

A Decentralization in Governance Project Screening Indicator for NGOs and International Organizations

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Abstract: The article offers an easy-to-use indicator for scholars and practitioners to measure whether NGOs, international organizations, and government policies and projects uphold the international legal consensus and related professional standards for "decentralization"; a euphemism that has replaced the universal principles in international treaties for promoting "self-determination" and decolonization. Use of this indicator on more than a dozen standard interventions funded today by international development banks, UN organizations, country donors, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) reveals that most of the major actors in the field of development have failed to follow international guidelines that many of them are bound to follow and appear to be using "decentralization" as a cover for new forms of colonialism that are simply more efficient. The indicator helps to further codify international development law and points to specific areas for holding organizational actors accountable to international agreements in order to promote development goals of sustainability and good governance. This article also offers a sample test of the indicator using UN Habitat's Decentralization Guidelines as a case study.

Introduction

In its 2000 handbook for "Decentralization and Local Governance Programming" the U.S. Agency for International Development noted that it had at that time already 15 years experience in "democracy promotion" and four decades in "municipal development work" but that it was still asking the question, "Should decentralization always be promoted?" without being able to come up with any answers (USAID, 2000, p. 65). Indeed, the Agency admitted that it was unable to measure any success and could not even define the problems it was trying to solve, noting that "The complex and dynamic nature of decentralization and democratic local governance makes target setting particularly difficult" and that "perceptions [on what to do and why] often differ widely" (pages 54 and 53). Yet, it has still gone ahead promoting decentralization for another decade without revising its guide.

The World Bank similarly notes on its current website that "Decentralization is not a panacea and it does have potential disadvantages" and that there is a need for an "appropriate balance". Yet it offers no guidelines as to what that balance is and what the real logic is of interventions beyond the rather vague and easily politicized objective to "alleviate the bottlenecks in decision

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making that are often caused by central government planning and control of important economic and social activities" (World Bank). Indeed, as if to underscore the lack of clear standards, many observers say that central decision making by World Bank officials, themselves, is the very bottleneck that needs to be broken (Korten, 1995).

Similarly, the United Nations that runs several types of decentralization interventions through various agencies such as its Development Programme (UNDP), the UN Human Settlements Programme (UN Habitat), UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) throws up its hands in trying to determine when such interventions are appropriate, which (if any) problems decentralization is supposed to solve, and how to measure the benefits. The organization simply offers some 22 different tools for readers to choose from in its "User's Guide to Measuring Local Governance" and wishes them luck (Wilde et. al., UNDP, 2009).

More to the point, one scholarly attempt to resolve the confusion notes that "there is little agreement about: 1) what decentralization means, or 2) how it should be measured" (Schneider, 2003) coming almost a generation after earlier authors noted the same (Conyers, 1984). Rather than find any logic, the author of the 2003 study tasked a computer to use mathematical techniques to find statistical commonalities and to see if the computer could find the logic, in the belief that humans, themselves, could not. Though decentralization has been one of the major interventions in "development" for more than 30 years, what one finds in the field is a mess of conflicting indicators and definitions with the agencies, themselves, uncertain of when to use which indicator or to promote which goals. Yet, they continue to run these projects without even being certain which problems they are trying to solve or which results to achieve, experimenting on communities to whom they are entirely unaccountable.

In fact, there has long been a standard established by the international community that represents a consensus on the appropriate role of decentralization as a fundamental principle of governance. It emerged as part of the essential legal documents with the founding of the United Nations following World War II, specifically to guide the process of protection of ethnic and racial minorities and to promote the process of de-colonization in a way that met the international goals of peace and security. Without codification of these standards, however, international organizations and social scientists have lost sight of the international legal consensus and have substituted approaches that have often aligned agendas with private interests rather than international objectives.

Today, though most projects that fall under the classification of "decentralization" are usually described in terms of promoting "democratization" or "efficiency" many of them actually seem to be covers for furthering hidden agendas of international donors. Often, the goal of strengthening local governments seems to be a screen for dislodging natural resources for exploitation through direct contracts with weak and corrupt local authorities: for creating a "race to the bottom" in regulatory standards for wages and for product sales that allow for commercial exploitation of localities; for opening key localities to exploitation where foreign investors have commercial interests and benefitting from the creation of government structures that are in fact influenced by foreigners rather than under any local control or promoting local benefits. These approaches too often seek to assimilate minorities more rapidly into the global system by exerting direct international influence on groups that have maintained diversity in their political systems, and traditional consumption and production patterns. Sometimes these projects are promoted simply as a business to promote the interests of development bureaucrats, running projects for the sake of keeping themselves employed for cushy, unimaginative and high paid work.

Indeed, individual agendas, bureaucratic shortcuts, lack of professionalization and competence, and a general confusion of directions, indicators and a proliferation of international declarations and treaties (that have themselves become a business of treaty proliferation to justify bureaucratic careers) have so muddled the agendas that no one can even articulate the original goals of "de-

centralization” and the basis for it in the international system. Few in the field seem to remember what the international system was designed to do or, particularly in the area of development, what international laws and directives for international development are.

The purpose of this article is to refocus the international community on the agreed goals and standards for ”decentralization” that come out of international laws and treaties but seem to have disappeared from both theory and practice. In the same way that legal scholars have taken bodies of law and created legal treaties that establish various elements and principles to fulfill those laws, this article offers a tool for practitioners and scholars that can be used to measure compliance with the established international standards for ”decentralization”. Such ”codification” of principles essentially places them within the framework of law in the area of ”international development interventions” where such principles exist in laws and treaties but have yet to be codified. Indeed, for the peoples of developing countries and for professionals, an indicator can serve as the basis for initiating political or even legal action against invasive or harmful activities that previously were difficult to hold to a common professional standard by recognizing that they are essentially principles of ”international law”.

Recent articles by this author have taken some of the initial steps to codify international development law by establishing indicators and benchmarks through which the public and organizations can hold international development actors accountable to international law and to professional standards that follow international law. These indicators are offered as easy-to-use tools to create accountability and transparency in the use of public funds in development interventions; exposing abuses and offering signals for improvements. In two articles now in press, the author has codified the international consensus in ”development” and in ”poverty reduction” in the form of indicators (Lempert, 2014; 2015). Previous indicators began with tests of whether development projects met international treaty standards for promoting the agreed development objectives of ”sustainable development” (Lempert and Nguyen, 2008) as well as other basic governance objectives to promote self reliance and end colonial ”dependency” (Lempert, 2009), to build ”democracy” and protect rights as key international legal goals of good governance (Lempert, 2009; 2011) and to hold development professionals to standards of ethics in order to eliminate conflicts of interest (Lempert, 1997). This is also part of a larger initiative to build organizations that will monitor and challenge donors (Lempert, 2008).

This indicator is a direct corollary to these others. While decentralization projects can also be measured by these other indicators for their adherence to international standards in democracy and sustainability, as well as held accountable where they rely on the tool of ”capacity building”, this indicator adds a second dimension to the measure of sovereignty. It measures whether international development agencies are appropriately implementing the internationally agreed principles for promoting ”self-determination”/sovereignty, peace and security that are at the basis of the international system.

The author’s previous indicator on dependency focused on how effectively projects reverse colonialism and uphold international values and agreements on sovereignty and independence, from the perspective of the relationship between the donor and the recipient country. This indicator takes this one step further; looking at the goal of reversing internal colonialism within countries as a way to promote international law, as well as goals on self-determination and rights protections, and sustainable development.

The article begins by defining ”decentralization” according to basic internationally agreed principles that can be codified and placed into an indicator, surveys existing indicators, and explains why several international ”decentralization” projects now fail in the absence of an indicator or standard to hold them accountable to minimal levels of competence. To highlight the issues, the article also offers a case study of Lao P.D.R., one former French and Japanese colony where the agenda of ”decentralization” (i.e. decolonization) fails because the technocratic (and ideo-

logical) approach to decentralization is out of touch with the reality of actual sovereignty and power, today. The piece then offers a new indicator and tests it on several categories of projects, including a detailed examination of how to use the indicator on an organization like UN Habitat and its Decentralization Guidelines

International legal principles of decentralization in governance

There is no body of "international development law" as such, and there is certainly no "case law" of judicial interpretations of the principles and elements of "international development" and its various aspects like "decentralization". But there already are several international laws and treaties that define the basic elements of rights and dignity that are part of the international consensus. Some of these laws, for example, identify the essential elements for survival of communities and right to choice patterns of consumption for living sustainably and for governing themselves, that are the essence of the "decentralization" of sovereignty (U.N. Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide ("Genocide Convention"), 1948).

The methodology for extracting the basic principles from a body of laws and treaties is one regularly used by lawyers and judges when trying to find the precepts underlying laws and is referred to as "statutory analysis". Though bodies drafting laws do not always fully define the theories and principles that they use when they reach a consensus and draft a law or a group of laws, legal scholars and judges routinely use laws to reconstruct the underlying principles (Cross, 1995; Beninon, 2009; Sutherland, 2010).

Identifying and systematizing them is similar to what social scientists also do in "deconstructing" texts to find the guiding logic underlying them. The empirical "data" used to explore human behavior and draw conclusions comes from the written texts, themselves. Not everything is explicit, but there are also some implied conditions and elements for the overall principles to work. That method can be applied here.

The international universal principle of decentralization is actually a very simple one to enunciate, but the word "decentralization" does not appear in international treaties. The real terms that are found in the United Nations' founding documents and in a number of its declarations and treaties as well as in international criminal laws in place of the word "decentralization" are:

"self-determination", "decolonization", and "group rights".

If it is used properly, in accordance with international agreements, "Decentralization" is simply a short-hand term for promoting the self-determination of groups in ways that are sustainable and that protect any infringement against the rights of that group to all of the attributes that allow it to survive independently.

Though these alternate terms are enshrined in international documents, it is almost impossible to find such a clear and succinct statement of this established principle in any project or guide to decentralization today. Even the United Nations own documents do not reference the many founding documents, laws, treaties and declarations that enunciate these fundamental goals and how decentralization serves to achieve them.

Affirming the international principles of "decentralization" through "self-determination" and "decolonization":

More than 50 years ago, the United Nations formed one of the first groups to work on the problem of decentralization, then under the term "decolonization". The UN Special Committee on Decolonization, formed in 1961, put at its center the internationally recognized doctrine of the

UN system that "all peoples have the right to self determination"; a doctrine enshrined in almost every one of the human rights laws and treaties, starting with the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948).

The Committee's Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonized Countries and Peoples contains one of the clearest statements of the link between decentralization (as a mechanism for promoting self determination) and the fundamental goals of the U.N. system of international laws. It noted: "the increasing conflicts resulting from the denial of or impediments in the way of the freedom of such peoples which constitute a serious threat to world peace" and that "the continued existence of colonization prevents the development of economic cooperation, impedes the social, cultural and economic development of dependent peoples and militates against the United Nations ideal of universal peace." Further, "the subjection of peoples to alien subjugation, domination and exploitation constitutes a denial of fundamental human rights contrary to the Charter of the United Nations and is an impediment to the promotion of world peace and cooperation." (U.N. Special Committee on Decolonization 1980)

The principle and goal of decentralization could not be clearer. It should be to re-establish autonomy, sovereignty and self determination of cultural groups over their resources and ways of life to re-establish their sustainability and to reverse legacies of colonialism and domination from stronger powers. Since cultural diversity and adaptation is also a fundamental key to long-term human survival as a recognized universal principle, the goal of "decentralization" in "development" must be to assure the integrity of the globe's 6,000 cultures as well as other groups that are able to adapt to particular eco-systems and to assure the integrity, security, and sustainability of those groups.

How the treaties offer the basis for measurements that apply the principles:

There are very clear links in the international system between "self-determination" (including autonomy, sovereignty, and group rights) and sustainable development. Three previous articles by this author presented indicators to measure compliance of development actors with international law and treaties and documented these basic principles and the links to development. The author's:

- Sustainable development screening indicator outlined how the principles for sustainable human development that are at the basis of UNDP and the UN system were defined clearly in the U. N. Conference on Environment and Development (the Rio Declaration, 1992) and how this reaffirmed the idea of cultural integrity (Lempert and Nguyen, 2008)
- Sovereignty/dependency indicator linked the principles of the Genocide Convention and the Rio Declaration to the concept of "self-determination" in development (Lempert, 2009); and
- Democracy indicator outlined the universal principles of democracy including the recognition of two levels of rights (cultural/community and individual rights) in the international system (Lempert, 2011).

The only difference in the application of "decentralization" interventions to those same three principles is at the level the principles apply. It is clear that the international system recognizes the rights of cultures as units for sustainable development planning and interventions, as units for sovereignty in the form of self-determination, and as rights holders in democracy. Do cultures also have the right in the international system to be the specific units around which "decentralization" interventions are planned such that sustainable development works to promote decolonization for the benefit of cultures currently subject to internal colonialism and other forms of colonial domination (such as neo-colonialism in the global economy)?

So long as decentralization works to decolonize in ways that do not threaten the security of other nationalities (i.e., those who dominate nation states where the colonization occurs), the principle is that it is these cultural rights and the sustainability of these cultural groups that is the underlying goal of the international system. Beyond all of the rights treaties and criminalization of genocide, the U.N. Declaration on Indigenous Peoples reiterates the principle (in the first eight articles) and begins to define the elements (in additional articles) to assure that "control by indigenous peoples over developments affecting them and their lands, territories and resources will enable them to maintain and strengthen their institutions, cultures and traditions" (2007).

- Article 1 iterates the "right to the full enjoyment, as a collective or as individuals, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms"
- Article 3 reasserts the principle of "self-determination"
- Article 4 reiterates the "right to autonomy or self-government"
- Article 8 requires that States provide "redress for: (a) any action which has the aim or effect of depriving them of their integrity as distinct peoples, or of their cultural values or ethnic identities"
- Article 14 affirms the right to educate for one's own economic, political and social system, without having to follow others, either of the State or international values
- Article 18 implicitly affirms the right to oppose colonial and state political systems where these erode "indigenous decision-making institutions"
- Article 20 makes it clear what the right of independent development and choice means: "Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and develop their political, economic and social systems or institutions, to be secure in the enjoyment of their own means of subsistence and development, and to engage freely in all their traditional and other economic activities."

Sovereignty and autonomy of cultures is a universal value that is to be legally protected by the global community and incorporated as a fundamental concept of development that protects "choice" and diversity. According to Principle 8 of the Rio Declaration, sustainability is a long-term balance of consumption and production, underlining that it is the independent control of resources and the proper balancing of choices within the framework of one's culture and identity that are to be universally protected and promoted.

The way the principle works in development is relatively clear. Colonial systems, by definition (and including the current global system) are unsustainable. The development goal of decolonization/decentralization is to restore those sustainable cultures in their environments, following the disruption of colonialism, as well as to assure sustainability of populations in ways that are tied to their local eco-systems. Though previous research by this author, sampling existing cultures, suggests that half of those extant cultures may themselves have once been empires that have now been subjugated, and cannot be returned to those earlier conditions, many are currently located within areas where they have the potential for sustainability if they have the security, sovereignty, identity, and appropriate planning within the context of those eco-systems.

Why "decentralization" has been substituted for the clearer principles and terms:
Today, "decentralization" has become a euphemism that departs from and hides the actual terms – "decolonization", "self-determination" and "group rights" - that most countries are now afraid to use because of individual agendas to subvert the international principles. Indeed, "decentralization" today is often used to undermine the very principles of self-determination, cultural diversity,

and sustainability in ways that promote new forms of colonialism and assure genocide through the undermining of cultures.

At the heart of the international system today remains the fundamental contradiction between the protection of some 200 nation states in which processes of internal colonialism continue and that have also agreed to an approach to globalization that is largely unsustainable and in violation of most of the international treaties (Lempert and Nguyen, 2011), and protecting the 6,000 cultures of the world, some 3,500 to 4,000 which are currently endangered from processes of genocide that the international system claimed devoted to end as one of its central missions in protecting the future of humanity and promoting peace and security (Lempert, 2010; UN Convention, 1948).

The Declaration of the UN Special Committee on Decolonization has highlighted this contradiction noting that any decolonization that is in "partial or total disruption of the national unity or territorial integrity of a country is incompatible with the purpose and principles of the Charter of the United Nations" (1980).

The principles are clear and the system works to promote decentralization that protects the world's 6,000 cultures and the various communities (sub-cultures and groups) that have adapted or can be sustainably adapted to different eco-systems, but it requires one condition. For internal colonization to work and for the international system to move towards actual sustainable development, the groups that currently have (at least nominal) control (since having statehood today does not assure actual sovereignty given actual distributions of power in the international system), also have to feel that their interests are being protected. If, they are being protected, then it is also in their interest to allow the minority groups and regions within their states to have the autonomy and sovereignty they need for their sustainable development.

In trying to explain why the U.N. system and international donors did not follow the very principles they established against genocide and for sustainable development, and why they scored so poorly on our sustainability indicator, this author and a co-author found that most of the governments of the world today actually feel that the international system fails to provide them the security they need to protect their own resources against others (Lempert and Nguyen, 2011). Countries' elites abuse their resources and maintain systems of internal colonization as a response to the threats they feel and the violence they have experienced from other countries in the international system. The inability of the international system to provide the actual security it promises has created a "prisoners' dilemma" of global instability and unsustainability. It reinforces colonial hegemonic blocs that effectively undermine the actual sovereignty of many states, and also reinforces internal colonialism. The need to protect resources against outside threats perpetuates systems of colonialism by "national" elites even after "independence" and causes country elites to define attempts at sustainable development that would promote internal self-determination and decolonization as a "disruption of national unity". These fears have a rational basis.

Immediately after the establishment of the United Nations, the Cold War reinforced a system of global hegemony that perpetuated colonialism in new forms as well as maintained internal colonialism even in many "independent" countries. The ideas of "nation building" promoted in the 1950s and thereafter were designed to destroy and control cultural diversity and to establish a system of nation states that replaced many other kinds of relationships between communities that often allowed them greater independent identities (Huntington, 1968; Wallerstein, 1979). In the context of globalization, that system of control and forms of corporate influence ("neo-colonialism") continue today (Korten, 1995).

The international community recognizes very clearly that colonialism is unsustainable and a threat to the very objectives of the international system. It disrupts and destroys locally adaptive mechanisms that balance cultures with their resources with resultant poverty and violence that destabilize the international order. But, as previous indicators have demonstrated, there is little attempt by the international community to actually work towards sustainability and security that

would allow for decolonization.

Hence, "decentralization" has been substituted for the actual international goals of self-determination/sovereignty/autonomy, group rights protections, sustainability, and decolonization. Instead of dismantling both internal colonialism and neo-colonialism, "decentralization" is now often being used to make internal colonialism and neo-colonialism simply more "efficient", while reinforcing inappropriate boundaries for sustainable development, and undermining cultural diversity. This actual destruction of democracy and development is being done under the pretext of democratization and development.

The purpose of this indicator is to restate those basic, simple international goals and to offer an indicator that can hold initiatives accountable to those goals. The principles of "decentralization" as a standard development intervention to achieve self-determination, decolonization, group rights protections and sustainability are internationally recognized principles enshrined in international laws. They are agreed upon not only by major donors but also by the community of non-governmental organizations and by professionals in development called upon to practice "decentralization". This makes it relatively simple to test whether organizations are actually doing that which they say they have committed to.

Indicators in the field and the lack of an indicator to screen "decentralization" in interventions

There are plenty of indicators to describe the "before" and "after" results of decentralization in what World Bank and other bureaucrats define in the sub-areas of "fiscal, administrative, and political decentralization" but there is still no indicator that determines whether a decentralization intervention is actually in compliance with the principles of international law and whether it is appropriate or not to the goals of the international system for self-determination, decolonization and protection of group rights. Professionals can measure the size of the pieces that are cut up in the process of decentralization but they cannot offer any tool that offers the legal justification of why or how to cut!

The goals of the international system for security, peace, and long term human survival, as achieved through the protection of human cultural diversity and sustainability of autonomous groups within protected ecosystems, have been trumped by technical inputs and outputs to serve other ends that delinked from universally agreed goals. Indeed, the means of "decentralization" have been substituted for the ends this kind of intervention was supposed to achieve in the international system, with the ends forgotten. Nor is there any licensing or grading system to measure basic competence or to establish other competence levels for practitioners who do "decentralization" and who claim to be "decentralization experts."

Hijacking the principles of decolonization, self-determination and group rights:

Although there does not appear to be any existing indicator in use by "development" professionals in the area of "decentralization", it would not be surprising if one were to emerge, substituting measurements of colonial, top-down administrative efficiency for the internationally agreed goals of cultural diversity and sustainability.

Examples of the existing frameworks in use by the international "development" banks and by other international agencies, almost all of whom work with central governments as their "clients" are easy to find in project reports and in academic literature, often produced by practitioners working for or in tandem with those organizations. In a recent report commissioned by the Asian Development Bank, for example, some 14 different frameworks are offered highlighting different objectives (ADB, 2009). They are easy to cluster. They seem to fall into three categories of

objectives: *economic policy* (four), *economic efficiency* (three) objectives and *political* objectives (seven).

When "decentralization" initiatives are promoted by international "development" banks, the objectives are generally *economic policy*: "growth", "poverty alleviation", or "mobilizing local resources" (Manor, 1999; Eaton, et. al., 2010). Although the Asian Development Bank and others have now inserted the goal of "sustainability" into the decentralization agenda as an additional economic policy objective, following its mention by the World Bank (Parker, 1995), it can be in direct conflict with some of the other stated goals such as "growth" and "mobilizing local resources" and is hardly applied in anything other than slogans. Linked with economic policy is the agenda for *economic efficiency*; the "efficient" use of resources as defined by international economists in their definition for how resources should be used: "allocative efficiency of public resources", "public sector efficiency", and reduction in "corruption" (Manor, 1999; Prud'homme, 1995).

The World Bank, for example, currently views the purpose of "decentralization" on the basis of financial efficiency in the global system, rather than protection of sustainable development, resource protection, human choice, and long-term human survival. The view of the World Bank is largely one of economists who seem to view decentralization as a "corporate management" problem as if they own the globe and are running it for profit and productivity for a few people in the center (Wallerstein, 1979; Korten, 1995). From this perspective, the goal of decentralization is simply efficiency through "economies of scale", "technical capacity at each level" and ability to thwart "functions [being] captured by local elites" (World Bank, Decentralization website). The goal is to follow "the design principles of finance: clear assignment of functions, rational decision making, and adherence to local priorities and accountability" (implying choice at local levels within the boundaries for choice established by global planning). The Bank's definition of decentralization is "the transfer of authority and responsibility for public functions from central government to intermediate and local governments or quasi independent organizations and the private sector" where the private sector includes multi-nationals and global banks that can exert pressure on the local agenda.

Apart from economic goals, many decentralization projects are promoted on the basis of *political* objectives that may sound at face value as if they are consistent with international rights and legal objectives, but often they fail to uphold these objectives in implementation. Among the political justifications and tests are those for: "planning from below" (without specifying who should have power below and why), "participation" (also without a clear standard of the principles of autonomy or sovereignty), "sharing of power" or "democracy" (similarly without a clear standard or reference to international law and its goals), "transparency and accountability" (but not clear to whom or for what), and "improved services" (without clarity on who chooses the services, why and how it meets international law and its goals of sovereignty and rights) (Unsworth, 2010). In the list of objectives presented by the Asian Development Bank, these are actually all culled from independent single studies rather than as part of any systematic approaches to decentralization as a goal of "good governance" (ADB, 2009).

The U.S. Agency for International Development, for example, seems to view decentralization less in terms of efficiency of the global economy for private investors but harmony of interests of countries over which it exerts hegemony, in assuring efficiency of political influence and standardization. The U.S. approach is not to start bottom-up to promote sustainability of autonomous cultures but to gradually transform countries from top-down in a process through stages of "de-concentration" (central Ministries establishing local field offices), "devolution" (transition to quasi-autonomous local units of government implementing national policy) and then "delegation" (transfer of policy making to local governments but with accountability to central government) (USAID, 2000). Though the USAID's "Governance Indicators" describe the purpose of decentral-

ization as focused on "increased responsiveness to citizens" it is through "constitutional and legal reforms for devolution" rather than for self-determination, decolonization, local identity, sustainability and group rights (USAID, 1998). The goals are to establish systems that duplicate the U.S. model of "democracy" with "regular competitive elections", "town meetings" and so on (USAID, 1998) as well as to promote "transition to a market economy" and to improve "accountability and performance" (USAID, 2000). USAID defines decentralization as "a process of transferring power to popularly elected local governments" with the unmeasured assumption that elections actually represent full protection of rights in all dimensions of power as measured in terms of "raised direct revenues and/or more administrative responsibilities" (USAID, 2000). The determination of when intervention is appropriate in the USAID manual appears to be dependent not on local needs, rights protections, sustainability or history of colonialism, but rather on whether there is the "political will" and "tradition" that would enable USAID to intervene (USAID, 2000). Like the World Bank, USAID offers no statement of the problems that "decentralization" is designed to solve and how benefits are to be measured.

Sometimes, the political objectives are simply normative. The Asian Development Bank, for example, now recognizes goals of: "political or fiscal stability" (but not cultural protections) and "equity" among groups (but not protection of rights, diversity and choice) (Tanzi, 1995; Prud'homme, 1995).

Of the 14 criteria recognized above, the author has already analyzed three of them - "sustainability", "poverty alleviation", and "democracy" - as well as several of the related criteria that sometimes fit into these, to see how they are applied by the international community (Lempert and Nguyen, 2008; Lempert, 2011; and Lempert, 2014a). The author has also devised an indicator for the international community's legal approach to "planning from below" in terms of "sovereignty" (Lempert, 2009). For each of these, there are also no other indicators other than those now published by the author, to assure compliance with the international legal framework that also does exist for these concepts. Most current projects score poorly when tested for compliance with the standards.

If international organizations, practitioners and scholars are claiming that there is a set of standards because they can create a checklist of areas in which they can suggest they demonstrate results, they are creating a deception based on slogans that remains detached from international legal principles.

It appears that "decentralization" has become an intervention that is justified by itself, with no measures at all of the cost-benefit of interventions to specific beneficiary communities and with no link to any problems or internationally agreed goals. Like investment banking and consulting industries that began to promote mergers, acquisitions, divestments and restructuring in the 1980s, for short term business gains but little long-term measurable benefit, this industry may be developing by itself simply to justify itself. Like the investment bankers and consultants who benefitted from every financial transition of purchase, sale and restructuring, so do consultants in "decentralization" also have a conflict of interests. Every time they reshuffle government functions and create the need for transactions, they derive personal benefit, even without any measures to justify their work or value-added.

Technical measures for the sake of measurements:

Although there are no existing frameworks and indicators to ensure compliance with international legal objectives, international organizations and practitioners have worked to justify their work with highly technical measures of results, whether or not the results actually serve a purpose recognized by the international legal consensus. Considerable energy has gone into the creation of indicators to support the industry of decentralization, in the three areas used by development bureaucrats today: fiscal decentralization, administrative decentralization, and political decen-

tralization. These three categories describe the specific interventions rather than the categories of objectives (economics, efficiency, and political) examined in the previous section. Yet, without any links to measurable benefits for sustainable development and self-determination, these measurements could be described in the way accountants refer to measurements that are not tied to policy making; as a form of "bean counting".

- *Fiscal decentralization measures:* The World Bank Group is the leader in the generation of fiscal indicators for decentralization, derived from public accounting theories of "fiscal federalism" dating back more than 50 years (Musgrave, 1958). These include measures such as: "revenue assignment" (raising of funds, between levels), "expenditure assignment", "characteristics of the transfer system" and "regulatory framework for sub-national borrowing" (World Bank, website; IMF, 2000). For purposes of sustainable development, such measures are largely irrelevant because the assignment of how funds are raised, spent or transferred has no link at all to the sustainability of human populations. Sustainability depends on management of resources and incentives for protecting resources and balancing consumption with the productivity of a resource, but this is not what these fiscal measures address. A locality can be self-financing by selling off its resources, but it will be unsustainable. It can also be temporarily dependent on outside revenues and expenditures and be moving towards sustainability by rebuilding the integrity of its community and control of its resources, but none of these measures address that.
- *Administrative decentralization measures:* Administrative decentralization measures have started to blur into political participation and "democratization" measures. In fact, since democratization measures rarely look at actual political power relations of cultures or other groups (Lempert, 2011), many of the measures that are called "political" or "democratic" are really administrative. Those used by the World Bank and measured in the Central Intelligence Agency's "world fact book" for example, measure institutional frameworks for different government functions and seek to measure the amount of "federalism", the basis of "political parties" and different executive powers at different governmental levels (Beel et. al., 2010; C.I.A., 1997). None of these mention community or group rights or appropriate units for ecosystems for sustainability.
- *Political decentralization measures:* Like the other categories of indicators, those for political decentralization are haphazard and are often just long lists of characteristics taken from the political systems from which the authors are familiar and in looking to see how others compare. Most are more in the way of checklists of possible inputs to justify program spending rather than any real measure of relative power or of benefits.
- USAID's original decentralization measures as part of its overall "governance indicator" started with just a short list of subjective project output measures. Among them was the "number or percentage of local council's laws passed without hindrance from central government" without any evaluation of whether the local council laws were enforceable or had any significance (USAID, 1998). A later version offers a list of 48 (!) similarly vague outputs including things like "number of reforms passed" and "scope of responsibilities clearly defined at each level" (USAID, 2000).
- Among some 22 "tools" described in the UNDP User's Guide to Measuring Local Governance (Wilde et. al., 2009), they range from measures like those used by the World Bank and USAID testing whether certain institutions copying those in the donor countries exist at local levels, to subjective "citizen report cards" (a favorite of current UNDP projects) on quality of service delivery at different levels. SNV offers a "local governance barometer" to

try to measure quality of services, also assuming that all governments are to fit a single mold. IDEA, a UNDP think tank in Stockholm offers a "Local Democracy Assessment Guide" (2002) with its determination of what the democratic process should look like everywhere. There is an effort among some of these to establish conformity with the European Charter's view of local self government in Europe (1985). Some of these, such as the Open Society Fund's citizen ratings of government transparency, are quite narrow.

- None of the political indicators actually test what a decentralized political system must do: it must protect the integrity of the cultural group it serves, assuring mechanisms for sustainability within the eco-system of the group and maintaining the autonomy of the local group, protecting it against all kinds of outside powers that could destabilize it (outside military and police power, outside economic interference, outside cultural interference, and threats to resources.) None of them measure the actual distribution of power in its various forms and the threats those distributions create for the sustainability of the cultural group and its resources. None measure the different incentives and factors necessary for maintaining the group as a political entity, politically unified and with sufficient authority to protect itself. It is of little significance whether a group has elected councils or some other mechanism for political choice and protection since the relevant measures are the ends that are the free choice of each cultural group, not whether they copy institutional forms that may or may not be appropriate to them.

Some authors have also looked for links between the different measures, suggesting for example that revenue decentralization is linked to better governance, simply by throwing data into regression analyses, but without any understanding of the known cultural factors for sustainability in control and management of population, consumption and resources (De Mello et. al., 2001). Given that the analysis of "decentralization" has started in disregard of basic international goals and known principles of sustainability, these models are attempts to try to rediscover what is already known without having to use the terms and concepts that are self-censored by "decentralization experts".

The problem with many "decentralization" projects and the real value of an indicator

In the absence of any professional standardization for "decentralization", there is in effect no public review of the tens of millions of dollars of public funds that are being transferred from developed countries to, usually, unrepresentative local government officials in the rest of the world in the guise of "decentralization." Abuses in this area are in fact running rampant. Many of the projects are working to achieve the opposite ends from those agreed on by the international community. Rather than protecting group rights and promoting sustainable development, international donors are often targeting localities specifically because of their weaknesses, to prey on their resources and destroy local cultures.

To understand what is going on today in most "decentralization" projects, it is important to remember that the same donors that now promote "decentralization" were the ones that were the colonial empires promoting internal colonization but calling it "nation building" after World War II in a direct effort to destroy local systems (Huntington, 1968). Though many countries sought during the Cold War era to be "non-aligned" and to promote their own nationalism that could have opened the door to greater internal decentralization and minority protection, the major powers forced polarization, militarization and internal colonization upon them. With the end of the Cold War and the rise of globalization, the same donor countries have taken no

responsibility for the impacts of colonialism or of internal colonialism and never utter the words or look to undo its damage. Instead, they claim that the processes of cultural genocide that have become part of globalization are "inevitable" and must continue going forwards. Decentralization is presented as if countries are now all homogeneous, or must be, in a single urbanizing form, and decentralization is now offered as a way to make international control more efficient and standardized. The principles are not those of cultural diversity and sustainability appropriate to eco-systems, to historic identities, and human choice but have been replaced by terms of "efficiency" and "harmony". One almost never hears, for example, about changing the basis of internal districting in countries to meet an actual development or international law objective of protecting peoples or resources.

Typically, today, international donors and practitioners claim that the agenda for decentralization initiatives is actually set by the recipients rather than by the donors and that the process should not be viewed as "top-down". In reality, almost all of the projects are designed by foreign donors and are planned directly with central government authorities or the local governmental authorities that are in place subject to the authority of central government. Few if any of the initiatives are "rights based" approaches originating in appeals by community groups to protect local resources, sovereignty or ethnic identity. The funds originate in the international community with economic policy, economic efficiency and political objectives and they are presented to existing authorities as incentives to follow those objectives.

In many international projects, today, decentralization has nothing to do with promoting local identities and undoing damage as a result of colonialism. Instead, the focus is on giving power to local authorities to contract with foreign donors and multi-national businesses for one of several purposes that actually destroy sustainability and cultural difference in violation of international treaties.

- The international banks call for the rights of localities to contract directly with international lenders in a process that is much like giving a teenager his or her own credit card to irresponsibly generate debt and to force rapid sales of resources to pay off the debt. None of these calls include sustainable development plans.
- Donor agencies call on local governments to have the power to "raise more local revenues" but rarely call for revenues that are linked to local productivity and local investment in ways that assure resources are protected and communities are sustainable. The goal is to sell off resources more quickly, through local authorities that often have less idea of the value of the resources and often even less concern for the localities than national officials (since many are simply appointed to take local control). More sellers simply helps lower the sale price.
- Donor agencies looking to generate more "anti-poverty" projects also wish to work directly with local communities and to bypass (often corrupt) national authorities. While the intention to avoid administrative red-tape at the center makes sense, these projects often work to assimilate local groups and offer no sustainable development planning or projections. Donors claim to be more interested in local peoples than central governments, but their projects simply funnel resources for "growth" in ways that further undermine local identities and resources.
- Projects promoting "investment" and "market transitions" or "democracy" are often part of international trade agreements like World Trade Organization accession that uses "decentralization" as a way to open up local government councils and elections to foreign money and lobbying in ways that undermine democracy and replace citizen rights with corporate influence.

- The long term result of much of this influence is to create more localities dependent on foreign investment and foreign products, competing against each other to lower regulatory standards on consumer protection, labor protection, and other rights and protections in ways that create a "race to the bottom" that forces everyone to the lowest common denominator and that actually generates poverty and unsustainability.

While USAID defines decentralization in a spectrum of deconcentration, delegation and devolution, there appears to be a hidden donor agenda in decentralization that is better described as the "dismantling" of local resources and public protections, and the "disintegration" of societies and communities for assimilation into a global system that exploits them and is unsustainable.

A short case study: sovereignty and "decentralization" in Lao P.D.R.

In using the word "decentralization" as a substitute for self-determination, sovereignty, group rights, and sustainability, many (if not most) "decentralization experts" today also insert an ideology that brings along a number of comically false assumptions about how things work in the real world. Although one could choose almost any country and its internal cultures, eco-systems and communities to demonstrate why decentralization must start with the principles agreed on by the international community, one country where almost all of these issues are raised in micro-cosm is Lao P.D.R. ("Laos"), where the author has worked for five years. While foreign projects work to "decentralize" Laos, their efforts are farcical because the country itself has no real sovereignty to decentralize. Moreover, the outside forces that exert power over the country assure both that there is no real independent government providing central services other than exerting military and police control over resources and no central revenue or spending system that protects the country's resources or sustainability at any level. How can there be "decentralization" when the real authority and funding is from foreign powers outside the country and the revenue system is set up to extract wealth and assure that the leadership serves outside interests rather than has any connection to the wealth or sustainability of the country? As a small state, Laos is not alone in this regard and the short description here is not meant to single out Laos or its leadership, who might choose a very different approach if they were free to do so and if they received the support promised by the international community in its agreements.

The ideology of decentralization:

Countries like Laos have been recognized as "independent" by the United Nations because they have military and police forces staffed by people in the country and have government offices also staffed by "citizens" in the country. Foreign organizations nominally sign agreements with these representatives. Ceremonially, the individuals (or families) running Laos are a network of (unelected) interests that refers to themselves as the "Lao People's (Revolutionary) Party", but scholars, foreign interests and members of this group themselves all acknowledge that it developed as an offshoot of the "Indochinese Communist Party", headed by Vietnamese-Lao and funded with Vietnamese weapons and support, coming from China and the Soviet Union (Evans, 2009; Rehbein, 2007). The mere existence of these formal organizations and citizens nominally working for them in the center creates a legal fiction of autonomy that says nothing about where their salaries (or weapons) actually come from, the outside pressures they are under and the personal and family consequences if they do not comply, the ties they have or are allowed to have to any local identity, and the actual power they have over the use of their resources. Four out of Laos' five neighboring countries dwarf them in population by five to one hundred times and have

historically decimated Laos' populations, leaders and cities, while many other countries in the region or globe, including powers that have assassinated leaders and demolished entire regions of Laos, also continue to make demands for resources and markets.

The assumptions used by "decentralization experts" create a picture that is blinkered to the role of foreign military and economic actors, to the history of the country and its relations, to the actual sustainability of its populations and resources, to its ethnic populations and their histories of forced relocation, mixing, enslavement, and needs for sustainability, and on the link between current revenue systems and resource protection. The picture they present is limited to seeing a centralized functioning state with a sustainable economy and absolute power that simply needs to be cut up into more manageable units along existing lines, with some tinkering in various roles at different levels. They see an urbanizing society that is homogenous (or that they wish would be), with all boundaries already reflecting appropriate distributions of people and undisrupted eco-systems, sustainable through a single formula of foreign investment.

To analyze sovereignty, power, ethnicity and sustainability within eco-systems for political decentralization in its full context, as well as the specifics of revenues for financial decentralization reveals a very different picture and one that the international principles and agreements were designed to solve rather than cover up.

The colonial context of Laos:

Like many "nation-states", Lao P.D.R. is also a forced creation of mixed eco-systems and minorities as a result of a long colonial history even before European colonization, leaving a mix of peoples of former empires constantly relocated, pushed across different borders and into new eco-systems, and further under different systems of cultural control. One can hardly speak of "decentralization" without first looking at issues of reconstituting and restoring in ways that are sustainable and sensitive.

The country is named after the "Lao" but the Lao are barely a majority in the country and the majority of ethnic Lao as well as half of the Laos' 16th to 19th century capital of Vientiane are now in Thailand, as a result of the carving of borders between the French and British in the late 19th and early 20th century. Before that, the Lao were constantly in "tributary" relationships recognizing the power of larger sovereigns around them like the Chinese, Vietnamese, and Siamese, much like today. Within Laos' borders, the "49" officially recognized ethnic groups include many groups that had former empires and kingdoms - possibly up to half of this number - that have largely been pushed out of their original eco-systems and previously enslaved when conquered by the Lao or placed under Lao control when entering Lao territory (like the H'mong, whose global population is more than Lao's but who lack a state) or other groups like the Tai Lu whose lands were tacked on to those of the Lao by the French.

Before the Europeans, some of the local groups also had sovereignty and paid tribute to the Lao in the "muang" system of local autonomy common to Tai peoples like the Lao and Siamese. The influence of the French and British in the region, in creating Western type centralized states was to destroy the muang system in ways that undermined decentralized local leaderships who were ethnically tied to the populations. The history of conquest in the region was one of genocides and forced relocations as well as population mixing to dilute senses of identity and autonomy. That also continues to characterize the region today.

Though nominally independent since 1945 and then again in 1975 with a change in leadership, the pattern of governance has been one in which half or more of the government budgets have come from foreign powers to the selected local rulers whom they have also supported with weapons. Though the countries supplying this aid and the leaders have been different at different times, this pattern has largely continued.

Similar to Cambodia, another neighboring small country, more than half of the national rev-

enue comes from foreign sources, though the mix is different. Rather than from direct aid and subsidies, it is more from the selling of particular resources that are requested by powerful neighbors: hydro-power, mining, forest, and tourism. This is similar to the earlier system of "tribute". Previously, a major source of revenue was the opium trade; an illegal product but one that was actually more closely tied to something produced by local populations and neighboring ones, but not the Lao. Major forms of revenues follow a pattern started during the French colonial era and replace the traditional systems of taxation and local management that existed before the French and are described by French explorers as the "pao" or "client system" (such as Etienne Aymonier, 1884). The taxes that the French introduced were on opium, tobacco, and alcohol, promoting products the Lao did not need and that had no tie to their economic growth or sustainability but that created objects of revenue. Indeed, the tax on the government beer monopoly and the government's interest in promoting beer consumption for revenue also characterize the revenue system (McCoy, 1972).

It would be hard today to claim that the Lao have "sovereignty" over their territory and resources or that they are able to protect or define a Lao ethnic "identity" consistent with local traditional choices for ways of life, political structure or production that is not influenced or directed from the outside. The idea of "decentralization" presumes that both the Lao government and its citizens actually have rights to stay on the land where they are; but that does not seem to be the case. Almost on a daily basis, as a result of pressures from its neighbors, Laos sells off its cities and its territory while on a smaller scale, the country's people are in constant motion in forced resettlement when foreigners make a claim to Laos' lands and resources.

An article in the *Vientiane Times* of February 20, 2012 described the areas of land sale to China in the country's northwest as among the first three of 41 planned "economic zones" sold to foreigners in which the foreigners would essentially be allowed to create their own police forces and governments, effectively ceding sovereignty. These are company towns with airports, no taxes and complete foreign control similar to independent principalities like Monaco. This is just the formalized sale of the country in parcels to foreigners, complete with accompanying control, but it represents the acceleration of a process that has been occurring in Laos and throughout the world. The issue of "land rights" and forced resettlement is occurring globally, as a result of foreign purchases of land and resources by companies, governments, and in deals promoted by international development banks. In Laos, even the capital city has been subdivided for sale to Chinese and other land speculators and money launderers for riverfront and lakefront properties. In rural areas, people are made landless by land grabs for Chinese and Vietnamese cash crops such as rubber plantations, by Vietnamese population invasions due to unsustainable population in Viet Nam (again promoted by the international community due to a lack of sustainability planning), and other forced relocations for foreign mining, hydropower and other resource purchases. Along with it, much of the country's heritage sites are being destroyed while language and culture are largely unpredicted and undefined against the onslaught of globalization. What does it mean to "decentralize" a flattened and transient landscape without protected sovereignty or identity?

The fiction of Laos' "centralized" government:

Before "decentralizing" government services, there is an untested assumption that an effective government providing services for the benefit of citizens and protection of resources exists. In Laos, decentralization is a fiction that is played out only on paper but in effect hides the reality. That which does not exist, cannot be decentralized.

It is hard to identify a central "Lao government" with sovereign military/executive authority, legislative authority, and judicial authority because the foreign State and economic powers that exert hegemony over Laos benefit from the absence of any authority other than a local military/police force to maintain this order. Measures used by "political and administrative de-

centralization experts” never focus on where the power lies and who actually funds, delivers and controls different services. Offices exist, but government officials routinely say they have “no money” and recognize that the real work of many areas of government is either done by a parallel system of foreign agencies or by private companies. Lao government salaries are so small that most officials work at other jobs or use their public offices for “rent seeking activities” or outside contracts. It appears that the foreign governments that exert sovereignty and that provide the funds for services want a system that subdues local autonomy and nationalism and creates this dependency, since it has existed for decades without donor projects seeking to change what is openly recognized.

There is essentially a military and policing government function in Laos. The military acts as an intermediary in selling access to the countries resources and acts to move and control the Lao public in compliance with these transactions. This is largely a continuation from the system under previous foreign colonization; for example, under the French when a French-Vietnamese and French foreign legion military and police force exercised local policing of the country in accordance with decisions made in France relative to exploitation of local resources. The Lao parliament and judiciary exist largely on paper with little independent power or financing. Under the French colonial system, the Parliamentary and judicial authorities were in France, with merely local symbolic councils. There is no direct accountability of a legislative or judicial authority to the citizenry.

The rest of the government - the line ministries at the central level - has no resources because there is no budget authority for taxation and no real incentive to invest in the country (as described below in the section on finance). Government positions are simply part time business offices used to make deals to bring in foreign money or to extort money from the citizenry through the use of regulatory powers. The implementation of services actually occurs by a third system of power and administrative authority; the foreign donor funding community. Foreign donors shop around government to find a government official or agency that will accept their project for a percentage cut. Then, they set up their own parallel/replacement system for what the government itself does not do.

A short inventory of different services that are considered “government roles” reveals some of the following:

- Drinking water is private business for sale, with no public clean water.
- Household and farm water is provided through a monopoly utility selling service privately.
- Communications systems are owned by government and foreign military companies and with the national government often trying to monopolize the competition to promote its private businesses.
- Transportation systems are largely foreign funded and promote the purchase of private vehicles sold by the countries building the systems (Japanese and Koreans building roads and selling cars to an elite).
- Education and health infrastructure are also largely foreign funded and privatized, with no incentives to provide anything more than an almost non-functional minimum well below that which could be funded with a real tax system.

At the local level, there are local “services” but there is little solidarity in the form of “governance”. Local roads, water systems, etc. are left to individuals who act alone or in small groups when they realize no one else will act. For example, people buy gravel to fill in potholes on their local streets, recognizing that government will not do it. It is hard to classify this as “local

government". In cases of infrastructure, it is largely funded by foreigners and is labeled as an advertisement of the donor building the road, school, hospital or other service.

Why "political and administrative decentralization" in countries like Laos misses the point in the absence of sovereignty:

In Laos, as in many countries, the idea of "decentralizing" services (that are provided by foreigners) and powers (that are exerted from outside the country rather than from within) may be more of a diversion from the reality of power and control than an actual attempt to reform anything. How can the government "decentralize" services that are funded and delivered by foreign agencies? Indeed, the very design of the government that has been maintained this way by foreign donors seems to prevent any actors in Laos from self-financing and self-investing precisely because foreign powers fear real Lao and minority nationalisms, sovereignty, and control of their resources.

The idea of "decentralization" in Laos, as in many countries, is simply nonsense given that there is no protection of rights to land or resources for anyone other than foreign speculators and investors. How can a community invest in itself and its resources when the likelihood is that they will undergo forced relocation and be disbursed and their resources taken from them as soon as any major power wants them? You can't govern yourself on your land if you can and will be thrown off of your land the minute someone else wants it. Foreign donors know this because most of the "achievements" of their projects with local governments have been destroyed by investors forcing people to move. The very purpose of the international system was to protect sovereignty and people's own resources and to promote their sustainable use, but the reality is that international actors collude in places like Laos (and much of the world) to ensure the opposite.

Why "fiscal decentralization" in countries like Laos misses the point, given the lack of connection between sustainable resources and revenues:

In Laos, as in many countries, what exists is a broken and perverse financial incentive system that exploits resources and brings benefits only to those outside the country and to intermediaries, and this is almost certainly its logic. Probably by design, none of the indicators used currently in decentralization capture this, but work instead to misdirect attention to the distributions at various levels rather than the incentive system and its results. In Laos, the government draws revenue by selling off the common wealth and by selling "bads" (not "goods") like alcohol and lottery tickets. There is no connection between the receipt of revenues and any kind of investment in resources or people because such investments would not generate more revenues for officials.

Before even considering the level at which resources are collected and expenditures are made, there is the more important question that "decentralization experts" currently avoid questioning fiscal decentralization, and they may do this on purpose. The question is this: "What is the real connection between both the source of revenues and government expenditures, and the prosperity and enhancement of wealth for local people on protected resources? The answer is that in many countries like Laos, there is no link at all. In fact, continuing from French colonial times, the reality is the opposite and current approaches to decentralization only makes the problem worse, by increasing the number of actors able to sell off the country's assets and displace its people.

The indicator of "decentralization in governance" that can measure adherence to recognized professional standards of the field

The indicator below, with 13 simple questions serving as a litmus test of basic competence, is offered as a first step towards the licensing of practitioners who claim expertise in "decentralization" and as a way for citizens to hold donors accountable in the spending of their funds or in the acceptance of funds for "decentralization" while exposing approaches with hidden agendas. By asking these 13 easy "Yes or No" questions and then counting up the results (possible 8 points or a loss of 5 points), one can determine the relative competence and integrity of a "decentralization" project or intervention on the following scale:

<i>Scale</i>	
5 - 8 points	Comprehensive approach to "decentralization" in ways that also appear to be promoting sustainable development, self determination, group rights, and decolonization in line with the Rio Declaration and International Conventions
2.5 - 4.5 points	Partial solution or minimally competent approach to "decentralization" with only a partial commitment to the international goal or several failures in procedure or safeguards
0 - 2 points	Narrow or weak intervention
<0	Incompetent or colonial project with a hidden agenda that has been corrupted either by the donor agency, stakeholders in a developing country bureaucracy, or both, in a possible attempt to destroy minorities, loot resources, destabilize a country, or to impose an unsustainable agenda for homogenization and control of a population.

Note that the indicator is not an absolute scale. It is best used to show the relative value of different projects and to highlight their weaknesses and agendas. The indicator does not measure how effectively a decentralization intervention is at promoting sustainable development for a particular culture or group of cultures, or in promoting self-determination, group rights, or decolonization. It does not offer a cost-benefit determination.

What the indicator does is determine whether the project is meeting international standards and is in compliance with international agreements. It also determines whether other agendas and ideologies have taken control of the funds. It is essentially a litmus test of basic competence in the field and application of appropriate safeguards to protect professionalism and the public interest. Like most indicators, answers to each question would need to be "calibrated" to assure that different observers make the exact same determinations. To do so would require a longer manual for standardized, precise answers across observers.

Measures/ Sub-Factors:

Anyone can apply the test to any "decentralization" project by asking the 13 questions and recording the scores. There are two sets of questions: the first group (8 questions) that offers positive points for proper application of the international standard and the second group (5 questions) that either remains neutral where professional safeguards are in place or subtracts a point for introducing a harm or hidden agenda where the safeguards are overridden. Most of the

questions are clear cut and the determinants are simple "Yes" (1 point for applying a standard procedure or 0 loss of points for protecting against conflicts of interest or other corruption of standards) or "No" (0 points for failing to apply a standard procedure or -1 indicating a loss of points for facilitating conflicts of interest and corruption of standards), with a middle category for judgment calls where scoring can be a "Debatable" (0.5 points for benefits and - 0.5 points for harm).

1. Proper Application of the Basic Principles and Standards of Decentralization (De-colonization/Self-determination/Cultural and Community Rights Protections; and Sustainability):

This is the category that can be used for screening whether the project and spending really have any substance and fit the basic professional competence of decentralization and of development interventions, in its assessments and implementation. (8 questions and a potential score of 8 points.) Questions are in two sub-categories. There are 6 questions on measurement and promotion of sovereignty/self-determination and de-colonization and 2 questions on eco-systems and sustainability to reflect the two interrelated principles of decentralization: peoples and environment. A project that does not score more than 4 points in this category is already partly suspect as being driven by an outside agenda.

a) Promotion of Sovereignty/Self-Determination and De-Colonization:

Question 1 *Analysis of Sovereignty and Power:* The project assesses the actual sovereignty of the central government relative to foreign national military powers and foreign economic powers (including multi-national business and international development banks and economic organizations) and the actual sovereignty of local communities and targets intervention in ways that increase sovereignty at local levels as part of decentralization.

Scoring:

Yes - 1

Debated (or partial, for different groups) - 0.5

No - 0

Question 2 *Analysis of Legacy of Colonialism on Cultures and Sustainability:* The project assesses the historical context of the central government and all of the cultures and communities in its boundaries to understand the impacts and distortions of its colonial history as well as current forms of hegemony (such as neo-colonialism and globalization) and looks for ways that could restore or reverse the impacts of these legacies on the sustainability and identity of different groups. It plans a strategy of de-colonization where appropriate and directly confronts historical legacies.

Scoring:

Yes - 1

Debated (or partial, for different groups) - 0.5

No - 0

Question 3 *Analysis for Protection of Existing Cultures:* The project studies each cultural group for which decentralization is to be applied and begins with a sustainability plan for that

group using the internationally recognized equation for sustainable development (balancing population and individual consumption with productivity on an established resource base, for at least two generations) as the basis for decentralization.

Scoring:

Yes - 1

No - 0

Question 4 *Measurable Impacts on Sovereignty/Self-Determination:* The project works to promote local sovereignty, community rights and protections (including land rights and resource rights) through measurable, enforceable increases in rights protections and transfers of relative power. Simple advocacy without actual measurable change in relative power and assertion of actual protection

Scoring:

Yes - 1

Debated (or multiple impacts on different groups) - 0.5

No - 0

Question 5 *Restoration and Promotion of Cultural Identities and Integrity:* The project promotes the cultural integrity and special characteristics of each separate, sustainable, cultural group it affects through reaffirmations of cultural identity, protection of cultural heritage markers, restoration of specific political, economic and social systems and attributes, and values.

Scoring:

Yes - 1

Debated (or multiple impacts on different groups) - 0.5

No - 0

Question 6 *Attention to Security of Groups Relinquishing Control Over Weaker Groups:* The project recognizes the security concerns of more powerful groups in the center and/or outside the country that have been impediments to internal de-colonization (within the country or within a regional system) and internal (within the country or regional system) promotion of group rights and works to provide protections of the rights of this central group as well.

Scoring:

Yes - 1

Debated - 0.5

No - 0

b) Promotion of Sustainability:

Question 7 *Analysis of Sustainability within Eco-Systems:* The project assesses each eco-system in which decentralization is to occur and looks for the most appropriate boundaries for governance systems within those eco-systems (such as watersheds) for sustainability. In areas where there are rural and urban sectors, the plan looks to integrate the relationship between both so that they are self-supporting and sustainable, rather than de-linked.

Scoring:

Yes - 1

No - 0

Question 8 *Promotion of Fiscal Systems for Cultural and Ecological Sustainability:* The project analyzes tax and spending systems and implements plans for financial systems that promote linkages of revenues and incentives directly to spending that protects the eco-system and the sustainability of the community, and works to promote self-sufficient systems in which taxing and spending authority incentives are directly related to the benefits and protections they bring to the community. Any system based on co-dependence on social evils (making the tax system dependent on alcohol or drug consumption, for example) or on sales of resources or where the authorities have incentives to promote outside interests or their own rather than those of the communities does not meet this test. The focus of the test is not on distribution or amount of resources at a local level but on the incentives of the system, itself.

Scoring:

Yes - 1

Debated (or multiple impacts on different groups) - 0.5

No - 0

2. Professional Safeguards are in Place Against Conflicts of Interest and Against Unintended Consequences:

These questions are challenge tests to assure that projects protect against hidden agendas and common failures that are well known in the field. For this reason, scoring here is negative, subtracting points for failures. Questions are in two categories: 3 questions on protecting minority groups and resources against conflicts of interest or hidden agendas and 2 questions on common forms of donor incompetence that have potentially negative impacts on public systems. (5 questions and a potential loss of 5 points)

a) Safeguards against Hidden Agendas: Protection of Minority Groups

Question 9 *Protections of Internal Minorities, Existing Integrated Systems and Solidarity, and Individual Rights:* The project establishes safeguards to protect the interest of any vulnerable minorities or communities as well as of individual rights that are affected by a promotion of group rights or sovereignty to a minority. Since the creation of sovereignty may create new risks for populations that suddenly become minorities in newly sovereign areas, or that may find themselves subject to different cultural rules, laws, and practices, or that could undermine their tax bases and integrity if they are part of an integrated system (e.g., urban areas or wealthy districts "seceding") the project establishes real protections.

Scoring:

Yes - 0 (no loss of points), if the project shows awareness of this and protects against harm

No explicit policy at the organization to protect against this, but no clear sign that abuse has occurred - (-0.5) (Loss of half of a point)

No, and there are signs that this abuse has occurred or is very likely to occur - (-1)
(Loss of a point)

Question 10 *Protections Against Foreign Donor Conflicts of Interest with Local Interests:* There is no political or commercial empowerment benefit to foreign interests that could compete with or trump the local interests in self-determination, cultural integrity and sustainability, and no promotion of foreign trade, commerce, sale of resources, exploitation of labor, or political or military alliance that is linked to the change, and the project takes active steps to prevent this. Foreign corporations/investors cannot use governance changes to increase their power relative to any interests or to exploit any group or workers or resources. No effort is made to use decentralization as a way to weaken collective empowerment of local communities against outside powers or to create a "race to the bottom" of regulations or bargaining power.

Scoring:

Yes - 0 (no loss of points), if the project shows awareness of this and protects against harm

No explicit policy at the organization to protect against this, but no clear sign that abuse has occurred - (-0.5) (Loss of half of a point)

No, and there are signs that this abuse has occurred or is very likely to occur - (-1)
(Loss of a point)

Question 11 *Protection Against Assimilation of Minorities, Harmonization and Top-Down Controls:* The project does not enter a local community with a formulaic approach and set of pre-determined institutional forms, levels of consumption or production, political, economic or social practices or institutions determined by the donors or national authorities, other than to protect cultural diversity and sustainability appropriate to each particular culture, eco-system and community. "Efficiency" is not an appropriate "decentralization" goal and must be introduced only independently as another, separate, intervention.

Scoring:

Yes - 0 (no loss of points), if the project shows awareness of this and protects against harm

No explicit policy at the organization to protect against this, but no clear sign that abuse has occurred - (-0.5) (Loss of half of a point)

No, and there are signs that this abuse has occurred or is very likely to occur - (-1)
(Loss of a point)

b) Safeguards Against Donor Incompetence: Fiscal Impacts and Distortions

Question 12 *No Aid that Distorts Sustainable Development Planning and that Offers Support in the Guise of "Democratic/Participatory/Community Choice":* There are no inputs or grant funds given simply on the basis of "participatory" stakeholder choice without a determination that such grants will restore a cultural system and move the group towards sustainability and sovereignty. The project clearly distinguishes the difference between sustainable development "needs" and partner/stakeholder "wants." Needs for decentralization are assessed as relevant to fixing a root cause of a development problem.

Scoring:

Yes - 0 (no loss of points), if the project shows awareness of this and protects against harm

No explicit policy at the organization to protect against this, but no clear sign that abuse has occurred - (-0.5) (Loss of half of a point)

No, and there are signs that this abuse has occurred or is very likely to occur - (-1) (Loss of a point)

Question 13 *No Aid that Would Distort Fiscal Sustainability and Independence:* There are no inputs or grant funds for officials to manage that do not directly target unsustainable behaviors or that could create distortions in management systems. The project includes no pump priming grants to government agencies that increases their existing budgets without starting directly on the root causes of administrative system/incentive failures in taxing and spending decisions and controls.

Scoring:

Yes - 0 (no loss of points), if the project shows awareness of this and protects against harm

No explicit policy at the organization to protect against this, but no clear sign that abuse has occurred - (-0.5) (Loss of half of a point)

No, and there are signs that this abuse has occurred or is very likely to occur - (-1) (Loss of a point)

How some organisations do

After understanding how the indicator works, it is easy to apply to every new case in just a few minutes and with close agreement among anyone using it. Below are more than a dozen examples including many of the standard approaches that are now widespread in the field, showing how different organizations and projects score, from best to worst. Rather than score specific projects in particular countries, some of the projects are generalized in project categories that are common in the field, showing the range of scores that they earn depending on which particular features are included in certain types of projects by specific donors and proponents.

Note that even though not every question applies to every kind of project, the scoring is still designed to yield a scoring spread that leads to categorization and comparison and that also shows how some projects in a category can do better or worse depending on their attention to specific project features that are highlighted in the scoring system.

Before reading these results, consider the following: Most "self-rating" systems using indicators grossly over-inflate results because of the natural tendency to look uncritically at one's own projects (which is why there is a need for clear and objective grading standards) and because there is a tendency to avoid considering several organizations at once when rating those organizations one favors. Any rating instrument needs to be "calibrated;" i.e., tested for consistency using the same test question multiple times on multiple organizations in order to reveal differences. Each observer doing the test ultimately reaches some internal consistency after a number of tests, but different observers are likely to come up with different results because they are "harder" or "softer." The scores below are those consistent with the judgment of the author and they are an example of strict application of the ideas, such that weaknesses are revealed as areas where improvement is needed. If such a tool is ultimately adapted by professionals and subject to multiple tests, there would ultimately be a consensus on the scaling and the rating system.

Models of Comprehensive Decentralization: 5 - 8 points.

The examples that fall into this category are rare. Nowhere is there comprehensive design of decentralization, but occasionally there are projects that work within a region and focus on an eco-system or on a community that is already relatively ethnically unified and can be restored to sustainability without any major redistricting, rebuilding of identities, or restructuring other than working to rebuild local community organizations and then to change the role of outside agents from bottom-up.

- *Integrated and Sustainable Community Development Approaches such as a sample project of the Australian Foundation for the Peoples of Asia and the Pacific (AFAP)*

AFAP's project with the Muong in Viet Nam is an example of a donor funded project that is a comprehensive solution to community integrity and reconstruction within an eco-system that can score about 5 to 6 points. The project design started with community sustainability within its eco-system (watershed management) and found that each village could be strengthened by working with community organizations of the minority groups, thus partly reinforcing identities (though the project does not really score for specifically promoting identity or for beginning with a focus on the historic communities). It is partly accidental that the minorities in the project area did not have a history of forced relocation or mixing since the project would not have addressed that and loses a point there. It works realistically with the central authorities to address their fears as best as possible and the funds it brought in were primers for community self-management and self-financing as part of sustainable development planning, though that component could also have been stronger and is partly distorted by a donor focus on rapid "anti-poverty" gains and "equity". The project mentioned here, which did receive EC and other European country donor funding, was an exception to the usual rule on these projects (see below).

Partial Solution or Minimally Competent Approach to Decentralization: 2.5 - 4.5 points

The one example here is of a project to protect community heritage and identity and to promote ideas about sustainability and reconstruction, rather than a project working to redraw boundaries and redefine systems. It is an example of a partial solution of the type that is currently possible even where there might be ideological resistance to the idea of directly redefining communities and shifting sovereignty. Probably projects that work to promote sustainability and cultural integrity and to oppose contemporary forms of globalization and corporate hegemony would also score points in this range.

- *Global Village Foundation's "Heritage Trail" Project for Promoting History, Heritage Protection, Tolerance, and Environmental Understanding of Different Peoples on the Landscape*

This project, creating thematic maps of history, culture and themes throughout Southeast Asia (based in Lao) and elsewhere, and offering children's books and heritage protection plans on the landscape, as well as environmentally friendly approaches to tours on the landscape (biking and walking) was not designed as a "decentralization" project, but it scores 4.5 points because it offers the basic analysis, protection, and dialogue at the basis of cultural restoration and sustainability of all groups in a harmonious way. It does not earn points for cultural restoration planning or decentralization impacts (which are not its intent), does nothing on fiscal systems, and earns only half a point on sustainability planning for raising the issues of how different peoples lived in environments that are visited through heritage tours. Without any hidden objectives and with protections against being abused, it loses no points

Narrow or Weak Intervention: 0 - 2 points

Projects that are technically competent can also score points on competency but fail if they are promoting a particular agenda that is not sustainable development and that could distort overall government functions. Interestingly, no projects seem to fall in this category. The distinctions between projects in decentralization are sharp. Either they follow the principles of sustainability, decolonization and cultural rights protection in one or more combinations, or they don't.

Incompetent projects with hidden agendas that have been corrupted either by the donor agency, stakeholders in a developing country bureaucracy, or both: <0 points

Most international organizations working in "decentralization" are actually promoting a neo-colonial agenda that undermines international agreements to promote cultural rights, self-determination, and sustainability, and the test exposes them, with scores from 0 to as low as (- 5) points.

- *UN Habitat Decentralization Guidelines Promotion and Promotion of a "Draft Charter" for Local Governments (analyzed in a separate section, below)*

UN Habitat is engaged in "decentralization" without any understanding at all of what it means, what international standards require, or what the context is, doing little more than missionary work to try to justify itself as an agency and scoring (-2.5) points largely as a result of its incompetence. Though UN Habitat does appear to have a hidden colonial agenda, its lack of actual professional competence in decentralization, rights protections, sovereignty and competence promotes a colonial agenda and makes groups more vulnerable to harm than they otherwise would be without any project at all.

- *USAID Local Governance promotion to change "Laws on Local Governance" as part of the World Trade Organization accession*

None of the projects aimed at entry into global trade have any pretense about promoting local identities or sustainability, but they do have a pretense about building certain "democratic" mechanisms at local levels for abuse by foreign business interests and this project does just that working to reinforce colonialism in its current form, scoring (-3) points. The projects actually do some analysis of sovereignty and sustainability (0.5 points in each category) as a way of understanding where power is and how foreign organizations can exert it, and then works to distort local political systems into a common form that allows for abuses by outsiders, losing 4 points, but not the 1 point for subsidies since it offers no "anti-poverty" funds, only funding to change local laws to favor foreign economic interests.

- *United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)'s Governance and Public Administration Reform Projects to Promote Service Delivery and "Citizen Report Cards" at Local Levels, funded by Multiple Donors*

There is no analysis at all of any of the factors for appropriate decentralization in these projects; they simply start with governments as given and seek to assure provision of certain hand-picked services in a way that is reflected as satisfactory in poll results, with no protections or reform at all, leading to a score of between (-3) and (-5) points. While proponents would argue that a project like this scores badly because it isn't really a "decentralization" project at all and is simply a "local governance" / "efficiency" project, it in fact distracts attention from other projects in local governance and reinforces existing divisions of power, making it a project that undermines appropriate decentralization when it should be acting to appropriately promote it. This is a neo-colonial project in that it reinforces the inequities and unsustainable systems that are in place without even suggesting they

should be examined, and substituting a false concept of rights and democracy for real local sovereignty and real legal and political accountability.

- *United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) and other "Local Development" Projects supported in almost the same model by a large number of donors (e.g., the SEILA project in Cambodia with DFID, World Bank, and UNDP support, local governance projects of GTZ, SNV, Lux-Dev, and Belgian Development Assistance in Viet Nam)*

All of these projects work on a common model of transferring funds to local government officials to promote "decentralization," with claims that they are simultaneously building local government "capacity" and supporting "participation/democracy" by asking some local citizens what gifts they would prefer from the foreign donors in a list of giveaways. At best, these projects might have a small understanding of fiscal management, but they do none of the analysis for real decentralization and open themselves up to hidden agendas that undermines cultural rights and community sustainability in a way that is top-down and colonial. A typical score for these projects is strongly negative, (-4.5) points. These project fail to examine what systems are broken from the perspective of local cultures and are used to promote agendas of globalization/export and industrialization that are favorable to donors and in violation of international treaty agreements.

- *Helvetas, SNV, CIDSE, and other "Minority Area Integrated Development" Projects*

These projects do not claim to be local governance projects but simply include a small governance component, but they do claim to protect minority communities and select these communities on the basis of their "poverty"; offering a perfect opportunity to address the need for self-determination and protection of minority rights, and sustainable development in the context of long histories of colonialism, forced migration of peoples into new eco-systems (often after being conquered), and the destruction of their environments and communities as a result of colonialism. Yet, these projects simply act to reinforce current forms of colonialism with quick fix solutions that further assimilate minorities into a homogeneous system. In doing so, these projects provide short term "relief" and "poverty reduction" but long term cultural genocide and unsustainability in ways that violate international treaties and every professional standard of development, scoring (-5) points. They increase consumption and make resources vulnerable. Note that this is in sharp contrast to the positive impact of an atypical international NGO project in the same category (the AFAP project, scored above) that promotes independence by paying attention to long-term sustainable development (resource and consumption planning) and cultural identity and community. In the AFAP approach with the Muong in Viet Nam, as opposed to the standard "integrated development" project in the field, the concept of "integration" means actual long term balance and not just multiple inputs and the outcome is more than the simple treatment of poverty symptoms through productivity increases achieved by transfers of technology or purchases of infrastructure.

Post-Script: Solutions

The unfortunate irony of using an indicator to expose the lack of professionalism in development interventions in this area today is that the "experts" who are in the position to protect the public have little incentive to do so. An indicator can facilitate change, but like other improved tools, indicators must be in the hands of those willing and able to use them.

Organizations that score the worst on the new indicator in this article will likely not even recognize their failures

- They are likely to say that performance measures do not apply to their work. They may say that this business-like approach that introduces a variety of professional expertise takes the artistry and the "humanistic" or "human" judgment out of their work, though in fact it does the opposite by applying their own professional standards to their work.
- They are likely to respond defensively to suggestions for more public oversight of their work, and to claim that accountability is a form of "policing," even though they accept the idea of "accountability" as one of the key principles of decentralization. They are likely to say that oversight implies "mistrust" and that their good faith is being questioned. They will likely hide behind the premise that they are above the law and that the public is (by their design) ignorant and uninformed about what they do. They may say that holding a government official accountable for results is unfair because there are "too many factors."
- They may ask, "Why should decentralization be burdened with international law and with larger objectives of protecting sovereignty and cultural rights?" "Why can't it just meet simple measurable objectives?"

Overall, such responses from many "professionals" will demonstrate exactly why many of the people in place in current systems are part of the problem and not the solution. We have an international system of laws and treaties designed to promote our survival, our security and rights. It was designed in light of experience after two ghastly world wars and the recognition that humanity may not now be able to survive a third. The goal was to establish priorities and a framework for compliance with those priorities to assure that the world would not degenerate into the same excuses and myopia that allowed the colonial policies and global failures leading to previous world wars. To strip away that framework and to replace it with narrow or inconsistent objectives is to create the lawlessness and dislocation that puts our survival at risk. If international organizations and experts do not uphold these principles, it is up to academics and citizens to do so.

This author has suggested the formation of Donor Monitor NGOs that act as public advocates (Lempert, 2008) and has designed a full set of other governance reforms for promoting compliance with international laws and treaties.

This article offers one tool, a weapon of empowerment, to establish a basis for accountability and enforcement of decentralization objectives through international law.

Scoring of United Nations Human Settlements Program (UN Habitat) Decentralization Guidelines on the 13 component questions of the indicator:

Preliminary Information for Assessment	
UN Habitat's Organizational Mission (Claim) and Role of Decentralization according to UNCDF's website (www.unhabitat.org)	Though the mission has changed since 1978 from a general focus on "settlements" and "habitat" within the context of U.N. system mandates such as sustainable development, it has shifted to a focus on urban environments and slums as separate from rural areas, without clearly explaining which organizations are responsible for the same concerns in rural areas and how the links between rural areas are to be maintained for overall country sustainability and protection of cultural or community rights or regional identities. These are the key statements now on the website: "To Promote socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities" and "To stabilize the growth of slums and to set the stage for the subsequent reduction in and reversal of the number of slum dwellers"
UN Habitat's International Guidelines on Decentralization and Access to Basic Services for All (UN-HABITAT 2007, 2009a, 2009b, 2011a, 2011b)	As a guide to action, including its projects that go beyond just urban slum dwellings and that seem to include the entire mandate of decentralization within the UN system, UN Habitat has generated a set of guidelines that it views as part of a "Draft Charter for local governments on financial and legal relations" Current projects in 2012 work internationally to promote this charter for adoption among central governments in U.N. Member States. The guidelines "invites governments" in "their national development policies" for overall governance BUT also for a sectoral focus taken out of this context, on selected services of sanitation, transport, waste management, energy and communications, to follow the guiding principles of: "transparency and efficiencies; participation of stakeholders; decentralization; solidarity; sustainability; and affordability." In areas such as "Governance: Representative and Participatory Democracy" and "Access to Basic Services", the charter includes a wish list of things governments and others "should" do such as: "National and regional governments should transfer to local authorities clear and extended responsibilities"; "establish anti-corruption ... and legal aid programs ... civic engagement mechanisms including public hearings and full information"; "ensure predictable budget transfers." "Local authorities should regionalize civil society." "Schools should have children's councils." "Local authorities should set standards for sustainable management of local resources and eco-systems" and promote "environmental sustainability ... to economize resources, protect the environment, avoid climate change." The goal of these projects is also to feed into funding from the UN Capital Development Fund that transfers money to local governments for projects through "seed capital" such as "District Development Funds" as well as capacity building through initiatives like "Governance and Public Administration Reform"

Overall analysis of UN Habitat in the area of "decentralization"	UN Habitat has no clear definition of "decentralization" that comes from UN laws or principles and its links to ideas of sustainability are haphazard. Its view of democratization and decentralization has no mention at all of group rights. With no analysis of root causes, no identified problem to be targeted, no historical context of colonization/de-colonization, no analysis of actual sovereignty or power, and no target group for projects for behavior change, UN Habitat is haphazard, unsystematized and almost random. Its guidelines are little more than theological benedictions and institutional lists as if they are doing missionary work to try to convince everyone what they "should" do, with no real understanding of any context or incentives. It serves as a link for funds and capacity building without understanding how financial or political systems work.
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Analysis		
Question	Indicator	Scoring
I.	Proper Application of the Basic Principles and Standards of Decentralization	Scoring in the first category demonstrates that UN Habitat is engaged in "decentralization" without any understanding at all of what it means, what international standards require, or what the context is. It seems to simply be using buzz words to generate a religious document with no real policy or practical implications on any problems and with only a focus on a few services taken out of context. – 0.5 points
I. a.)	Promotion of Sovereignty/Self-Determination and De-Colonization	In the initial review of competence, with a checklist of 6 basic attributes of decentralization, UN Habitat fails. – 0 points.
1.	Analysis of Sovereignty and Power	There is no analysis at all of sovereignty issues. UN Habitat simply targets certain central government Ministries and localities as partners simply to run projects, with no understanding of context or actual power or incentives. – 0 points.
2.	Analysis of Legacy of Colonialism on Cultures and Sustainability	UN Habitat focuses only on symptoms with no context and no mention of cultures or differences. Every urban environment is viewed as the same. – 0 points.
3.	Analysis for Protection of Existing Cultures	There is no evidence that UN Habitat analyzes the problems in each country or locality before moving to apply a formulaic tool and approach and culture and community/group rights are never mentioned. – 0 points.
4.	Measurable Impacts on Sovereignty/ Self-Determination	With no measures of sovereignty and no targeting of problems in decentralization, there is no measurable impact. – 0 points.
5.	Restoration and Promotion of Cultural Identities and Integrity	UN Habitat focuses only on symptoms with no context and no mention of cultures or differences. Every urban environment is viewed as the same. – 0 points.

6.	Attention to Security of Groups Relinquishing Control Over Weaker Groups	There is no understanding at all as to reasons why decentralization does not occur and no attempt to address underlying security fears. – 0 points.
I. b.)	Promotion of Sustainability	0.5 points are to be awarded here since there is some lip service to the idea of sustainability and fiscal systems, though without any actual professional context or attention to standard practices for addressing root causes of problems in the context of decentralization policy.
8.	Analysis of Sustainability within Eco-Systems	UN Habitat gives lip service to sustainability but then seems to focus simply on service provision to slums without any concern for the overall environmental context. – 0 points.
9.	Promotion of Fiscal Systems for Cultural and Ecological Sustainability	Some of the partner documents of UN Habitat and the guidelines mention needs for appropriate fiscal systems, but it is not clear that they really understand how they work. – 0.5 points since it is possible that in some cases they get this right, even if the design isn't clear.
II.	Professional Safeguards in Place Against Conflicts of Interest and Unintended Consequences	Though seeming to mention the rights concepts, UN Habitat's lack of actual professional competence in decentralization, rights protections, sovereignty and competence promote a colonial agenda and make groups more vulnerable to harm than they would probably be without any project at all. – - 3 points.
II. a.)	Safeguards Against Hidden Agendas/Conflicts of Interest: Protection of Minority Groups	UN Habitat pays a small bit of attention to rights but still opens the door to vulnerability, particularly since it focuses on a cookie-cutter approach that does not recognize minorities and offers few safeguards. – -1.5 points
9.	Protection of Internal Minorities, Existing Integrated Systems and Solidarity, and Individual Rights	Though there is no clear attention to minority rights in UN Habitat's descriptions of participation and democracy, there appears to be at least lip service to rights and UN Habitat narrowly gets the benefit of the doubt. – 0. points.
10.	Protection Against Foreign Donor Conflicts of Interest with Local Interests	Though there is probably no potential for major harms in the UN Habitat approach, its work with other partners and its lack of attention to safeguards offer no positive protections. –0.5 points.
11.	Protection Against Assimilation of Minorities, Harmonization and Top-Down Controls	The very point of the UN Habitat approach is a one-size fits all homogenization approach that seems to assume everyone is and should be the same. – -1 point.

II. b.)	Safeguards Against Donor Incompetence: Fiscal Impacts and Distortions	UN Habitat does not follow standard practices in targeting identifiable problems, target groups or behaviors. Its focus on symptoms makes it vulnerable to failure for its lack of competency – -1.5 points.
12.	No Aid that Distorts Sustainable Development Planning and that Offers Support in the Guise of "Democratic/Participatory/Community Choice"	The focus on particularly services makes it very likely that UN Habitat distorts sustainable development planning rather than promotes it – -1 point.
13.	No Aid that Would Distort Fiscal Sustainability and Independence	In itself, UN Habitat is not offering aid, but combined with other UN agencies that do make grant aid without looking at changing financial incentives, there is a likelihood of distortion – -0.5 point.
Total:		Though this project does not appear to have a hidden colonial agenda, it ends up serving one due to lack of professional competence in the real needs and international goals for self-determination, decolonization, sustainability and group rights protections that are the heart of decentralization policy and not part of a cookie-cutter approach to provision of a few basic services out of cultural context – - 2.5 points.

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