

extending decision making to the grassroots, which can contribute towards non-violent conflict management. The urban 'value-added' is that the municipal level is where democracy truly hits the ground and turns democratic principles into daily practice. Consequently, local democracy may be one of the best ways to combat the rise of private security and the segregation of urban groups as developing world cities get ever larger and more impersonal. If cities are democratic, responsive, adaptable, flexible, and representative, they can empower their constituents to work with local authorities to ensure their security. Democratic systems are more likely to respond to alienated and underrepresented slum populations, as they can secure property rights and regulate the provision of public services. The growing trend of decentralization,⁶² or the devolution of power from the state to the urban level, also places local authorities in a better position to respond to the needs of the people, if this transfer of power is done in conjunction with adequate resources and inclusive decision making.

Democratic systems at the local level serve three functions that strengthen human security. First, in contexts of decentralization, they can provide a people-centred approach to governance. This empowerment can build human security by establishing trust, a sense of inclusion and responsibility, and consistent lines of communication between groups. Second, in terms of attacking some of the long-standing root causes of violence, local democracy broadens the basis of peace by extending it to the community, municipal, and city level. Third, responsive and representative local democratic systems are more effective at managing violent "disruptions from below" – the spontaneous eruption of violence that can occur in fragile cities – than are municipal authorities lacking in legitimacy and the consent of the people.

The role of local governance and democracy in conflict contexts

Local democracy may be especially important to cities that are in, or emerging from, conflict. Vibrant local democracies tend to cultivate leaders that can guide cities to peaceful outcomes. The role of the mayor of Diyarbakir (Turkey's major Kurdish city) in publicly encouraging peaceful relations between Kurds and Turks through intercommunal activities points to the importance of leadership. The courageous attempt of Zoran Djindjic, the mayor of Belgrade mentioned above, who attempted to oppose the genocidal policies of Slobodan Milosevic's regime in 1996-1997, is another example.

⁶² 63 of 75 (84%) countries with a population greater than five million are engaged in some form of power transfer to local government. See "Democratic Governance: Local Government," National Democratic Institute, <http://www.ndi.org/globalp/localgov/localgov.asp>.