

DEMOCRATIC
DEVELOPMENT



THE RELATIONS BETWEEN
LOCAL AND NATIONAL INTERESTS
WITHIN A PARTY

BY
PROF. DR. HORST POSDORF

November
2007

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PUBLISHED BY



**Konrad
Adenauer
Stiftung**

KONRAD ADENAUER FOUNDATION
KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA

THE KONRAD ADENAUER FOUNDATION

The Konrad Adenauer Foundation (KAF) is a German political foundation named after the first Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany after the Second World War. The KAF provides counseling and education on good governance with a view to promote democratic political institutions and policies. The KAF works in 120 countries worldwide. Half of the foundation's activities continue to be done in Germany. The office in Cambodia has been established since 1994. The partners include the National Assembly and the Senate, the Council of Ministers, the Ministry of Interior and selected other ministries, the political parties represented in Parliament, media and civil society organizations. In recent years particular emphasis has been given to the support of democratic decentralization.

OCCASIONAL PAPERS ON DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT

In this series the KAF will make available documents emanating from the cooperation with its partners in Cambodia which appear of interest beyond the specific program work.

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Publisher and Editor:

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Website : www.kas.de/kambodscha

Printed in Cambodia

ISBN-13: 978-99950-880-26

PREFACE

This second volume of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation's (KAF) "Occasional Papers on Democratic Development" deals with political party matters at the local level and the relations between the powerful top and the bottom of party organizations. This volume reflects two areas KAF is engaged in: political parties and decentralization. Successful democratic decentralization of the state must be reflected by decentralized party structures.

Democracy is pluralistic by nature. Democrats acknowledge and welcome the fact that people have different interests and ideas. To reconcile them democracies depend very much on political parties. The success of a democratic society largely depends on the culture that prevails within and between parties. To strengthen Cambodian society and to reach democratic normalcy political parties need to be included in the modernization process.

In Cambodia modern democratic political parties are relatively young. Still, they have penetrated almost all sectors of public life. They compete fiercely since much of the access to opportunities in society depends on party dominance or good relations to dominant political forces. Cambodian political parties strive to improve their performance and are interested in exchanging views on party democracy with partners. The Konrad Adenauer Foundation offers such dialogue and training for the parties represented in the Cambodian National Assembly. This volume emanates from our cooperation with these Cambodian political parties.

Our cooperation extends to the ruling and opposition parties alike, without discrimination. This is done in the conviction that Cambodia needs more than one political party to further the development of democracy, rule of law, respect of human rights and a broader based economic development, for a peaceful future.

The KAF in Phnom Penh is indebted and grateful to Prof. Dr. Horst Posdorf, Member of the European Parliament (MEP), for having written this paper for us and for his continuous support of our work in Cambodia since the year 2000. Based on the author's experience of more than a dozen working visits to Cambodia, I feel that the paper focuses well on aspects of the theme relevant in the local context.

Wolfgang Meyer
Country Representative
Konrad Adenauer Foundation

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A. INTRODUCTION

This paper discusses structures and mechanisms within a political party. The main emphasis will be on the cooperation of the different political agents at local, regional and national levels. The work and significance of the politicians at the local level will be the focus of attention and examination.

I. Overview of the paper

The introduction provides an outline of the traditional responsibilities of a party. In that context some elements will be recalled that are crucial to the success of party operations locally and on higher levels. Fundamental characteristics of successful party organization will be highlighted.

Following the general introduction, the role of local political leaders will be discussed. Subsequently the paper will dwell upon regular conflicts between interests of local politics and overriding party programmes and the party leadership.

Overview of the paper

Introduction

- Traditional responsibilities of a party

Main Part

- The different roles of leading local politicians
- Local politics in relation to the programs of the entire party

Summary

In connection to this we will take a closer look at the processes of political opinion building inside and outside the party.

We will see that leading local politicians play a key role in securing regional and national political success.

At the end of the paper ways and means of solving internal party disputes between the grass roots and party leaders will be discussed. This should be achieved without postponing required decisions. Controversies are necessary and welcome. They should not be suppressed but solved. We will deal mainly with the question of how local politics can be brought into tune with the higher ranking aims of the party and be realized locally in accordance with the party manifesto.

A short summary of the fundamentals of the paper is provided at the end.

II. Traditional responsibilities of a party

A political party carries out multilayered functions in a democratically constituted country. With this in mind we can come to a better understanding of the special status of local politics and local politicians.

Political parties are collective agents in the political system. They assume the role of a direct interface between society and the state.

In an ideal model of party democracy, parties bring together citizens with similar values, convictions, interests and goals. Parties integrate the interests of the electorate into their agendas and seek to bring these ideas to reality through their work in public offices, in councils, and government.

Let's have a closer look at the functions and responsibilities of parties.

Candidates for political office

In the course of their work the parties recruit suitable people to stand as candidates for elections and political office.

Collecting and articulating interests

Through their manifesto and their actions, parties voice and channel the interests and opinions of their members and voters.

They give their supporters, so to say, "one voice" in the state.

Interaction

The parties provide a link between the state and its citizens by opening a two way communication channel. On one hand, the parties voice the interests of their members and voters directly to the state institutions. On the other, they offer the state a special way to explain, inform and clarify state decisions or the opposition's opinions to the citizens.

Party programme

In general parties develop their political programs over a long period of time. With its program, a party offers a "political homeland" to all those citizens who identify with its values and aims. The party brings together political

Traditional tasks of a party (1)

- **Candidates for political office**

Recruitment of staff, putting forward candidates to fill electoral and other political positions.

- **Collecting and articulating interests**

Formulating and collecting the interests and opinions of the members and electorate.

- **Interaction**

Forming links between the state and the citizen, a two way communication channel: on one side articulation of interests aimed at state institutions and on the other comment, information and explanation of state decisions aimed at the citizen.

currents inside society, channelling them for the purpose of enforcing a common political aim.

Government

Through elections, successful parties get involved in governments. They influence the government, not only when they are in government but also when they are in opposition. Ideally, the parties create a well run system in parliament. Factions and their divisions of labour generate a capable and functioning parliament and organise majorities for government proposals.

Accountability

Accountability refers to the establishment of a mechanism that decision-makers will have to carry the consequences of bad policies by losing elections or, based on successful policies, by rightfully gaining renewed legitimacy by the electorate. Through discussion of their policies and those of their political

adversaries, the parties enable the electorate to reward political success fairly and in reverse, punish political failure.

Parties must fulfil these tasks not only at state and national level, but also at local level. Only if a party fulfils its responsibilities through adequate organisation and through powerful orchestration of its members' involvement, will they have continuous

success in elections. This is a prerequisite for taking over political responsibility.

To organise party structures in a way that they can fulfil these tasks is a crucial condition for success.

As an example of a well established structure of a party, let look at the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) of Germany.

III. Party structure using the CDU as an example

Parties are never monolithic blocks. Their personnel and membership structure is divided in two dimensions. On a horizontal level the party is divided into a

Traditional tasks of a party (2)

- **Party program**
Developing political programs over a long time frame. This creates a "political homeland" for the citizens.
- **Government**
Setting up and influencing control of the government, creation of harmonious systems in parliament. Factions and their division of labour generate a working parliament and organise majorities for government proposals.
- **Accountability**
Creating mechanisms that decision-makers bear the consequences for bad policies.

large number of geographical divisions, organizations and political wings, ordinary members and holders of mandates and political office.

Structure of a party

- **Horizontal structures**
 - Geographical subdivision
 - Dividing interest groups / "political wings"
- **Vertical structures**
 - Ordinary members - party office holders - steering committee
 - Ordinary members - members of parliament (faction) - government members

Vertically, there is a line which runs between ordinary members at the grass roots, office holders at different levels and the party leadership. Another line can be drawn between ordinary party members, members of parliament and members of the government.

Let us look closer at these fragmentations in the party

structure, in order to better understand the position of local politics.

1. Horizontal structure

a) Geographical substructure

The CDU, which we have taken as our example, is organised according to the federal structure of Germany. Consequently it is a federally moulded party with 17 state associations.

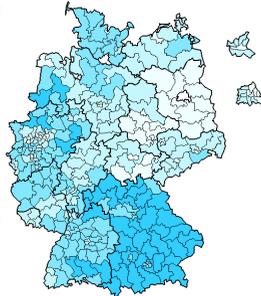
These are divided into 27 regional associations, and then again into a total of 360 district associations. Around 600,000 CDU members nationwide are organized according to this model.

Horizontal structure of a party (1)

Example: Christian Democratic Union (CDU) Germany

Geographical substructure

- 17 State associations
- 27 Regional associations
- 360 District associations
- ca. 12,000 Local association:
- ca. 600,000 CDU members

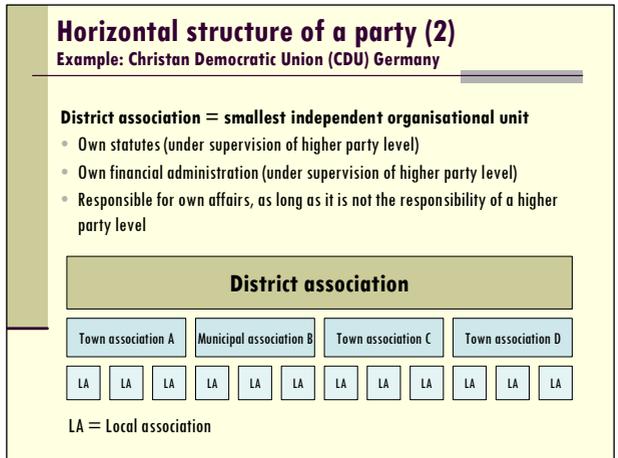


The district association is the smallest independent organizational unit of the

CDU with its own rules, independent finances and accounting. Each district association is responsible for all organisational and political questions within their area, except when - occasionally- the issue has been raised to a regional association. If a matter concerns more than one regional association, the respective

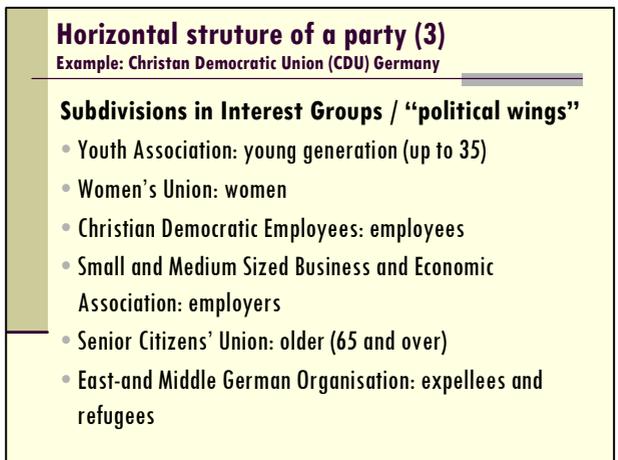
state association of the CDU will deal with it.

The district association is the smallest organisational unit with its own articles of association and finances. It is however again divided into other bodies which are financially dependent on the district association and limited in their rights. The district associations are composed of the so called town associations and commune associations. These are composed of several local associations.



This subdivision ensures that the party organization reaches the smallest quarters of towns and tiniest villages in a region. Local associations in a town’s quarter or a small village often have only 10 to 20 members. Yet, most

of them are active on their own initiative in local politics. Through their inclusion into the larger party structure, they contribute to its life blood and enjoy guidance and support from above. In total, the CDU Germany has over 12,000 local associations. They all have their own political agenda on local affairs and at the same time they represent general party policies in their community.



b) Political wings / associations, special organisations

In order to disseminate their political ideas to almost everywhere and almost everyone in society, political parties use special interest groups which belong to

the party. These associations are aimed at certain social groups. In the CDU Germany there are for example interest groups and organisations which are aimed at the younger generation, women, employees, local politicians, employers, senior citizens, expellees and refugees. The chairpersons of these associations are represented on the board of the party. Here they articulate their special interests which will thus enter into the party's policy formulation. The associations' value for the party is therefore twofold: special interest groups can be reached easily and they in turn can articulate their interests in an elegant and effective manner.

2. Vertical structure

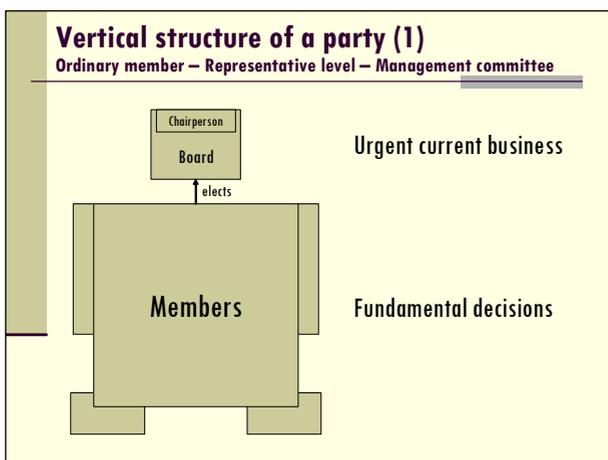
a) Grass roots – representative levels – steering committee

A hierarchical vertical line runs through the member structure, starting at the grassroots, through the different functionary levels up to the national steering committee and the chairperson.

Simplified, you could say that we have the majority of the party members on the one side and on the other side, the officers and functionaries of the party. They form the necessary bodies that make the party operational at all levels.

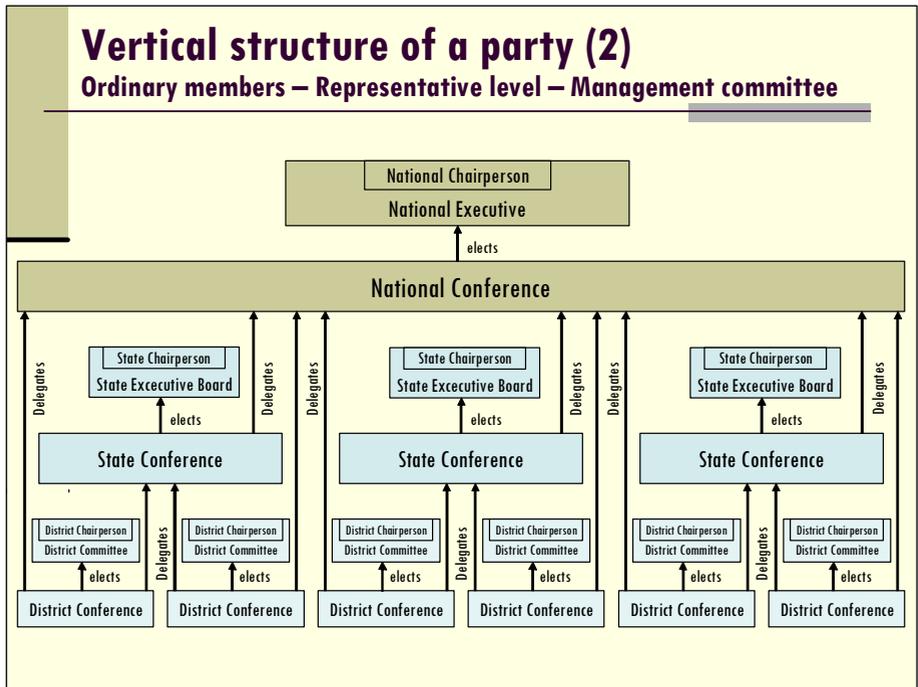
In Germany, the structure of these party bodies follows the organisation principles of private associations or NGOs. Through these structures a party can become functional and capable of taking democratic decisions.

A crucial and leading idea is that all fundamental and general affairs of the party's sub bodies, are democratically dealt with by majority decision at an assembly or congress of all the members of this sub-body. At the lowest levels of the organization, each party member can attend and vote. At higher levels representatives or delegates assume this role. They are elected at the respective lower levels' conventions or congresses. The party leadership has no influence on the election of delegates.



The execution of all current and urgent business of a party body will be entrusted to an executive committee, elected by all members at the lowest level or their delegates at higher levels.

Local, town and municipal associations, associations at district level, regions and states as well as the national level hold congresses of members or delegates to decide on fundamental issues and personnel. This is a clear bottom-up process. The executive committees deal with urgent current issues only. They are obliged to follow party strategy and principles. If they fail to do so they will certainly not be re-elected.



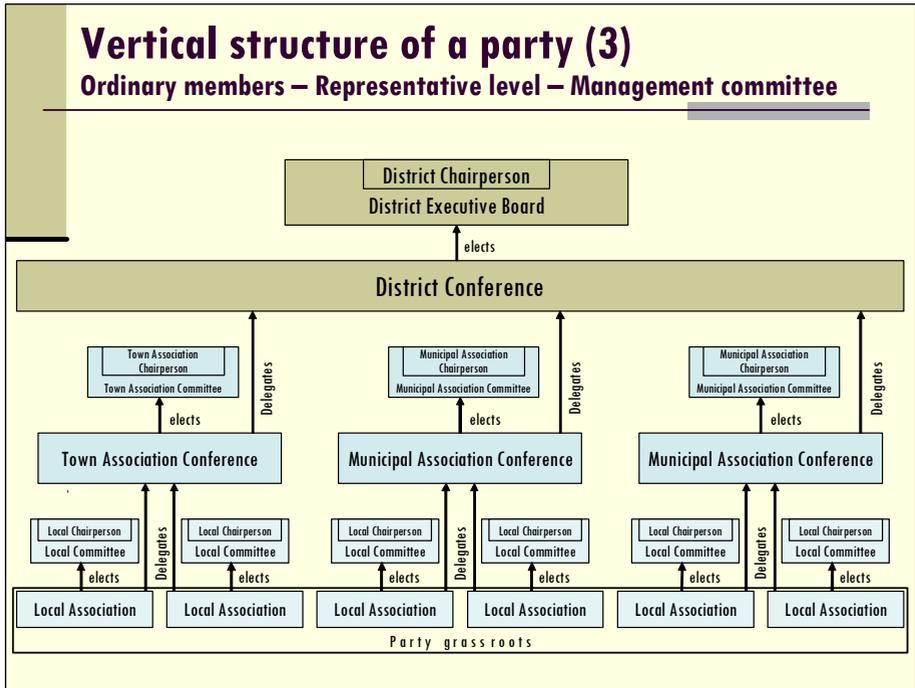
The organizational units – from bottom to top– are closely tied together. Each level delegates elected representatives to the next higher level.

Without support from the respective lower level delegates, a policy decision or an election into party office cannot have success. This is very important: the CDU (and all other democratic parties) are built on a bottom-up approach.

Without the support of the grass roots, middle and top leaders cannot succeed. This creates a very competitive and success oriented selection mechanism.

Vertical structure of a party (3)

Ordinary members – Representative level – Management committee



The district associations of the CDU Germany elect their own executive committees as well as the chairpersons. They also elect their delegates to the state party conferences.

Each state party conference elects its state executive board and a chairperson.

The national party congress is the highest body. Most members of the national party congress are delegates from the district associations along with a smaller number of delegates from the state associations. This is important: the local level is well represented in the national party convention. They decide on all major issues and on the election of personnel.

The national party congress elects the national management committee, the vice presidents and the party president; currently this is Angela Merkel, who is also the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany. From 1949 until 1963 Konrad Adenauer assumed these positions. The KAF is named after this great statesman.

The district associations are structured according to similar principles: each member is entitled to one voice in the elections of party functionaries or decisions on policy issues. Each individual member has the right to address the assembly of their town or municipal association, the urban district association,

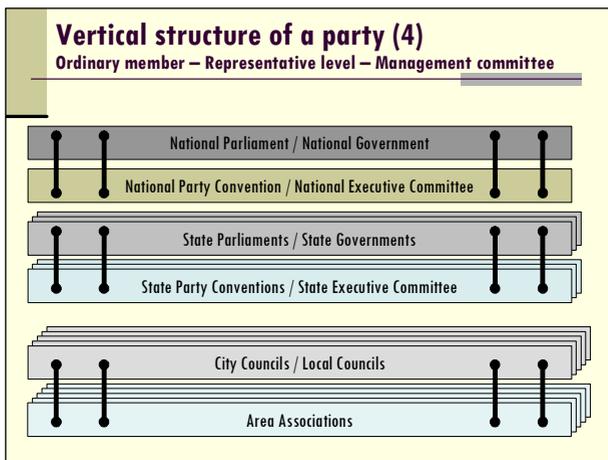
as well as the party conferences at district level. By exercising the right to vote at the assembly of their local association, a party member decides which members of the local association will be delegated to the conferences at higher levels. Reflecting the federal structure of Germany small variations exist between states. In some states all ordinary party members may take part and have full voting rights at their district association conference. In others only delegates may speak and decide. This difference is due to the autonomy of statute at the district level.

From district association level upwards a uniform delegate system is valid. All party conferences at regional, state and national levels are representative meetings of delegates.

b) Members of parliament (faction and party) – government members.

A further vertical division exists between the party hierarchy on the one hand and its factions in public representational bodies (councils and parliaments), and members of the government.

The German constitution stipulates that members of parliament are subject to the welfare of the German people and to their own conscience only. They are supposed to be free in executing their duties (free mandate). However in practice they are also a kind of "extended arm" of the party into the legislative and executive branches of the state. The party has no constitutional or other legal claim that the factions or government staff will realize the aims of the party. Yet, parliamentarians and elected politicians feel compelled to convert the aims of their party and their platform into concrete state policies.



If they fail to do so, they risk losing party support in the future. Immediate repercussions however are limited to moral persuasion. Expulsion from the party is extremely difficult and exclusion from parliament almost impossible, even if a member deviates from the party line.

B. THE RELATIONSHIP WITHIN A PARTY BETWEEN LOCAL STRUCTURES AND THE PARTY LEADERSHIP

The local way of life and local affairs form the backdrop to local politics. Local politicians have a special significance because of their proximity to the grass roots. Regarding the importance of local politics, the Greek statesman Pericles (approx. 490 to 429 BC) noted that "who does not take part in the affairs of their community is not a quiet but a bad citizen".

With this in mind, we will now turn to the core of the paper and discuss the relationships in a party between its local structures and interests at the grassroots level and the party leadership. The former responds directly to local needs and preference, the later to overriding party principals and programmes or the interests of national party leaders.

I. The different roles of leading local politicians

The special relationship between the grass roots and the party leadership can best be exemplified by examining the role of leading local politicians.

1. Local politics as a nucleus of democracy

Indeed, the local community is the centre of life for the people and the nucleus for political engagement in a democratic state. Villages, towns and districts are the basis for every democracy. All higher layers of the democratic system build on it. Local politics functions in close proximity to the citizens and deal directly with their interests, wishes and suggestions. It reflects the worries and needs of the people.

Over and above the local focus, local authorities can use institutionalized paths to represent their own and the interests of their citizens at higher levels (government and legislators). Commune associations have been created to represent local interests at provincial and national levels. Whenever local interests are affected by provincial or national government decisions, these associations have a right to make their point of view heard. This has been a tradition for one hundred years in Germany. Equivalent associations and a league of commune/sangkat were recently created in the Kingdom of Cambodia.

Democracy without politics at a local level is simply unthinkable in a functioning democratic state.

The economic, social and cultural success of a society as a whole depends on the initiative at local level. A nation's success is the sum of its local achievements. The solutions for local problems can best be found in the towns and municipalities. Citizens can be highly effective if they commit themselves to local tasks. Decisions from above can only provide second best solutions. Therefore, the state and political parties and their decision-making organizations are well advised to provide a framework allowing for

Significance of communal politics

- **Community = daily center of the people's life or the "nucleus of democracy"**
- **Local politicians work closely with the people and also represent their interests nationally**
- **The citizens can themselves have an effect on local politics by becoming engaged in local tasks**

a high level of local decision-making. Power has a strong tendency to centralise. It requires wise statesmanship to withstand this tendency and to create and to retain bottom-up locally based structures.

The tasks and topics of local politics are as multi-layered as life is colored.

Because they deal with the most immediate human needs of the citizens, local politicians have a broad field of activity.

Local authorities in Germany fulfill an almost endless number of tasks. They include road construction, traffic and transport, schools and education, public safety and order, science, research and culture, health, sports, recreation, energy and water supply, housing and construction as well as general administration. This may be a broader field than local authorities in the Kingdom of Cambodia are charged to cover now. Yet with the Decentralization and Deconcentration Policy of the Royal Government, the principle of local self government will gain more prominence. Communes, districts and provinces will be given more tasks and decision-making power, step by step. The central state and its ministries will reduce their involvement in sub national affairs.

In all these fields decisions must be made continuously, almost on a daily basis. The decisions in a community are usually taken by a council elected by the citizens. The execution of the decisions taken by the council is the task of the local administration.

Officials and employees of the public services in local government in Germany work as paid professionals. The commune and district councillors perform their tasks as volunteers. They receive a small reimbursement of expenses.

In Cambodia, up to now, commune staff is limited to one clerk per commune. District and province staff are employed by the State, not by the sub-national government unit itself. They do not enjoy the rights of self-government.

The local political elite is composed of two types of people. On one hand we have the administration and on the other councillors. These two represent the executive (administration) and the decision-makers (legislative).

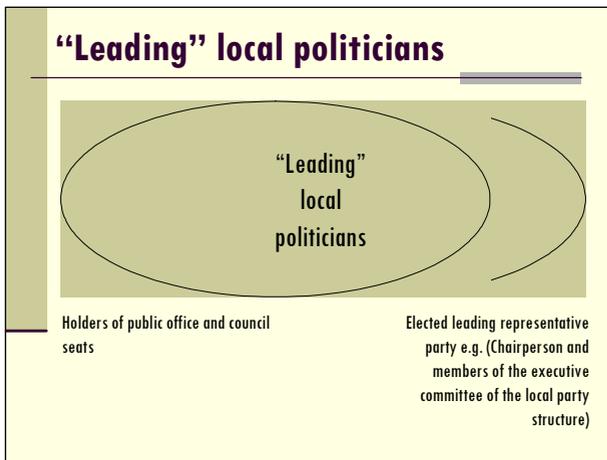
In a broader sense one must also include local politicians in the local political

Who is a local politician?

- **Strictly speaking: office and mandate holders in the community such as council members (as volunteers or paid staff)**
- **Generally speaking: party members who deal with local topics (possibly outside the council, e.g. at party meetings).**

elite who have committed themselves to party work at the local level, without being council member or public office holder. One rule applies in all democracies: the opposition of today may be in power after the next elections and vice-versa.

Close interaction thrives on the local scene between the different types of leading local politicians:

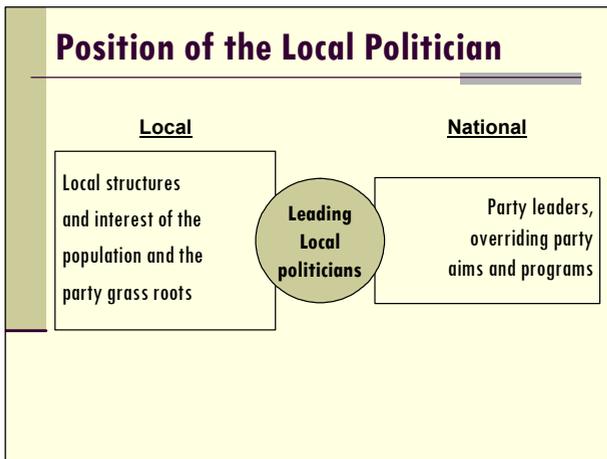


local office and mandate holders on one hand and on the other those engaged in local level party politics on the side of the majority and minority parties.

One reason for this is attributed to the function of the parties to nominate suitable candidates for public mandates and offices. Those who prevail as functionaries within a party almost inevitably recommend themselves to take over more responsibility for the community in public office. Continuously political parties generate candidates suitable for public office in councils or administration.

In Germany, a party career is not a legal prerequisite for a successful candidature. Yet non-party members in high public office are more of an exception in the German democracy. It is thoroughly shaped by the party system. This coincides with the Cambodian reality. Yet, at commune level independent groups often prevail over the big parties

In most cases it is justified to speak of "leading" local politicians as the local elite. They have gained their legitimacy through internal party elections and from the citizens in public elections. The parties recruit these individuals. They provide the "breeding ground" where candidates learn to form and articulate opinions and – most importantly – win support and elections. In spite of all internal controversy, party leaders present a unified picture of the party to the outside. Leading local politicians take a key position between local government structures and interests of the population. Local party leaders also represent the link between local party aims and the party programme at large.



Local politicians must have a thorough understanding of the wishes of the population in their area and be able to take political decisions, which do justice to the majority.

This is not only valid for those who carry responsibility as council members or local officials. It naturally applies to the local functionaries and repre-

sentatives of the party in the opposition. Both groups' success depends on their ability to understand the citizen and to formulate policies accordingly.

It is highly advantageous if a local party politician can create a link between local policy expectations and national party perspectives.

The personal success of a local politician and the success of his party locally are determined by the degree to which they reflect general trends of the society. This should be reflected by the party's policies at national and local levels alike.

2. Political opinion-building

Let us look closely at the different phases of the political process of molding the peoples will. The parties assume a prime role in it.

Phase 1: Development of informed opinion in the "pre-election stage"

Basic to the process is the development of an informed opinion on a political issue during the "pre-election stage". The political development of an informed opinion at this stage takes place in a private social area - family, friends, and neighborhoods. At this early stage it must be taken up by the party.

The "pre-forming" of the people's political opinion takes place with substantial involvement of other opinion-forming protagonists: media, interest groups, and influential independent people. It is also influenced by the current government's actions. At this stage the party must come in. Public statements of top party leaders, informational guidance to lower party levels and local advocacy by leading local politicians can win support for the party's position. This process is already part of genuine opinion-building within the electorate. Only a small number of voters take their decision at the last minute before the elections. The majority makes up its mind in the pre-election phase.

Phase 2: Election to the representative bodies of the people

After this first phase of the early forming of the people's opinion in a democratic state the second and decisive phase begins: the elections to the representative bodies of the people.

The opinion of the people tends to be little related to parties during the first phase. There are many trends and opinions. It is a science and an art for parties to select the right topics and to give them the appropriate expression during the election campaign. To do this well and in a united manner will have a major impact on election results locally, regionally and nationally in Germany.

The decision on the composition of the representative body is made on election day. The will of the people reflects aspirations for future action of the

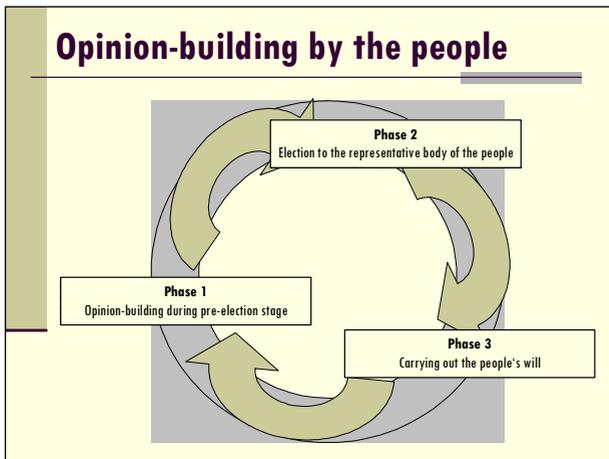
government, or that of the commune respectively. The people determine the direction of future political trends.

Phase 3: Execution of the people’s will

After the elections to the representative bodies, the development of informed opinion slows down. Yet, after one election, the pre-election phase for the next poll begins.

The electorate re-enters the first phase, the pre-election stage. Until the next election, they limit themselves to pure expression of opinion, with an uncertain influence on the government and the composition of the next council or parliament.

After the election, it is up to the representatives in parliamentary groups, commune councils and the executives to implement the policies advocated during the election campaign. Approved by the electorate, the party’s political aims as stated in the party programme and promoted in the election campaign form the initial position for the work of the parliament council and government. Newly developing opinions must be taken up by those in power.



This cycle reflects the ideal task of the parties in developing an informed political opinion of the people. It expresses itself in an election platform and – if the elections are won – political legislative and executive behavior.

During the governing phase the parties carry the responsibility to be accountable for their actions. They communicate their policies and thereby continue to influence the people’s opinions.

This principal is true for the political cycle at the highest state level. It is equally valid for the lower levels of the state.

At local level, citizen interaction with the local council is more direct than at higher levels. Communication within the community often takes place

personally, with little red tape. The small size of a local community and its easy-to-grasp personal relationships enable the average citizen to voice approval, praise, support, but also criticism and suggestions. The responsible people in the council and the administration are within easy reach.

Local politics offers the opportunity to adequately voice personal concerns to local decision-makers. They in turn will communicate these concerns upward within the party hierarchy- to the very top.

3. Local politicians as contact persons for the citizen

The activities of local politicians directly affect the daily life of the citizens in a commune. Even if elections are held only every few years for the purpose of renewing democratic legitimacy, local politicians feel continuously committed to the citizens. This is an effect of their closeness to the people.

In Germany it is therefore not only considered good practice, but a necessity to make oneself available in the context of public events and in regular citizen consultation hours. Availability is a must for local politicians.

For the citizen it is important to have direct contact through their local representatives to higher level authorities. The opinions and needs of the people are as much a factor in a democracy as those of the more broadly informed leadership.

The parties must do both: reflect and respond to popular opinion and influence public opinion so that it will contribute to general welfare. A purely populist approach will be more successful short term. In the long run largely populist parties will not succeed and be voted out of mandate and office.

Only a small number of citizens have the educational background and information to find the right authority in the commune, or at a higher level, to successfully address issues they feel need to be addressed. For local politicians it is challenging and rewarding to provide satisfactory consultancy and bring matters up at higher levels.

Local politician as contact person

- **Special sense of duty of the local politician:**
“We care about your issues!”
- **Recommended: citizen consultation hours, general sociability**
- **Information edge through “insider position”**
- **Use of personal contacts and networks in favor of legitimate requests of individual citizens**

If a local politician reacts appropriately to a legitimate request, this will have a positive effect on how he himself and his party will be evaluated by the citizens. A politician who cares will rightly be said to be of value to the community and this will have a positive effect on his future political career and that of his party.

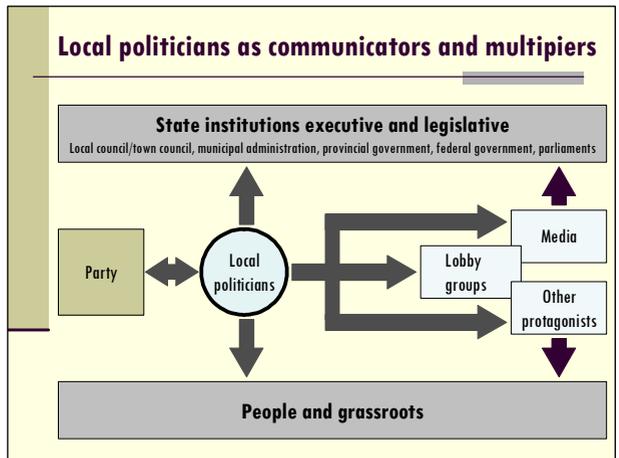
4. Local politicians as communicators and multipliers

Over and above their role in the commune local politicians also fulfill an important function for their party in bringing local concerns to the attention of higher authorities and in communicating higher level views to the citizens.

A party can convey its ideas directly to the local people through its local politicians. Local politicians serve their party as multipliers. They convey fundamental objectives, political concepts and up-to-date political reactions to current issues.

This is valid in more than one way: through their local politicians the party communicates locally with citizens and institutions.

Through their contacts to the local population, local politicians are in an ideal position to present the programme and actions of their party and to win local support for them.



Local politicians are also preferred contacts for the local media. It is the media above all other institutions that make the greatest contribution to the development of the collective opinion of the people. The media offer opportunities for politicians to reach the population and to win their support for the plans and positions of their party. In Cambodia, local media still need to be more widely available. In particular local radio stations could contribute to the rise of democracy.

Finally, leading local politicians are communicators and multipliers in relation to their own local party members. They are responsible for providing the communication between the grassroots level party members and the higher executives.

II. Local politics in regards to the agenda of the entire party

This chapter investigates recurrent conflicts of interest between local politics and the programmes of the party at large. It will be discussed how to deal with these differing interests and how to organize mutual political support.

1. The association law as a framework for political opinion building within a party

Generally, you can expect that party members represent the aims of their parties and actively support them. However, from time to time a conflict of interest arises within the party. Local interests can deviate from those of the party at large. What is needed is a rational decision which balances out the opposing interests. The solution must be acceptable to the voters in the first place. Party discipline is a second important aspect.

In conflict situations it is significant for a party to bring these opposing interests into agreement through a well-organised procedure. A decision must be made and clearly communicated to the public. Successful party work is not possible without cohesion and discipline in internal disputes. It requires strong management and leadership, with an ability to moderate between interests and to communicate decisions clearly to the public.

How can local politics and overriding party politics avoid colliding with each other? It is mainly by a democratic procedure “from below” within the party. Party discipline and order play another important role. Majority decisions should be respected by all party members. This is a basic principle of democracy. Majority decisions are to be taken “from below” or “bottom-up”. Then they promise to win broad based support in the party.

2. Commitment to principles and internal order in the party

Party politicians should follow the programme of their party and its values. Within a party it is necessary to limit public expression of deviating opinions. Entirely opposing ideas are incompatible in the long run: a party needs to have a core set of values, ideas and aims that the members can subscribe to.

Local party politics should always remain in agreement with the general direction of the party.

Local politics must be compatible with regional and national policies of a party. The party leadership must not lose sight of what people in the communities demand or undertake and make sure its policies remain compatible with the needs and opinions at the local level.

One way to guarantee consistency of party policies at different levels is to ensure that subordinate organizations and structures respect and agree to follow decisions taken at higher levels. This may be brought about by internal party rules requiring unity and discipline. For this purpose the party should agree on rules of procedure for internal party disputes in its statutes.

Articles of association law as a ruling framework

- Solution to conflicts of interest by internal party opinion-building
- Articles of association law provide rules and direction by tying the party to its principles and internal order
- The politics at all party levels must adhere to the basic principles and fundamentals of the party program
- Allow sanctions in case of violation, while preserving the right to free speech in the framework of internal party opinion-building

Statutes and articles of association may extend over all horizontal and vertical sub-divisions.

Autonomy of statute may be considered if regional diversity requires adaptation. Ethnic or religious minorities might be easier to be reached with different statutes and rules. The most important tool to engage people an active party politics is the practice of the bottom-up approach to decision-making. It ensures that decisions are broad based and less controversial than top-down decisions.

3. Fundamental policies

It is absolutely necessary that a party has written principles and a program. This should be stipulated in the statutes or articles of association.

In Germany, the important parties state their substantial values and priority aims in their articles of association. They also provide a detailed political programme. How the party intends to achieve its stated aims is primarily laid out in party election platforms. For each election campaign the party platform is updated with current issues addressed.

Party platforms usually cover the whole political spectrum and include an expression of intent and fundamental action outlines with regard to all political topics (foreign policy, domestic policy, economic policy, energy policy, policy relating to the family, financial policy, defence policy, education policy, local politics, and so on).

The party programme and platform is the result of an extended opinion seeking process within a party, led by a programme committee. In Germany,

parties develop and adopt new party programmes at regular intervals of about ten years. This is almost never a ‘new’ programme, but rather an update of the old version. Major shifts in orientation are rare.

4. Possibilities of sanctions

The party’s internal set of rules, the statutes and the articles of association, make sure that the basic concepts, contained in the party programme and statutes, are obligatory for everyone in the party.

Deviations, in the sense of calling into question the elementary principles of the party, are not to be tolerated and must be punished by sanctions for the sake of party unity. The statutes of parties in Germany stipulate that members, who repeatedly violate the principles of the party and harm the party politically, can be expelled. Inner-party committees are charged to deal with such cases.

This does not mean that the party programme and statutes are beyond debate. A check of the policy platform, for further development and adaptation to a changing world, remains possible and even essential for long term survival. However, persisting deviation from the basic values and principles of the party against majority decisions can not be tolerated. Only through its commitment to basic values can a party give its supporters a ‘political homeland’. Only then can it create a sustainable following.

These are considerations within which local politics must operate if it is to avoid conflict with the overriding party objectives. Should the party grass roots run local politics in disagreement with the principles of the party, conflict is unavoidable. A local party activist must not carry forward his or her views if they violate the basic values and aims of the party.

However, a lively debate within a party and competition between different ideas are necessary for the renewal of the party programme and policies. A party is therefore well advised to allow a fair and informed inner opinion building process, in order to enable competing ideas to bear fruit. Also for that purpose parties in democratic countries have established the elaborate party assembly and convention structure that has been described in a previous chapter.

Organizing support of local politicians for the major aims of a party is an art that should not be based on a dictate over local politicians from above. Instead, it should be based on convincing them and involving them in the bottom-up political process. This will contribute to a sustainable party movement.

If local politicians develop ideas deviating from the party line, then the party leaders should listen to these ideas, reservations and deviating concepts and include them into a structured process of internal opinion-building. The closeness to the grass roots and their insight into local trends give them an advantage that may contribute to the fruitful adaptation of party policies.

Therefore it is important to include a commune level politicians' association in the routine inner-party debate.

The question how local politicians can be won to support the aims of the party at large is easy to answer: it can be achieved through persuasion and inclusion into the opinion-making process better and with more sustainability than by order from above.

Local politicians are better qualified than their top level counterparts to arrive at realistic assessments of trends in society. Some top politicians tend to be alienated from ordinary life at the local level. This assessment should be taken into consideration by the party. When party leaders face obstacles in convincing their own local party members, this provides an indication of how the majority of the population will see a particular matter. Local politicians can give early warning signs. Faulty political concepts that are doomed to be rejected by the population can be amended if local politicians' voices are heard.

Party rules and policies will only be followed locally if they are suitable for local conditions. An internal bottom up party opinion building process on policy issues is necessary to guarantee cohesion between the centre and the periphery. Once this principle is followed, party discipline must require that principles and guidelines are respected for the time they have been voted for.

Integration of local politics into the platform of the party

- Observe the shaping of internal opinion-building procedures on all levels
- Allow the maturing of ideas and decisions on their way from the grass roots up into the highest decision-making bodies of the party
- Support of local politicians through offices, materials and professional staff
- "Guidance" / "leadership" of the grass roots by the party leaders

In cases in which sub-ordinate party structures or single party members obstinately refuse to accept a resolution obtained by democratic decision, the party leaders must, for the sake of party unity and by virtue of its articles of

association, use all repressive possibilities at their disposal to punish undisciplined and disloyal members of the party.

5. Professional party staff

The party has a vital interest that local politicians serve as multipliers of their policies down to the grass roots level. For pragmatic reasons it is reasonable that the work of local party functionaries is supported by skilled professionals.

The CDU Germany operates a professional office for each of its district associations. This office runs the business of the district association, and of all lower level units. The tasks include the organisation of party events, membership administration, public relations and finance.

At the same time, these offices channel information from higher party offices down to the districts and below. The party headquarters support active local party members and local politicians by providing information materials through the district offices. This pays off, especially during election campaigns.

The district offices usually employ a manager and limited additional paid staff, such as a secretary, experts and a public relations specialist. Independent from the elected or appointed local politicians, they ensure the continuity of daily political work. Through their professional assistance and service, they relieve local politicians of organizational duties. The district offices can devote themselves fully to management tasks.

The continuous supply of information and materials to local politicians is an effective means for the party at large to organise support for the aims of the party as a whole. This direct communication channel pays off for both sides.

The district offices provide the party leadership with a channel to communicate closely with the grass roots levels. The national party can in the true sense of the word “lead”. It can influence the opinion and attitude of the subordinate party bodies and give them a common direction. This will then be communicated to the electorate.

By these means the party leaders execute their opinion leading position on major subjects. This counter balances the strong element of “bottom-up” inner party democracy and contributes to party unity. The better the party leaders prepare such communication to the district offices, the less they have to fear legitimate criticism on the part of their own grassroots. The bottom-up party organization assures that the local views and interests are reflected in the leadership communication.

For inner party debate and decision-making bottom-up and top-down channels are both necessary. It is recommended to include a description of these procedures in the party statutes. This seems to be the best guarantee for a functioning democratic party organization. It prevents the party leadership from overruling the grass roots. It can contribute to the smooth implementation of high level party decisions down to the village level.

Local politicians ultimately determine which course the party takes. Local politicians are in touch with the masses, they interpret and communicate party policies. Because of their voice at the party conferences, even the most ambitious party leader needs to take them into account seriously. In Germany, nothing is possible that goes against the majority of local politicians. A party can only work efficiently and shape its policies if it works with local politicians, who personify the grass roots. Therefore the association of local politicians plays such a vital role in the party.

The author of this paper and the Secretary General of the Commune Level Politicians of the CDU, Mr. Tim-Rainer Bornholt have discussed this matter repeatedly with the parties represented in the Cambodian Parliament. May this outline of the relations between central and local party units provide inspiration for its readers in Cambodia.

C. SUMMARY

We have seen that the local politicians take a key position between the population at the grass roots and higher party levels. In this key position, local politicians function as representatives of the interests of the party at large (top-down) and of the local community (bottom-up).

Through their closeness to the grass roots and their large numbers nationwide, local politicians lay the foundations of party politics. Giving them prominence in the democratic internal party opinion-building process and securing support from them, must therefore be the aim of every responsible party leadership.

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A Khmer language version of this paper is available. It may be obtained from the Konrad Adenauer Foundation office in Phnom Penh.

