharing: integrative approach**. Peace settlements should feature incentives for multi-ethnic co-operation to build multi-ethnic political coalitions.
4. **Majority rule democracy** is generally not seen as ideal for multi-ethnic cities in which one identity group is a majority or historically dominant. Ethnic minorities may be outvoted, which breeds frustration.

In the dialogue between the Finnish and Namibian local authorities we concluded that "Tolerance, equal opportunities and respect for all" should be the ultimate goal which leads into a situation to which "Democracy has a real impact on the real life of citizens and communities".

HOW TO ACHIEVE THIS?

If tolerance, equal opportunities and respect are not always a reality in the community, what should we do about it? Often we organize training, workshops or hire a consultant. All these may be relevant but the substance of the activity of these instruments should however be given a primary role. The methods may be various. And innovative they must be if tolerance as attitude is our challenge endangering democracy.

In the logical framework-process of a Finnish-Namibian project between local authorities we have listed e.g. strategy processes in general to search for mutual understanding, conflict resolution capacity of an organization, mentoring may have impact in some cases, there can be long term processes of civic education, the media can be challenged to promote the dialogue (traditional and modern electronic), and so on.

The first step in the process of promoting tolerance is to identify the lack of tolerance. Open and honest dialogue is the key in this process. The first step may also be the most difficult. Here the narrative methods come into the picture as a source of positive experience. We can start

OUR SEARCH FOR TOLERANCE IS BUILT ON STORIES, DIALOGUE AND INFORMAL FORUMS!

We are in the beginning of this road. We do not have ready made solutions. We want to start dialogue on this methodology with our colleagues in Southern and Northern local authorities. We are the key players in making the local and global societies more tolerant. Let us take this on the agenda. This may be part of positive processes in Kenya, Georgia, Somalia, Helsinki, Brussels and wherever ...

Local authorities can make an impact!

Essential factors of tolerance and respect are determined by local and individual behaviour. In the local response to this challenge the role of local authority is critical. Real democracy and tolerance is materialized in the local level.

Tolerance is not only an issue of philosophy, democracy or human rights. It may also have other dimension. It also relates to economic or technological development. Richard Florida, the famous Professor of Public Policy from George Mason University, in his book Cities and The Creative Class, discusses Talent, Tolerance and Technology. In his theory, diversity of a society and its tolerance may be part of the competitiveness and innovativeness of a city in economic and technological development. Thus, it may be useless to promote only technology in a developing country if we do not support growth of talent and promote tolerance, both laying basis for genuine sustainable development of a society.

by telling real-life stories about positive tolerance as well as cases of intolerance. Theoretical and philosophical discussions tend to be too distant from everyday life. Real-life stories bring the issue into our hearts and feelings, thus making them appropriate methods for the promotion of tolerance. Opening the dialogue through stories calls for unconventional forums. Formal meetings of committees, boards, workshops or conferences with agendas, minutes and memorandums may not be the most suitable methods and forums. More innovative solutions are needed. The forums for dialogue on tolerance must be more human and more informal.

Experiences from Namibia

In Namibia, we found a solution in coming together and exchanging ideas according to the African culture. We have established "Tuhungileni", a socio-ethical forum for dialogue, which finds its symbolism in the African culture, where we sit in the evening around the fire in the village and share knowledge and wisdom. This is the heart of the African philosophy, of humaneness "Omuntu" – ("Ubuntu").

STORIES FROM NAMIBIA

Told by Keetmanshoop and Ondangwa municipalities

Namibia is a young democratic nation of only 19 years old, after the painful experiences of the colonial apartheid system. A nation of diverse cultures, languages and ethnic groups who managed to enjoy democracy and tolerance embodied in the call of national reconciliation policy on the 21st March 1990. Tolerance is the backbone of any democratic process, which enables people to understand their democratic rights. However the implementation has many challenges.

Mutual respect, political tolerance and equal opportunities are challenged in a process where new political parties are born after the history of a bitter independence struggle which united the society. For the first time ever, the Namibian police had to use teargas because of political intolerance in Windhoek, Katutura, October 2008. It was a positive sign of the rule of law that police chief issued a "Stern Warning" in media to all parties to conduct their activities in a peaceful and tolerant manner. Parties are tolerant with each other but the intolerance is expressed by individuals!

Being a mayor, the only female in the council and a single woman, and on top of it, belonging to another ethnic group. I first felt that the men felt threatened, even though they actually had elected me. Ladies are often result driven and have more regular introspection people in high positions are generally scrutinized about their professional and private behaviour without respecting their privacy.

When the local authorities in Namibia were established, the media was very critical towards the new black leaders without understanding the historical background. It was of course a transitional period. Innovation and development can only grow in a conducive environment where we are encouraging each other. The leaders should not concentrate too much on the public appearances in the media, rather concentrate on their main task which is service provision to their communities. In Namibia tolerance is the main pillar which keeps us united. Freedom of speech and open dialogue is a prerequisite for a democratic society.

STORIES FROM FINLAND

Told by Kangasala and Lempäälä municipalities

Year 2000 the future committee of the Finnish parliament made a survey about the technological competitiveness of Oulu region in northern Finland. The survey revealed the importance of the strength of a christian Finnish movement on that area. A special feature of that movement is their "social capital" – capacity for cooperation and networking! Thus we understand the impact of trust and attitude for a will to cooperate towards common goals.

On the background of the recent Finnish school-shootings, there had been severe mocking and "unrespect" against these shooters in their schools and in the society. The Finnish society of course does not accept this kind of sad incidents but if individuals had more respect towards each other in the society, the incidents could be avoided.

In 2008 in Lempäälä a skillful person, with an African background, applied for a job in a small company. The other employees refused and said: "If this person will be employed, the others shall leave".

A long time ago, in 1918, there was a civil war in Finland. Only 90 years later the Finnish society is able to discuss the awful history of the fight between sisters and brothers. The city of Tampere and NGO's succeeded 2008 through organising a big day of tolerance and reconciliation. That may become a healing tradition.

