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This book is dedicated to all the people I have worked with during my years with DIPD.

Staff in Copenhagen, Nepal, Bhutan and Myanmar;
The Chairman Henrik Bach Mortensen and all the members of the Board of DIPD;
Staff and elected officials in the Danish political parties;
Politicians and officials in parties around the world;
Colleagues from other democracy institutions.

I would like to thank the following in particular:

Anja, Egbert, Flemming, Hanne, Heidi, Henrik, Isaac, Jakob, Karina, Kesang, Line, Mathias, Mette, Murari, Nkanyiso, Ole, Petra, Phuntshok, Rebekka, Shrishti, Susanne, Thazin, Ulla.

I would finally like to thank Shrishti Rana and Jakob Erle for answering my call to take a critical look at the articles. I have greatly appreciated their opinions. However, they hold no responsibility for the final result.

CONTENTS

WHY SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY?

It has been a privilege to work with dedicated people from many countries, who share the vision of why democracy, a democratic culture and democratic political parties are important. I have enjoyed our discussions about the threats and challenges we need to respond to. The articles in this book represent some of the reflections I have made over the six years I have worked for the Danish Institute for Parties and Democracy.

The photo was taken in October 2013, when I travelled to Bhutan with the Chairman of DIPD, Henrik Bach Mortensen. Between meetings, we walked to Tiger's Nest, a famous Buddhist monastery clinging to the side of a mountain.

A FRAGILE FLOWER

After 40 years of riding on the upward side of the 'wave of democracy' that started in 1974, we are now riding on the downward side. This ride is both dangerous and depressing, and we urgently need to come together as a global community to find answers that can guide us in moving forward.

I am not suggesting that the system of democracy as such is in danger. However, many commentators have suggested that we experience a growing gap between what citizens believe has been *promised*, and what they feel is being *delivered*. We also see rising levels of *polarization, populism* and *authoritarianism* as ways of responding to the gap. *Nationalism* and *isolationism* also seem to be part of the response.

Robert Kagan from the Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C has expressed the situation we find ourselves living in much more poetically in the book "Democracy in Decline?" edited by Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plather:

"Today, as always, democracy is a fragile flower. It requires constant support, constant tendering, and the plucking of weeds and fencing-off of the jungle that threaten it both from within and without. In the absence of such efforts, the jungle and the weeds may sooner or later come back to reclaim the land."

RAYS OF SUN

Having worked with democracy and development in its many forms and shapes for almost four decades, I know that the search for a 'magic bullet' is futile. In fact, such a search can be tricky, because dreaming about the distant ideal can prevent us from implementing responses that are necessary and 'good enough' right now.

Fortunately, there are also many rays of sun streaming through the grimy windows of our global house of democracy. Many of the efforts and experiences I refer to in my articles offer reasons for optimism. The problem now is to find ways of scaling up the necessary changes out there, as well as at home.

This understanding was a major motivator, when I decided to publish this book.

I am a practitioner, who has tried to follow the academic debate, and who has listened to the critical voices on the ground. I believe that our intentions are good, but accept that we may not always have been able to deliver in the most appropriate manner. This is true for the development community in general, and it is certainly also true for the democracy support community. There is a need for critical self-reflection, also among practitioners.

My humble hope is that some of my reflections could be a contribution to the broader effort to re-invigorate and re-position the democracy-support community.

VALUES MUST DRIVE US

When I joined the UN in early 2003, the broad understanding was that *governance or democratic governance or democracy* was an essential part development. The view was shared by the majority of people I worked with inside and outside of the UN.

This was not necessarily because the evidence convincingly pointed to democratic governance as a precondition for social and economic development. In fact, there has always been many in the research community questioning the admittedly rather simplistic assumption about free and fair elections automatically resulting in the economy growing and livelihoods of the poor improving.

China is often mentioned as the key producer of policies that lifted millions out of poverty. The argument seemed to be that if you really want to do away with poverty, you need to use authoritarian forms of governance.

It is important for all of us to look for evidence of how governance and growth, or democracy and distribution interact. This is our responsibility as participants and stakeholders in development. Searching for evidence of what works is necessary. Understanding what does not work is equally important.

I have always been a strong believer in taking the *values* of democracy as our point of departure (like human rights in general, freedom of speech and assembly, free and fair elections, gender equality, respect for minorities and inclusion of all, to mention a few). I see democracy primarily as an end in itself, not first or only as an instrument to achieve other ends, although I agree that this can be a legitimate approach.

This belief is reflected in the articles included in this publication.

However, I also agree with those who argue that democratic institutions and procedures do not necessarily create a state capable of delivering what people expect. Democracy-supporters like myself must therefore be able to think holistically, when we deliver the programmes that can support our partners.

VALUES UNDER PRESSURE

Democracy as a platform for development was certainly present, when representatives of 189 states met in 2000 in the UN General Assembly, to sign on to the *Millennium Declaration* as

the expression of the principles underpinning the measurable development targets of the *Millennium Development Goals* covering 2000-2015.

While no specific democratic system is referred to, the declaration makes it clear that values like freedom from repression, protection of human rights, gender equality, inclusion of minorities and access to information must be the foundation for the types of development that will offer all human beings freedom from poverty.

This type of thinking is fully in line with the tradition of Danish development cooperation, which has been my 'home' for more than four decades. Although the specific positioning of democracy and human rights in the strategic construction of our cooperation has varied, the general approach has been consistent. In that sense our cooperation has been value-based, not just a set of technical approaches.

Unfortunately, much has changed since the Millennium Declaration was adopted more than fifteen years ago. The *Sustainable Development Goals* adopted by the UN in 2015 to guide global development over the next fifteen years also refer to democratic governance and as a basis needed to ensure people-oriented development, but the reality is that we can no longer take democratic principles and values for granted.

We do not need to point towards repressive, despotic or authoritarian regimes in Africa to see what is happening. We only need to look at certain parts of Europe. This is documented by the annual reports from the US-based *Freedom House*, as well as by the *Democracy Index* published annually by the Economist Intelligence Unit.

Yes, there are obviously differences with regard to the levels and methods of repression between countries in Africa and Europe. However, the values and principles in the declarations do not operate at different 'levels'. Rights cannot be 'massaged' to fit changing interpretations.

Therefore, the sad truth is that the values are under pressure, not only in countries of the global South, but in the global North as well. Many of the countries we work in, cooperate closely with new donors that are ready to ignore human rights, protection of minorities, inclusion of the marginalized and equality of women and men.

I have been practicing, reflecting and writing within this broad context. I also realize that we may not have taken these challenges seriously enough, hoping or believing that they would suddenly disappear and leave the market-place of democracy-support to us.

SOURCES OF THE ARTICLES

During my years with DIPD, I have made detailed notes of all my missions and major meetings, including outlines for articles that I would want to write at some point. Many of the articles in this book are the result of such a process.

Some articles have initially been written for a specific purpose and occasion, and they have been published or shared with others in one way or the other. I have decided not to change any of the arguments and conclusions, although today we know that in some cases they present positions that have turned out to be wrong! Such is life – we can actually be wrong! In some cases I have decided to revise some sections for purposes of clarity, and this has been indicated at the start of the article.

Only the concluding article is what you could call a truly 'original' contribution. Having reread the 'old' articles, I felt that there was a need for some form of 'conclusion' or response to the challenges we face as a community. Time has not allowed me to elaborate as much as I would have liked to, so the themes and arguments highlighted in this article will be on my agenda when I retire from DIPD.

Throughout the book, you will find references to books and people who have inspired me. Some of them have contributed critically to form my views on what is happening in the world around me, and in a different type of book I would certainly have made the necessary references in an appropriate manner. The democracy literature is vast, and I am only scratching the surface. Hopefully the few readings I recommend in the final chapter of the book will be useful for some of you.

STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

The first part of the book presents articles about what DIPD has been involved with at the partnership and country levels. In particular, in the countries I have personally been responsible for or visited on many occasions – Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar, Egypt and Zimbabwe.

Since each country is unique, and the DIPD interventions therefore are 'custom-built' in each case, the approaches and lessons learned mentioned in these articles do not at all represent the totality of DIPD experiences. Readers who would like a broader perspective can visit the Annual Reports from DIPD, in particular the 2015 report about "Postcards from DIPD Partners".

Furthermore, my personal experiences are of course dominated by the multi-party activities that I have been directly responsible for during my years as director. This is only half of

what DIPD is involved with. The Danish political parties manage the other half, and as argued in the article called *Parties and their sisters,* I believe it is useful for DIPD to be able to cover the two types of party support.

I also believe that many of my observations are relevant irrespective of which type of partnership we are dealing with. This can be documented through the reports from the activities of the Danish parties that I have had the pleasure to read over the years since DIPD started.

The second part of the book presents articles that focus more on general reflections about democracy and support for democracy. Some of these reflections are the result of decades of work, including my work in the field of civil society organizations and the UN system. Other experiences are direct results of my work with political parties in DIPD.

In one of the last articles of the book titled *Ideas that can inspire*, I have tried to summarize what I consider to be key elements of the DIPD approach. Simply stated, this is a Danish approach, based on Danish competencies, Danish experiences, Danish history. In my view, this is not a 'nationalistic' version of what is Danish, and it is not presented in an uncritical or unreflective manner when we meet our partners.

But it is what we know best.

TAKING OFF WITH THE ARAB SPRING

The people gathering on Tahrir Square in Cairo in the period from 25 January until 11 February 2011 brought down the military dictatorship that had ruled Egypt for decades. Ten days earlier, I started as director of DIPD, and Jakob Erle started as director of the Danish-Egyptian Dialogue Institute in Cairo. We agreed that DEDI and DIPD should work together, to offer a small contribution to the people fighting for democracy. We are still active in Egypt, but we are no longer as optimistic as we were in 2011.

This article was written towards the end of 2011, when there was still a lot of hope in the 'revolution' associated with the Arab Spring. It was first posted on the DIPD website. The conclusions have not been changed.

The photo is one of the few I have taken in Cairo during my missions. This was taken on Tahrir Square, after the first period of enthusiasm had been overtaken by the daily struggle to survive, and the military was back in control.

TRANSITIONS WITHOUT A ROADMAP

Mahatma Gandhi said that the spirit of democracy cannot be forced upon a society from the outside. It will have to rely on the demands from inside a society. This is also the lesson we have learned from the *democracy wave* that started by a group of visionary and daring officers in Portugal in 1974.

Ever since, we have seen it happen repeatedly. No particular form of democracy can be exported or imported. However, thoughtful dialogue and good ideas that can inspire can make it possible to support democratic reforms initiated by local citizens and institutions.

The history of transitions over the decades tells us that there is no particular roadmap. Rulers disappear, but they also leave behind structures of power that new institutions and procedures cannot easily deal with or eradicate. Divisions in society will always require compromises that are supported by a majority and acceptable to the minorities.

Pushbacks and unfulfilled dreams are part of the stories of the more than 100 democratic transitions, we have witnessed since the start of the wave. Many have become nothing more than theaters, where puppets perform electoral shows to please the world, while the truth is that the spirit has been killed.

PLURALISM IN THE ARAB WORLD

Developments in the Middle East caught most politicians, academics, experts and political observers on the wrong foot. It was nowhere written or predicted that a new tsunami of democratic transitions would start there. On the contrary, it is easy to find articles and books concluding that this particular part of the world was immune to the principles of democracy now universally accepted.

Until the end of 2010, a heated debate in the democracy community was about the state of the "third wave of democracy", first described by Samuel Huntington in his famous book from 1991, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*. Many asked if the wave was finally running out of steam, and a number of indicators pointed in that direction. Many of the countries that have introduced democratic institutions and procedures have not wanted or been able to develop the required *democratic culture*.

Yes, elections take place, but the almighty ruling party wins repeatedly, for obvious reasons.

Independent media may be allowed, but the true nature of their 'independence' is questionable.

Parliaments function as described in the manuals, with several parties represented. Still, not even members of the ruling party have any real influence.

Civil society is allowed to operate as long as organizations focus on social activities. They will be silenced as soon as they ask for accountability and transparency.

Observers would often refer to the UNDP Arab Human Development Report in 2002, stating among others:

"There is a substantial lag between Arab countries and other regions in terms of participatory governance. The wave of democracy that transformed governance in most of Latin America and East Asia in the 1980s and Eastern Europe and much of Central Asia in the late 1980s and early 1990s has barely reached the Arab States. This freedom deficit undermines human development and is one of the most painful manifestations of lagging political development... Moving towards pluralism, which is more conducive to genuine sustainable participation and in tune with the requirements of today's and tomorrow's world, needs to become a priority for Arab countries."

BETWEEN PROMISES AND DELIVERY

These and similar arguments have been repeated in many reports since then. They all argue for a positive relationship between democratic values, institutions and processes and socio-economic development.

Not surprisingly, this argument was not received with great applause everywhere. Many pointed to examples proving the opposite. Look at China and Vietnam, where achievements like high economic growth and the reduction of poverty have been delivered by highly authoritarian systems.

They could also point to the long list of countries, where democratic institutions were unable to deliver what the electorate wanted, like jobs, education, health, transport and clean water. They were therefore ready to accept an authoritarian system, if this could deliver.

They are actually correct!

Surveys undertaken by the 'Barometer' institutions in Latin America, Asia and Africa provide the evidence. When asked if they would prefer to live in a society with the right to organize and assemble freely, vote freely and regularly for the party of your choice, be governed by a popularly elected government rather than a general, then the answer from the large majority was yes, thanks!

When asked if they would accept a dose of authoritarian or populist leadership, if democracy could not deliver the goods

they were waiting for, many were willing to endure life without the advantages of a democracy.

A FOURTH WAVE?

It is still too early to conclude, if the Jasmin revolution in Tunisia, the uprising on Tahrir Square in Egypt, demonstrations and uprisings in Libya, Bahrain, Yemen and elsewhere can be defined as the beginning of a fourth wave of democracy. It is not too early to conclude that when the wave started rolling in Tunisia, it became an inspiration for others, just like we had seen with other waves.

While history does not repeat itself, there are certain characteristics we can draw lessons from, according to one of my favorite books on democracy, written by Larry Diamond in 2008 with the title *The Spirit of Democracy*. He argues that democracy is a universal aspiration, contrary to the view held by some that certain religions, cultures and societies are unfit for democracy.

Larry Diamond tells the story of how the 'third wave' starts, when the 48-year-old dictatorship in Portugal is brought to an end on 25 April 1974 by left-wing officers in a bloodless coup. On that day, the future of democracy in Portugal was unclear, and we would only know in April 1976, when a compromise was reached on the constitution and a government was elected.

At this point, the world knew of only 40 democracies.

The first phase of the democracy wave lasted until 1989, when events in Tiananmen Square in China brought the spread of democracy to a momentary standstill. This period was also characterized by slow progress in the number of new democracies. Greece followed Portugal, then came Spain. The fire spread to Latin America, where Ecuador, Argentina and Brazil experienced transformations of varying depth. Asia was next, with the 'miracle' in the Philippines in 1986, plus South Korea and Taiwan.

By the end of 1988, two of five governments in the world could be called democratic. In 1994, an additional 20 percent had become democratic. In less than a decade, 40 countries experienced a democratic transformation, when communist Hungary dissolved; Gorbachev put 'perestroika' on the agenda, and the wall fell.

In the first phase, Africa was hardly impacted. Developments in Eastern Europe started a landslide. In Benin people took power; in South Africa Nelson Mandela was released; in the Ivory Coast, Gabon and Zambia, presidents on lifelong 'contracts' had to step down.

VERY DIFFERENT DYNAMICS

Today, more than 25 years after Huntington published his book, we should appreciate the achievements accomplished since the third wave started. Around 90 new democracies have been born, and irrespective of the weaknesses we can find, this period represents the most massive governance transformation ever seen.

Each case of transformation has presented its own dynamic. Let me point to four dimensions presented by Larry Diamond in his book.

To begin with, it would often be internal dissatisfaction or very special events that got things moving – like the death of a dictator, the killing of an opposition leader. Later we experienced the 'snowball' effect. The Philippines inspired South Korea; Poland motivated other countries in Eastern Europe. Politicians shared experiences.

Not all countries could avoid returning to some of the ills of old times. However, let us not forget that it is surprising that so many actually were successful, partly because transitions were negotiated with the old regime.

Various civil society actors played an important role. Unions, churches, students, professionals, women, human rights defenders, ethnic minority groups and many more. They articulated demands and hopes.

Elections also played a key role, and not just by being part of the ideal of a democracy. In many countries – Peru, Burma, Chile, Nicaragua, Poland, Zambia and Malawi to mention a few – the holders of power overestimated their strength and control of the ballot box.

CITIZENS COMING TOGETHER

Now the wave has also touched the shores of the Middle East. This is surprising and fascinating, moving and inspiring. We have become part of a global community sharing experiences and discussing how to offer support in the best way possible, as concerned global citizens understanding the need to come together.

A well-functioning *parliament* with clear rules of the game is critical; free and fair elections managed by an independent election commission is a must; independent *courts*, free and critical media, vocal and courageous *civil society* organizations are necessary.

Political parties also play a crucial role. Ideally, the parties offer citizens a platform for dialogue about the visions we need

to discuss to develop our societies, and the ways we want to manage and use our resources.

It remains to be seen if the parties will play the same role in the Middle East, as we have become accustomed to in our part of the world. Maybe we will see new forms of parties and movements, reflecting the way in which the revolution came about.

However, irrespective of the shape and form democracy will take, it will not automatically deliver on all the wishes and demands of the population. That much we already know.

OWNERSHIP, LEADERSHIP AND TRUST

One of the first DIPD partnerships has turned out to be one of the most rewarding for me personally. Six of the major political parties in Nepal have agreed to use a multiparty platform as a 'nursery' for dialogue. They use Danish inspiration to add 'spice' to their own way of doing politics. They have taken ownership of the platform, and they have offered leadership to their country. It has been a remarkable journey, and it has brought me many new friendships.

The article is written for this publication, based on notes and reports from my missions to Nepal during 2011-16, as well as from the study tours hosted by DIPD in Denmark.

I took this photo on the outskirts of Kathmandu in April 2013. Families gather for a local political meeting, and while they are loyal to the party, they also ask their elected politicians to deliver on their promises.

SCENE ONE

A meeting room in the Shangri-La Hotel in Kathmandu towards the end of 2011. I am participating in my first meeting with representatives from six of the parties represented in parliament, organized in the Joint Mechanism for Political Party Support, or just JOMPOPS.

When the meeting is over, I know instinctively that I have decided that this should be the first multi-party partnership DIPD engages in. I will ask the board to support it, as soon as we have finalized a project document.

That day in 2011, I had no idea that five years later, I would look back on this activity as one of the most successful DIPD engagements. The beginning was far from easy, and Nepal as such was not considered an easy country to work in. Initial discussions were definitely not easy either.

"We have talked with the donors for several years, about how they could offer capacity development support for our parties. Now we would like to know when we can expect some action?" one party leader states.

I knew the history he was referring to, and I knew that I would have to answer this particular question before I returned to Denmark.

Very briefly, the story as I understand it is the following: A group of donors, including Denmark, had held meetings with six of the parties represented in the Constitutional Assembly elected in 2008. The meetings had taken place over a long period. Ambassadors had attended some of the meetings, indicating the importance attached to offering support for parties in the new Nepali democracy.

Just when an agreement on how to move forward seemed certain, the project fell apart. Donors pulled out with different explanations. For some donors, I believe it was an issue of changing priorities. For other donors, my sense is that they preferred a different approach.

DIPD was in a special position. We had started to operate only some eight months ago, and Nepal would be a good place to start. There was a long history of development cooperation between Nepal and Denmark; I happened to be somewhat familiar with Nepal; the Danish Ambassador in Nepal was optimistic and supportive, and the Embassy had almost finalized a project for support to political parties when DIPD was established.

"Yes, we will support JOMPOPS, if a project document is approved by the board," I answered.

Not so long after my first visit to Kathmandu, the document was approved.

SCENE TWO

In that first meeting in Kathmandu, I only knew the broad outline of the modern political history of Nepal that had brought the six parties to meet around the same table. Over the years, I became more educated, not least thanks to the explanations and presentations given to me by Shrishti Rana, our Representative, in Nepal.

Shrishti has always reminded me that understanding the story of Nepal's democratic history is essential to capture the essence of what JOMPOPS can do. The following are some of the highlights she has emphasized.

In the early 1950s, parliamentary democracy was introduced. Unfortunately, it could not last long. The King usurped power, backed by the army. In 1990, following a widespread demonstration for democracy, the King was forced to relinquish power to the people. A parliamentary system was restored, with a constitutional monarchy.

Merely six years later, a radical communist faction known as the Maoist party waged a protracted armed rebellion against the state. Abolition of the monarchy and drafting of the new Constitution through an elected Assembly were their major demands. Since those demands were against the constitutional framework, the major political parties such as the Nepali Congress party and the Unified Marxist Leninist party could not agree.

In effect, the armed confrontation intensified. Around 17,000 people died. Thousands more were injured. Millions of people were displaced.

The majority of the people killed or attacked by the Maoist party were the members of the NC and UML parties. Similarly, the NC or the UML-led government were responsible for killing of many Maoist cadres.

In 2005, in a dramatic event, the King again usurped power, suspending the parliamentary system. This development pushed the major parliamentary parties and the Maoist party together in an alliance to restore democracy.

Multi-party democracy was yet again restored in 2006, following a massive People's Movement mobilized jointly by the major political parties and the Maoist party.

Since then, the Maoist party has joined the democratic fold, competing in elections with other parties. However, the truth is that the shadow of the difficult bitter past coalescing into a deep sense of mutual distrust still overwhelms Nepal's current politics.

That is, I believe, what makes the work of JOMPOPS both significant and impressive.

Today, parties with such a painful history are not only talking to each other, but are collaborating with each other for a common goal. If this collaborative culture percolates to the national politics, then it addresses one of the key challenges of Nepal's democratic politics, defined by a lack of multi-party collaboration, even on the issues of the overall welfare of the people.

SCENE THREE

A conference hall close to the harbor area in Copenhagen in the early part of 2013. JOMPOPS Steering Committee members discuss with Kisser, Rasmus, Jette, Leon, Rolf, Allan and other Danish local level politicians how a publication about setting up local branches should be presented, to ensure that the local level of political parties in Nepal can be developed in a democratic manner.

Yet another benchmark in a process that started more than a year ago, in meetings both in Denmark and in Nepal. What did the parties in Nepal feel they needed? What could the Danish side of the partnership deliver? What were other donors already doing? These were some of the basic themes in our discussions.

Having heard about the way Danish political parties managed a fairly tight net of local branches spread all over the country, thus ensuring that the priorities of the party could be discussed locally among the rank and file, the Nepali parties suggested that this should be a focus of DIPD support. They could learn from visiting the branches, when they came to Denmark; we could bring members of the municipal councils to Nepal for workshops.

It was suggested that we could develop a 'guide' as the basis for our work. Not a traditional donor manual that would show how to set up and manage a local branch, step by step, with all the details.

We wanted an inspirational 'guide' that would tell the stories about how eight parties in the Danish parliament actually organize themselves differently, some having a very centralized structure, others allowing the local branches more room to decide their own affairs, including local candidates for office. Many of the basic values of the different models were the same, but the Danish model was really one emphasizing different types of structures, as well as some differences or variations in the democratic cultures being pursued.

While the substantive theme was important, the process of developing the guide was no less important. We recruited a consultant to write a draft; municipal council members from

six of the Danish parties were brought on board as resource persons; the Steering Committee members in Nepal were the final decision-makers.

This resulted in a rather slow and tedious process. Drafts travelled endlessly back and forth in cyberspace; a delegation from Denmark joined the Nepali members for a three-day workshop on the outskirts of Kathmandu; new drafts were written and shared; and then we all met in Copenhagen to agree on the final version.

Some months later, I travelled to Kathmandu together with Rolf from the Conservative Party. Together with leaders of the six Nepali parties and the Danish Ambassador, we officially launched the guide. We had invested almost two years of hard work in getting this far, but in the process the members of JOMPOPS had taken charge and made their ownership clearly visible.

SCENE FOUR

A conference center outside of Kathmandu at the beginning of 2014. A new three-year programme needs to be developed, submitted to Copenhagen, and approved by the board of DIPD. The JOMPOPS Steering Committee meets to discuss the priorities for the next three years.

Our partnership is moving into its third year, and we have come to know and respect each other, also at the personal level. This is clearly reflected in the atmosphere of the meetings. Contrary to what will often be the case in Nepal, our meetings are very informal.

Discussions are also very frank and to the point. This is something the Nepali have come to appreciate after their visits to Denmark. Some of them have actually started to conduct internal party meetings according to 'Danish practice'.

This is my first visit after the November 2013 parliamentary elections that dramatically changed the strength of the three major parties. The Maoists used to dominate, followed by the Communists and Congress; now the Maoists have been pushed to third place, with Congress moving to first and the Communists staying in second place.

In addition to the three old parties, there are three parties in the platform representing the Madhes people in the lowland area bordering on India. They did not do well in the election at all, and they continue to be divided. However, as a historically marginalized community, they continue to play an important role in the constitution-making process, which continues to move forward at a snail's pace. The international community is not at all happy with the slow progress.

"So can you guarantee me that you will have finalized the new constitution when I visit Kathmandu the next time, which is likely to be less than a year from now?" I ask them.

I have tabled this question routinely since my first visit. It is the key to what is happening in the political arena, and therefore key to what we can do. As long as negotiations drag on for month after month, our partners – and the MPs in particular - will be preoccupied with this. We need a final constitution, before we know for sure how the politics of the country will develop.

"I think so," the Chairman answers with the smile of a fox. "But as you know, we have been disappointed more than once. It is also better that we agree on something that can be implemented, and it is not easy to agree in a country with so many diversities as we have in Nepal."

True! The diversity is one of the reasons why we always have to think creatively, when we discuss how Danish experiences and ideas can inspire in Nepal.

Despite what some Danes may think these days, in a historical perspective, Denmark is an extremely homogenous society. With more than a hundred ethnic groups, and even more languages, it is not easy for politicians and citizens of Nepal to find solutions that can embrace all the differences and diversities in a convincing manner.

There is no doubt in my mind that one of the key challenges of the 21st century is how to manage the large number of diversities, inside nation states, and also among nation states, both regionally and globally. This is an area where we can learn from other countries – and Nepal is a country with a wealth of experience, including ways of managing.

The Chairman has lived with diversity his entire life, and struggling to protect the rights of his minority group has defined his life. He is not in doubt when he continues to talk to me, and somewhat surprisingly points to some historical experiences in the Danish political system that might be useful:

"We need to be able to find good solutions together, not only as human beings, but also as politicians. Maybe it would be helpful if we had more information about the way 'coalition politics' works in Denmark. We could learn from you."

This was how the idea of a DIPD publication about the Danish way of doing coalition politics was born. It was a request from our partner in Nepal. It later turned out that other countries also felt they could benefit from it – so it was launched in Myanmar, Bhutan and Tanzania.

More than two years later, I returned to Kathmandu to launch the Nepali version of the DIPD reader about coalition building.

SCENE FIVE

A bus driving back from Bornholm to Copenhagen on a rainy night in June 2014. We are returning from the island of Bornholm, where delegations from Nepal and Bhutan have witnessed the *People's Meeting*, a new feature of Danish democracy.

Everyone is tired after a long day of walking, listening and partying, but one of the Nepali representatives nevertheless starts to sing. Slowly others join in, and those of us not mastering the language contribute with the clapping of hands.

There is a feeling of the type of comradeship we all remember from going on a tour with our class back in school. The Nepali representatives know their own internal differences very well of course, because they reach back for decades, into very turbulent and violent periods of their history. Bhutan is a newcomer both to democracy and to the world of party politics, and although their differences are minor compared to those of their colleagues in Nepal, they have learned how conflict-ridden the business of multi-party democracy can be.

All of this seems to be forgotten on this nightly tour through the gently rolling fields of the Southern part of Sweden. The passengers in the bus have just witnessed how leaders and members of the eight parties in the Danish parliament have debated in a friendly and peaceful manner, but still with pointed and sharp arguments. They have seen Danish politicians move around relaxed and safe among ordinary citizens, some being received as celebrities, while others were not recognized at all.

During the dinner before getting on the bus, the atmosphere was elated. Our guests took the floor to thank us for our hospitality, and to highlight what they felt were some of the inspirational experiences they would take back to Nepal and Bhutan and share with their colleagues. The relaxed atmosphere; the surprising informality; the frank exchanges of policy positions; the mixing of parties and civil society; the joking between political adversaries.

"Singing in the night is our expression of gratitude, as well as a sign of how overwhelming we feel all the impressions have been. One day we will have a People's Meeting in Nepal," one of the leaders told me. "We really need to try and do politics differently," he added.

SCENE SIX

A hotel in Pokhara to the west of Kathmandu in the early part of 2016. This is one of the big tourist attractions of Nepal, where on clear days the snow-capped Himalaya mountains form an

unbelievably beautiful backdrop. But there is only little time to look at the mountains. As always when we visit, our partners want to exploit our presence to the limit.

The visit is different this time. The Chairman of DIPD, Henrik Bach Mortensen, is part of the delegation. He has been chair since DIPD was established, and he has met with the Nepali representatives on their visits to Denmark, including the visit mentioned in scene four.

During the weeklong mission, we have the opportunity to meet with several party leaders in Kathmandu; we visit the areas of the city most devastated by the 2014 earthquake; we participate in the official launch of the Coalition Building reader; we meet with people working at the Danish embassy.

But the seminar-like meetings in Pokhara are the most important part of the mission. This is where we actively engage in the DIPD-approach of *ideas that can inspire*. The DIPD Chairman talks about the importance of leadership in politics, and many questions are raised. We also talk about women in politics, with many questions and comments being tabled.

When I listen to the discussions and compare them to those we had when we started back in early 2012, there is no doubt that things *have* changed for the better! More women participate in the discussions; more of the younger members dare take the floor and hold the old leaders to account; more ordinary members are no longer 'afraid' of the leaders at the top of the party hierarchy.

It is not easy to provide the hard evidence for such a conclusion, and it could be even more difficult to prove that this positive change is the result of DIPDs support in particular. There are many other influences and ideas at play in the global marketplace than what DIPD can offer.

"But we do appreciate the DIPD approach immensely, we trust you, and we feel respected," the JOMPOPS Chair states in his closing remarks.

SCENE SEVEN

A conference hall in a hotel in Kathmandu in September 2016, five years after my first meeting with the JOMPOPS parties. Several of the top political leaders are present despite their busy schedules, and many mid-level leaders are in the audience.

There are also delegations from Bhutan, Myanmar and Denmark. From Bhutan, we have several MPs and the first female minister in the history of the country. She has been supportive of DIPDs work all along. From Myanmar, we have key representatives of the major political parties, including MPs.

From Denmark, we have invited a former minister for gender equality and a former MP.

The occasion is the second regional conference about *Women in Politics,* as part of a regional project that has been added to the existing DIPD-supported programmes. While benefitting from the Danish ideas, the three programmes also saw advantages in sharing lessons from the region. The political histories of the three countries are dramatically different in many respects, but they belong to the same region and feel a responsibility to learn from and support each other.

Leaders express their commitment to push harder for equal representation of women in their parties; violence against women is highlighted as an issue that political leaders have to address, in the way the JOMPOPS members have tried to do with some encouraging results in recent years.

Women speak out with great confidence and conviction in the question and answer sessions. Things have changed. Today they do not allow themselves to be intimidated by male leaders.

Manu Sareen from Denmark, the former male minister for gender equality, and Lone Loklindt, the former female MP, share their personal experiences. What has Denmark achieved so far? Why have we been able to do this without quotas? Why have we not been able to reach a 50-50 representation?

SCENE EIGHT

This is my last mission to Nepal as Director of DIPD. In my concluding remarks, I focus on our approach:

We know from half a century of global development that development never takes a linear course. It will move fast or slow in different phases, and it will for sure experience setbacks.

We also know – and Denmark is a good example – that after 100 years there will still be targets we have not been able to achieve. There is never a definite end.

More than 20 years ago, I worked in Zimbabwe. What has stuck in my mind is the words of an old woman, who had never attended school. Standing in the middle of the crowd, with thick leathery wrinkles all over her face, she said:

"You Danes know a lot. I also know a lot. I know what change is about, and I want change. I also want to be the one deciding what the change process should look like."

Every country is unique, and the world needs the diversity represented through the many unique models and experiences. However, it is also true that one of the major challenges in the 21st century is how to manage diversity. This we can only do if we follow internationally agreed principles and values.

Among these values are the human rights, and we have heard in the past two days that women's rights are human rights.

Some may ask if signing yet another declaration or commitment will make a difference. In this case, I am not at all in doubt that it can make a difference. DIPD has seen the commitment and hard work from our partners in Nepal, Bhutan and Myanmar. We have seen dedicated Ministers and MPs and party officials coming together.

We feel privileged to have been part of this journey.

We also learn from this! We also bring home ideas that can inspire when we return to Denmark!

All of this is the true nature of a genuine partnership, and we need to protect this in the years to come.

The transformation from the end of 2011 to the end of 2016 is remarkable. To begin with there was an expectation that DIPD would guide and lead. Today the six parties have taken *ownership*, and they have added a strong dose of *leadership*.

Over the years, I have visited Nepal twelve times, so the few scenes presented here are only a part of what I have seen grow in this partnership. More important for the future impact and sustainability, however, are the hundreds of scenes that the six parties themselves have composed, not only in the capital of Kathmandu, but in towns and villages in valleys and on mountain sides of this country, situated at the feet of the Himalayas.

JOMPOPS has increasingly been seen as a collective effort, with the responsibility of chairing the Steering Committee on a rotational basis every six months as the key instrument. Still, individuals are important, and we have been fortunate in having smart, dedicated, hardworking and highly placed women and men on board from the start.

Another key individual is Shrishti Rana, our Representative in Nepal. A tiny young woman, who has a lot of experience from working with the parties. She has had the ability to maneuver the project through ups and downs; to adapt activities flexibly to changing political agendas in a strategic manner; and to never allow the member parties to forget that this would only work if they owned it, led it, and worked hard for it.

At the end of the day, it is all about trust.

They trusted us to deliver some of the ideas they could see that they needed.

We trusted them to find out how they could use these ideas in a very different environment.

So far so good!

WOMEN OF THE HIMALAYAS

Our guidelines specify that we need to define objectives as clearly as possible, and we should describe the route we want to take to achieve the desired changes. However, we should also accept that we will continue to be surprised and perplexed about the way things suddenly change. Without being flexible, we would never have seen the Bhutan Network for Empowering Women grow from being a dream in the sky to a dream come though.

The article is based on notes and reports from my missions to Bhutan, as well as from the study tours by several delegations from Bhutan to Denmark.

The photo shows some of the 400 women gathering in the town of Mongar, in the far eastern part of Bhutan. They have come to participate in the 2014 national assembly of Bhutan Network for Empowering Women, BNEW.

FIRST MEETING IN PARO IN 2012

It was difficult not to become emotional. For every story the women told with pride and a shy smile, the tears started to roll down softly.

"I first walked for three days to get to the bus stop, and then I spent two days by bus to reach the conference," a young woman told us in a short break between the dancing they had started after the dinner.

"My father did not think I should run for office in the local elections. This was not what a woman should do. I decided to do it anyway," another woman said, adding that she had never been to a meeting like this.

"At home it can be difficult for us to speak what we think, but when we are together like this, it is much easier. We all get stronger together," an older woman stated.

It was evening in Paro, the only major airport in Bhutan, and the entry point for most tourists coming to visit one of the few Shangri La's left in the world. A nation known for inventing the concept of 'gross national happiness', and recognized for having an enlightened King, who handed democracy (back) to the people in 2008, after careful planning for several years. Not an easy thing to do in a country, where a large part of the population – if not the majority – actually think and feel that they could do better without all of this democracy.

Even today, a large part of the population of 750.000 people, living in very small villages scattered on mountain tops and slopes and along rivers in the bottom of steep valleys, would argue that democracy will never be able to deliver what the King was able to. Democratic politics with political parties competing for power would only create divisions and possibly conflicts, even within families.

Time will show. However, while the answer to the large democracy question is blowing in the wind, many women of the Himalayas are not sitting quietly in their villages, waiting for things to happen. They are raising their voices and empowering each other. They are trying to touch the glass ceiling.

The women we had talked to had arrived yesterday, on buses from all corners of the country. They came to participate in the first national gathering of women, who intended to compete for local level office in the upcoming elections in 2016.

During the first day, they had listened to speakers from Denmark and various government agencies. They had conducted workshops on the barriers they face when running for office; they had also shared the ways they had devised to cope with adversity, be it in the family or in the village.

These were inexperienced women, but I had never met a group of people more determined and dedicated. Just think

about it: To travel for five days to reach the conference, then participate in the conference for two days, and then again travel for five days to get home.

Can there be a better indicator for the need and relevance to invest in such an activity?

OFFICIAL COOPERATION

Bhutan is among the most exotic and smallest countries Denmark has had official development cooperation with since it all started in the early 1960s. At the same time, Bhutan is a country that can document effective and sustainable use of the financial and human resources made available from Denmark. I would even argue that it is the most successful partnership we have been able to establish over the decades.

Why was this possible? You could argue that they knew their own 'theory of change' better than the donors, and this defined the way they wanted to do business. Open, friendly, competent and genuinely cooperative, but never in doubt about the direction they wanted to travel with the donors, at what speed they wanted to travel, and who should be in the driver's seat.

At the time of setting up DIPD, Bhutan and Denmark were discussing the phase-out of official development cooperation. This came a few years after the country had moved into full-scale parliamentary democracy, with political parties competing for power in the elections in 2008.

While Denmark had not supported the political parties so far, governance had featured prominently in the cooperation, in addition to health, water, education, and much more. Support for local level municipal elections and the participation of women had been an important focus area. There had also been support to the parliament, both in the form of hardware and software.

Fortunately, the official minutes from the phase-out discussions mentioned that Bhutan would welcome support from DIPD in the area of democracy.

This was a necessary precondition for getting started. We therefore went on a scoping mission for the areas, where we could meaningfully make a contribution and a difference. We met with government ministries, the Election Commission, agencies working with women, other bilateral donors, the UN system, and individuals who played a role in Bhutanese society.

The conclusion was clear: While there was great need for support to the newly established political parties, there were many sensitivities involved, and it was therefore still too early to engage with the parties. One important barrier was actually

the Constitution, which had language that indicated that it could be outright impossible or illegal to support the political parties, even if this support was what we define as *capacity development* and therefore not support to parties to win elections.

To engage with women at the local level would be less controversial. According to the Constitution, political parties are not allowed to enter the arena of local elections. Only individuals can stand as candidates.

A contribution to the struggle of women to be accepted on an equal footing with men running for office at the local level could also be seen as building on the achievements of official Danish cooperation over several decades. This type of *synergy* is mentioned in the law that gave birth to DIPD in 2010, and we have consistently looked out for opportunities to deliver on this.

A DIFFERENT VISION

How to provide support for the women in practice was a different and much more complicated question. Bhutan is a small country with a high level of cohesion, based on a strong faith in Buddhism, and with a tradition of enlightened and benevolent control from the top. Critical voices and calls for effective accountability by independent civil society organizations was a new and rather confusing phenomenon.

My vision was slightly different. From my talks with a number of individuals, many of whom were also close to the circles of influence, I got the sense that DIPD should use its unique position of being Danish and thereby trusted to do things a bit differently. We should of course play by the rules, but we should also challenge some of the traditional ways of doing things, as a contribution to the development of a new 'democratic culture'.

We should not only support the local level women to run for office through the government department and the commission for women and children charged with this task. These agencies had already worked for many years with support for the participation of women.

It would be interesting to see what a more independent platform could achieve.

I had no clear idea of what this 'something' would look like, nor did I have a clear business plan for taking it forward. I knew if could not be done from Copenhagen! Only a person with intimate knowledge of what had been done in the past, a person who was trusted and respected by the various stakeholders, and a person who was willing to travel to all corners of the country would be able to lead the journey.

Having met Phuntshok Chodden and heard about her track record working as a consultant, with gender as a key area of expertise, I was convinced she was the right person. My gut feeling was that it could work with her at the helm. Phuntshok knew the country, she knew what had been done in the past, she knew what others were doing, she knew the women, high as well as low, and she was ready to lead.

Still, she was hesitant to start with. At the end, after having shared our ideas, we agreed that it deserved a chance!

THE BIRTH OF BNEW

Now I was there, in February 2012, in the city of Paro, together with Elisabeth Møller Jensen, a strong and dedicated Danish woman, and a visionary leader. She was then the Director of the Danish women's organization KVINFO, the national focal point for women and gender in general. I thought it would be good for DIPD and for Phuntshok to benefit from the experiences of an organization that knew every detail of how gender equality had developed over time in our own country.

Elisabeth brought with her the Danish experiences of women's participation in politics, which was an important aspect of the first ever conference for women wanting to run for local office in Bhutan. Elisabeth was uniquely equipped to cover this. Not to 'promote' the Danish way, but to share Danish experiences for inspiration.

The more than 100 women from all over Bhutan worked non-stop for two days, and I do not remember having been in a conference with participants so hungry for information, so eager to share with their sisters, so grateful for being allowed to contribute to the new democratic culture Bhutan was developing.

For most of the women this was a 'first' in many ways: first time in Paro, first time in a conference, first time to speak in public, first time to ask a Dane a question.

When they assembled for the last time in the evening of day two, they unanimously agreed to continue to work within the framework of what was called *Bhutan Network for Empowering Women*, or BNEW as we normally call it.

The women committed to bring in their time and energy, and DIPD committed to bring in some money and ideas. The department responsible for local level affairs also committed to offer support in different ways. The National Commission for Women and Children did as well.

Next morning, the women scrambled to get on the busses, the first part of what for many would be a five-day arduous trip by wheels and feet.

However, there was no indication whatsoever of this in their faces or bodies. They were smiling and chatting, clearly genuinely excited about having been part of a truly historic moment. They had been party of the first ever national gathering of women seeking public office at the local level.

"They will probably not believe it, when I tell family, friends and neighbors about this," one of the women we spoke to the night before exclaimed, with sparks in her eyes. "But the photos on my phone will show them! Can I have one with you?"

On that morning in Paro, Phuntshok and I had no idea where this would all go. Would more women be interested in joining? Would we be able to meet the demands in case many wanted to participate? Would training and empowerment be enough to get women elected? Would old ways of thinking about roles of men and women in society persist despite all the efforts of BNEW and the women?

I thought about all of this, but I also have to admit that I have never felt more gratified than right there, among the women of the Himalayas. Ever since, whenever we have met, we have also taken time to shoot photos. Every time I have felt a gratitude purer and more genuine than anything I have been exposed to anywhere else – except maybe in my old battlegrounds on the African continent.

FROM PARO TO MONGAR

While there was not a clear business plan from the start, there was a lot of strategic thinking and hard work invested by Phuntshok and the small group of women elected in Paro to form a National Council for BNEW. They took the newborn child forward in a very practical manner, focusing on what the women 'out there' needed to be strong enough to compete with their fellow male competitors.

Two years later, I met the 100 women from Paro again at the national conference in Mongar in the western part of the country. I also met another 300 women, bringing the total number of participants to 400. An incredible achievement in such a short span of time.

When the women met in Paro, the plans for the future were unclear. Meeting now in Mongar, they could reflect on what had taken place on the ground. They had been to workshops where they discussed the rules and regulations of serving as an elected official; learned how to speak in public; practiced to pass a test in reading and writing as a basic requirement; discussing the needs of the people in the villages.

It was obvious that a change had taken place. The increased self-confidence was vibrating in the meeting hall, when women would take the floor and ask questions or respond to questions. Some were still a bit shy in the presence of senior officials, but it was not nearly as pronounced as back in 2012.

For BNEW as an organization, it was a sign of recognition that the Governor of the province had accepted to do the official opening; the relevant departments and commissions had participated in the planning and were present with their officials; the minister responsible for women's issues had her message to the women read out when the conference opened.

It was clear that the dream of being able to shape their own destiny was no longer just a dream in the sky. The dream had come through, although the ultimate success would be reflected in the numbers and percentages of women elected to the local councils in 2016 compared to the numbers for 2011.

TOUCHING BUT NOT BREAKING

In October 2016, the results of the local elections finally came ticking in on emails from Bhutan. Voting had taken place in 205 rural councils at the end of September, as well as in some larger urban councils. Votes cast on the day as well as the postal votes had been counted.

Thirty percent more women than in 2011 had applied to take the test that would allow them to be approved as candidates by the Election Commission, if they passed the test. Thirty percent more women ended up running for office, which was a huge leap forward.

BNEW had campaigned on a somewhat simple but very ambitious set of numbers:

Women were 7 percent of all locally elected officials in 2011. This should increase to 20 percent in 2016.

Out of 205 mayors elected in 2011, only 1 (one) was a woman. This should increase to 41.

When you set the targets high, the risk of being disappointed is also very high. I could feel the sense of disappointment in the messages piling up in my inbox from Phuntshok, who was busy getting in touch with all the villages where BNEW had supported candidates.

Results pointed to less than a doubling of elected women, from 7 percent in 2011 to around 12 percent now.

The result was way below the 20 percent BNEW had set for its campaign. Still, I would consider the final results as well as the entire campaign a great success and a victory for a small

organization, which has managed to utilize the limited funds made available from DIPD exceptionally well.

Most of the money has been used to bring the women together, to offer them some basic tools needed to be involved in politics, to allow them to share among themselves and through this gain confidence.

Today they have the confidence to stand.

Today they know how to run a campaign.

Today they can compete on equal terms.

Today they have reached for the ceiling.

Today they know what it feels like to touch it.

The journey is far from over. It has taken Denmark 100 years to reach around 33 percent representation for women at the local level. It will not take 100 years for women in Bhutan to reach that target.

BNEW still needs a lot of support and care, but there is no doubt that it has been able to contribute to the democratic change Bhutan is experiencing, after the King told his people that they themselves were now in charge.

The next major challenge will be the elections for the National Assembly in 2018. The 2013 election saw an unfortunate downward trend in the number of elected women. This needs to be reversed.

Once again, BNEW will have to punch above its weight!

A LIBERAL WITH HAMMER AND SICKLE

On the outskirts of Kathmandu, former minister for development from the Liberal Party, Ulla Tørnæs, speaks to a group of communists, standing amidst red flags with hammer and sickle. I never thought I would be a witness to anything like this. The minister had joined me on a mission to talk about women in politics. Her presence made it possible to attract political leaders from six parties, and it helped to get leadership buy-in to the agenda.

The article is based on notes from my mission with Ulla Tørnæs to Nepal in April 2013, when the JOMPOPS parties launched their work on women in politics.

The photo shows Member of Parliament and former minister for development in Denmark, Ulla Tørnæs, speaking to members of the Communist Party on the outskirts of Kathmandu in April 2013.

TOP POLITICIAN AND MOTHER

"I am 50 years old, a member of the Liberal Party in Denmark, and I have won all of the six parliamentary elections I have participated in. I am also the proud mother of three daughters, and all three have been born while I have been active in politics. So yes, you can!"

This was the encouraging message from Ulla Tørnæs, Member of Parliament and former minister, to the large gathering of party members, members of parliament, former and present leaders, assembled in the large conference hall in downtown Kathmandu.

"My male colleagues are never asked how it is to be both a top politician and a father! So yes, there are both obstacles and challenges. But earlier generations have prepared the road for me and other women, and we have a responsibility to use this opportunity."

Her words fell on fertile ground. A majority in the audience was women from six of the major political parties in Nepal. Some of them held high level positions in their respective parties, others were active members.

Although most of them had probably had to struggle with more obstacles and stronger resistance than Ulla, it was comforting and empowering for the women to hear her story. The facts about women in politics are known. It is not a new issue, but it needs to be repeated.

What can move things is sometimes the personal sharing of experiences about how women can participate and make a difference, and this is one reason Ulla has travelled to Kathmandu.

ONLY IN DENMARK?

Most questions from the audience were about the Danish way of involving women. This had started before a new constitution gave women the right to vote in 1915, but participation had been propelled by the social and economic changes after World War II. Women were in demand in the labor market; the state financed schools and kindergartens; more women had the time to join politics.

It was not as simple as that of course. Nevertheless, in the Danish 'model', the state played an important role, as did organized labor and political parties, supported by agitation from women's organizations.

"I have never felt that my gender was an obstacle," Ulla explained. "Today, and when I grew up, women enjoyed equality in the Danish democracy."

The women in the audience understood all of this. They had greater difficulty understanding the choice Ulla had made recently. She had decided to step down from parliament and run for mayor in her home town.

"You have been a MP and a minister. Will the position of mayor in a municipality not be seen as a move towards less influence?" a man in the audience asked.

"Some will see it like that," Ulla responded. "But you have to remember that municipalities play a key role in the way we manage public resources in Denmark. Municipal councils manage more than half of all spending on our welfare system. In addition, if I win, it would mean that I would be closer to my family."

"I am sure this can only happen in Denmark," one of the local politicians commented privately to me. "Your level of informality is extraordinary, and you don't seem to be controlled by hierarchical structure, rules and regulations to the extent that we are in Nepal. Good for you! Maybe someday we will learn enough to practice some of it!"

Danes may not always think that this is the full truth. There is a tendency for our guests to be more positive about Danish politics and way of life in general, than we ourselves seem to be. However, seen from their perspective, where politics traditionally is male-dominated and top-down, and policies are dictated rather than debated, it is easy to understand their enthusiasm.

This is what it is all about: sharing and learning, and at some point our Nepali partners will decide what they can use, making sure that it will fit with the traditions that they are as fond of as we are of ours.

"WE CAN LEARN FROM OTHERS"

A few days later, the fancy hotel was replaced with the basic facilities of a local branch of the powerful Communist Party of Nepal. Ulla had been invited by Asta, one of the highest placed woman in the party, an important member of the platform working with DIPD, and a formidable and respected personality in her own right.

"Ulla belongs to the Liberal Party, and she will disagree with you on many issues," I had informed Asta, when she raised the possibility of Ulla coming to speak.

"Good!" Asta responded with a big smile. "Then I will learn something new."

It struck me how great and genuine the thirst for learning was. I was also reminded how smart the people we work with are.

They are well aware of the limitations of trying to *copy or imitate* ways of doing politics in Denmark. They know that this is about *adaptation* of ideas.

"As a party, we believe in multi-party democracy, we know what we want, we know what we are fighting for, and we know where we are coming from. But we can learn from others, and we are happy to learn from our friends from Denmark in particular," she said in her welcome to Ulla and the crowd.

The hammer and sickle on the red flags made it evident who the organizers were. Party officials sat next to the podium. Members sat in front of the speaker. All participants were enjoying the festive atmosphere.

A liberal Danish politician surrounded by numerous hammers and sickles is not an everyday sight in Denmark. A liberal politician receiving deafening applause from a communist audience after her presentation may never have happened before.

Of course, the issue of 'women in politics' is in a sense neutral territory. Whether liberal or communist, most people can agree that things have to change in favor of women. You can disagree on how to do it.

Measured against every possible indicator, this was a very successful mission. The presence of the former minister had undoubtedly secured the participation of senior Nepali leaders. The conference had made a mark. Asta and Ulla were happy.

There have been many similar missions to Nepal and other countries. Danish politicians have engaged with partners in a multiparty fashion. Not because this is a fashionable way of marketing DIPD, but because it contributes to a trusted dialogue.

MINGLING WITH A PRIME MINISTER

Following parliamentary elections in Denmark in 2011, the 'red' parties held a majority. Three of them negotiated to form a minority government. The Social Democrats was the largest party, and its leader Helle Thorning-Schmidt became Prime Minister, the first Danish woman in this position. In Bhutan, this inspired the production of a documentary called "Yes, Madam Prime Minister", about how women in Denmark could shatter the glass ceiling. Why not also in Bhutan?

The article is based on notes and stories written for the DIPD website in June 2014, when the Bhutanese partners visited Denmark.

The photo shows the Danish Prime Minister, Helle Thorning-Schmidt, surrounded by members of the delegation from Bhutan, when they participated in Constitution Day celebrations on June 5, 2014.

MIXING WITH FRIENDS AND FOES

"Where is she?" my Bhutanese friends kept asking, unable to hide the great expectation of maybe meeting the first female Prime Minister in Denmark. Kirsten Jensen, a former mayor and a Social Democrat, had promised to be helpful in making it possible.

"Don't worry, she will be here," I answered repeatedly. "Maybe she is already here, somewhere."

"She couldn't be," one of the Bhutanese stated with conviction, looking around nervously.

"Why do you say that?" I asked.

"Because there would be loads of cars and officials and policemen and secret service people around, if she had already arrived," he said.

"Maybe not," I said. At that moment, Kirsten came by and informed me that the Prime Minister would be happy to meet with the Bhutanese delegation, when she had delivered her Constitution Day speech.

"She is already here," Kirsten added and pointed to a group of people at one of the other tables, where the Prime Minister was in friendly conversation with the leader of the opposition Conservative Party.

Then it was time for the photo session that would document that in the Kingdom of Denmark, like in the Kingdom of Bhutan, it is still possible for leading politicians to mix easily and safely with friends and foes.

WHAT OUR GUESTS SEE

Moments like these can be defining. They leave you with a symbol of how you see a society, a system, an institution. It may not be a true reflection of what is actually taking place in front of you, not exactly what your eyes register. Still, this will be at the front of your mind when you talk about it with others.

The intimate and informal nature of how we do politics in Denmark. The friendly and almost comrade-like relationship between political adversaries. The level of trust allowing politicians to mingle with the people they serve.

I have seen other defining moments over the years, when partners from around the world have visited.

A government minister meeting with a parliamentary committee, responding to questions from the opposition, while her husband is sitting behind her with their newborn child, ready to let the child come to her mother.

Political leaders enjoying a beer with friends and competitors at the annual People's Meeting, without talking much about politics at all.

Representatives of all political parties participating in the elections, sitting around a table in the community hall in the evening after the polling station has closed, counting the paper votes cast.

Having talked to many participants on study tours in Denmark over the years, I have heard the following words used to characterize our democratic culture:

Honest.
Inclusive.
Informal.
Intimate.
Transparent.
Trusted.
Truthful.

In DIPD, we have consistently taken the approach that it is our duty – if our slogan of *'ideas that can inspire'* is to be a practical way of changing things – to add what you could call 'a critical mass' of information to what our guests have seen. In a sense, we are doing exactly what we do when we engage with a partner in a developing country. We try to understand more than what we see.

So yes, Danish politics is about all the characteristics our guests have highlighted. However, some may be changing; others may have weakened in recent years; some could be an ideal rather than a reality; others again need new answers or approaches.

PROTECTING DEMOCRATIC VALUES

This afternoon, the sun is shining on the small town of Jørlunde outside Copenhagen, the air is spiced up with the smells of food, the Prime Minister smiled when she reaffirmed her own commitment and that of all political parties in Denmark to protect the values of democracy enshrined in the Constitution from 1915.

Allowing people to elect their leaders freely and fairly, and on a regular basis.

Ensuring the necessary exchange of information, before decisions are taken.

Trying to be as inclusive as possible, in particular when far-reaching legislation is decided.

Especially on this day, it was important that the PM did not forget the snakes in the garden of paradise. In confirming the basic values, you also need to confirm your will to change and improve the system. The threats to our democratic culture are many, and not very different from those seen in other countries.

Parties are losing members.

Politicians are losing trust.

Young people stay away from elections.

Debates tend to polarize.

Politics is perceived as being 'dirty'.

After the Prime Minister, the opposition leader from the Conservative Party spoke; followed by the leader of the Socialist People's Party, also a member of the coalition government. Both of them sent the same basic messages to the large and cheerful audience as the PM had.

Of course, they also mentioned issues of the day that divided them, in some cases at the level of principle, and in other cases just at the level of detail. This was something we had to explain to our guests later.

How to manage climate change?

What to do with refugees knocking on our door?

Our contribution to the war on terrorism?

On Constitution Day, the tradition is to talk about party differences in a light tone. Teasing your political opponent with a smile is allowed; using derogatory and polarizing language is not acceptable on this special day.

DO WE DELIVER AT HOME?

After her speech, the PM took time to greet the delegates from Bhutan, and she gave them an opportunity to take photos. During the next 24 hours, pictures with a smiling Prime Minister meeting smiling Bhutanese politicians in the small town of Jørlunde would circulate on social media and find their way to hundreds of global destinations.

More messages would be sent into cyberspace, when our guests in the following days visited local chapters of the political parties, to meet with regular members of the parties, and to find out what exactly it means to be an active member, trying to making a difference both locally and nationally.

This is an important part of what our 'democratic culture' is supposed to be all about - ordinary members having direct influence on the policies and decisions of the party. This is what we preach, when we travel to faraway places around the world as supporters of democratic political parties.

Is this also what we can deliver at home?

Some would say, yes, to some degree!

Others would argue, no, not to the degree we pride ourselves of being able to!

A TRADITIONAL DANISH LUNCH

This seems to be one possible conclusion from the conversation taking place a few days later in the lovely home of Per, a devoted Social Democrat for years, living in a small city north of Copenhagen, and with experience from international work in his profession as a teacher.

Per and his wife have kindly invited some of the Bhutanese for a traditional Danish lunch.

"In the seminar last week, we were told that all the Danish parties in total have fewer members than the largest Danish non-governmental organization working with environmental issues. Why are people not eager to be a party member?" one of the Bhutanese asks.

"It is admittedly difficult to attract new members," Per explains, offering his own straightforward and honest perspective. "My party, like other parties, has lost members year by year for decades. Party membership is not seen as a 'must' today, like it was the case when I was young. Young people in particular seem to be more attracted to join movements with one key message. Joining a party with many issues on the agenda is probably more complicated. It can be difficult for a party to make all of the members happy all the time!"

"Do you feel that a member like yourself has any influence at all on the decisions of your party?" another Bhutanese asks.

"Yes, I do," Per answers right away and with conviction. "But you need to know the rules of the game, and you need to work hard. In a party like the Social Democrats, and I think it is also true for most other parties, there are often many different views about an issue. You need to listen to other views, make up your mind, argue for your views, and finally make compromises. In politics, you rarely get it all. All involved need to get something."

Right there and then the discussion stopped, and the guests from Bhutan focused all their attention on the garden. From the lunch table in the kitchen area, we could see the well-kept lawn and the colorful flowers. A robot grasscutter had suddenly appeared out of nowhere and started to move back and forth right in front of us.

"Well, this is the only domestic help we have in our house," Per joked.

"Then you can use the time you have saved working for the party," one of the guests added and laughed.

A study tour is an expensive investment. It is also a methodology that can be easily criticized when you use the per person cost as an indicator. To ensure that the time and money invested is productive, you need to prepare it well, and you need to know how you will use the knowledge offered during the study tour.

Experts and academics are important during the introductory seminars, where the Danish experiences are presented.

Active politicians elected for parliament or municipal councils are needed to tell the story about how rules and regulations work in practice.

Party members hosting the participants at the local level offer yet another reality-check, which allows for dialogue in a very informal manner.

Reflecting on what ideas could be most useful in their own context is necessary, before they return and get absorbed in daily routines.

Mingling with a Prime Minister is not necessary, but it certainly adds value. On an occasion like this it also becomes a symbol of how Danish politics works.

HOW TO SUPPORT 'THE LADY'?

While the Arab Spring was unfolding in early 2011, attracting enthusiastic support from all corners of the world, an equally exciting transformation was taking place in Myanmar, also with huge support. Ruled for half a century by a crude, cruel and calculating military dictatorship, the country suddenly seemed to be on the road towards reforms that could ultimately result in a true democracy. Maybe the generals had understood that the spirit of the Arab Spring could also show up at their doorstep.

The article is based on reports written for the Board of DIPD as well as my personal notes from a mission to Myanmar in November 2014.

The photo shows representatives from different political parties, sitting below a series of DIPD posters in the meeting room of the Resource Centre run by DIPD in Yangon. The Centre was officially opened by the DIPD Chairman Henrik Bach Mortensen on this day in November 2014.

MEETING NAYPYIDAW

I had heard about Naypyidaw. I had seen a few pictures. I had speculated how this new political capital would compare with Dodoma in Tanzania or Brasilia in Brazil, two other examples of political capitals built from scratch.

Whatever I had stored in my brain did not prepare me for what I saw with my own eyes. Something more appropriate for an outer-space reality than a poor developing country, with buildings constructed for larger than life-size creatures, and six-lane roads better suited as runways for aircraft than for cars.

Unlike many of the international guests, who had been lucky to meet Aung San Suu Kyi, when she was in house arrest by the lake in Yangon, we had been asked to meet her in Naypyidaw, in the Parliament enclave. This was where she was now residing as the Chair of an important parliamentary committee, following her release from house arrest in 2010 and her election as Member of Parliament in the 2012 by-elections.

We were now nearing the end of 2014. The next big step in the gradual inch-by-inch journey towards a full-fledged democracy would be the parliamentary elections at the end of 2015. Like the rest of the world, we were curious to get the personal take of 'the Lady' on how the next scene of the play would unfold.

How did she see her own role?

How would she cooperate with the military?

How could we best support her country?

A BRIEF POLITICAL OVERVIEW

This was my first visit to Myanmar. I had followed developments in the country for decades; I had read about the brutal behavior of the generals; I had followed the larger than life role of Aung San Suu Kyi and her family; I had supported the sanctions towards the regime by the international community.

The purpose of this article is not to analyze the details of developments, but to present the background for DIPD's engagement. A few dots on the historical timeline marking key milestones might be helpful as a background.

Aung San Suu Kyi's father, Aung San, is considered to be the founder of Burma's army. He was assassinated in 1947 by a political rival, when Suu is only a few years old. One year later, Burma gains independence from its colonizer, Britain.

General Ne Win seizes power in a bloodless coup d'état in 1962. International organizations and private companies are expelled. During the years before and after, Aung San Suu Kyi travels and lives abroad.

Student protests flare up against the military regime in 1988, but the military cracks down on the uprising with the usual brutality, killing more than 3.000 people. Aung San Suu Kyi returns to the country and emerges as the leader of the democracy movement. Her party is founded as the *National League for Democracy* (NLD). Millions of people join. The following year the party leaders are jailed and Suu is put under house arrest.

In 1990, Suu is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, but she is not allowed to travel to Oslo to receive it. However, because of the prestigious nature of the Prize, the decision of the military puts the regime under more pressure from the international community.

The generals release her from house arrest in 1995, but they continue to limit her freedom to travel. Her husband living in England with their children dies in 1999, and she is not allowed to participate in his funeral. In the following years, the generals seem to be unsure of how to 'manage' her – placing her under house arrest, freeing her from house arrest, allowing her to speak, targeting her in what seems to be a planned assassination attempt, and then returning her to house arrest.

Almost ten years after the last major uprising against the regime, a new fire flares up in 2007. This time, hundreds of thousands of monks take to the streets in what becomes known as the 'Saffron Revolution'. The spark igniting the people was cuts in fuel subsidies; but the cries in the streets were about democracy. Many monks are killed.

A year later, a cyclone hits the country, resulting in the death of more than 130.000 people, not least due to the indifference and ineptitude of the military. Only the capacity and willingness of local humanitarian organizations to reach out, and support from the international community, prevent even more people from dying.

The final and full release from house arrest of Aung San Suu Kyi in 2010 comes more than 60 years after the assassination of her father, almost 50 years after the coup d'état, and more than 20 years after she became the leader of the democracy movement and was placed under house arrest for the first time.

WHY DID THEY RELEASE HER?

Few of us are destined to hold the wheels of political power and be trusted by the people to steer our country towards new and better horizons. Aung San Suu Kyi is by all accounts one of those few; just like Nelson Mandela was in the case of South Africa.

Today, we know a lot about what made the leaders of the white minority apartheid-regime in South Africa abandon

restrictive and discriminatory legislation and brutal repression. International condemnation and sanctions played a role. Destabilization by insurgent military groups with camps in neighboring countries was part of the picture. The understanding of certain white leaders of the need to reform to survive might have been key.

We are still not equally well informed about what made the generals in Myanmar decide to initiate reforms, release the Lady and open up to the outside world. Most likely, just like in the case of South Africa, different forces have played a role.

Clearly, the generals felt that they were in command, when they started the reform process. Personally and institutionally, the military controlled the economy. Politically, the constitution would guarantee a large presence of generals in civilian clothing in parliament, and certain sections of the constitution about marriage and citizenship of your children would make it impossible for Aung San Suu Kyi to attain the position of President.

After decades of relative isolation from the international community, and with very little success in making the economy grow and improve the livelihoods of poor people, at least some parts of the military establishment seemed to feel that the country needed to reconnect with the international community. They probably also recognized that major foreign investments would not pour in before the release of the Lady was a reality.

The generals therefore devised a closely controlled step-by-step reform process.

Another aspect probably also played a role. Despite the military power of the regime, it had not been able to end the numerous military conflicts involving insurgent ethnic groups along the borders with China, Laos and Thailand. Some of these conflicts had been very violent until recently, while others had been simmering for several decades. Even the generals recognized that a final solution was unlikely to be a reality until the country had again joined the international community of democracies.

Finally, despite the decision to open up, it was early on reasonably clear that there were divisions among the military leaders. Some were ready to play hardball with Aung San Suu Kyi, pushing her hard if she was unwilling to compromise. Others understood that their own long-term wealth and influence depended on the role given to Suu in the future power structure of the country.

Of course, many of them understood that she would undoubtedly be the most popular and influential politician in the country very soon.

MEETING IN COPENHAGEN

Our first direct meeting with the reform process took place in 2012, when DIPD Chairman and Director were invited by the Speaker of the Danish Parliament to a meeting and a lunch, on the occasion of a visit by a delegation from the Parliament of Myanmar. The delegation was led by influential members of the Union Solidarity and Development Party, which is the party established by the military to rule from 2010. The delegation also included representatives from other political parties.

The mission to Denmark was one among many outreach missions initiated by the military, and it had at least two purposes. One was to convince the international community that the generals were genuine in their wish to return the country to democracy, and consequently to have the sanctions lifted; the other was to search for ideas that might be useful as inspiration for the future modalities of democracy in Myanmar.

When asked, members of the mission welcomed an initiative by DIPD to support multiparty dialogue and help political parties develop capacity to function effectively and democratically. They also made it clear that a presence in Myanmar would require close consultation and cooperation with the authorities, i.e. the military rulers.

You sometimes wonder if and how the approach of 'inspiration' actually works; if in fact it amounts to more than a shopping tour to Copenhagen?

History will have to judge, but in his book *The Lady and the Generals. Aung San Suu Kyi and Burma's Struggle for Freedom,* Peter Popham tells the fascinating story of the rise and fall of the former Speaker of Parliament's Lower House, Thura Shwe Mann. He was one of the top generals who was close to becoming president in 2011, but lost out to Thein Sein.

Shwe Mann led the delegation to Copenhagen, and it could very well be then that he learned about the coalition culture of Danish politics. In a question and answer session in his constituency before the November 2015 elections, he was asked what he would do for democracy and human rights? In his reply, he refers to what he has learned travelling, and Peter Popham in his book quotes Shwe Mann saying:

"In Denmark, the winning party invites the losing parties to join it in a coalition government. I learned some very good lessons from these countries. I will collaborate with any party and any person for our country's success. A good leader must work for the interests of the whole country."

Assuming that this was a genuine statement by a military hardliner turned civilian politician, it is actually pretty dramatic stuff. Shwe Mann is stating that multi-party politics is the name

of the game; that the strong parties must include those that have lost the election; that we are ready to work with Aung San Suu Kyi and her party.

Following this meeting with the new faces of Myanmar, we set out to prepare our contribution to the emerging contours of the new democracy, with a particular focus on the experience of multi-party dialogue, women and youth. This was done under the leadership of Hanne, our senior advisor, and it started operating in 2013. Since then it has grown in scope and depth and received support from the European Union as well.

MEETING THE OLD SYSTEM

Standing in one of the oversized roundabouts in the capital of Naypyidaw, the scenery looked more like a military dictatorship than an emerging democracy. The same was to some extent true of the meeting with the members of the Union Election Commission, which took place before our meeting with the Lady.

The UEC members sat on one side of the room, seven men and one woman, all men dressed in exactly the same type of dress. The DIPD delegation was on the other side, three men and three women, in formal but different types of dresses.

In a sense, this was an image of the monolithic military dictatorship Myanmar was now in the process of moving away from, towards the more diverse and colorful system of governance called 'democracy'. The very fact that we had been invited into this room, to listen to their understanding of the transition taking place, and allowing us the time to share our ideas and concerns, was a recognition of times changing.

The Chairman of the UEC presented a brief overview of the history leading up to present times. With independence in 1948; parliamentary democracy until 1962, when the military took power to keep the union united; from 1974 a constitution allowing only one party; a new constitution in 2008, new elections in 2010 leading to multi-party democracy, and now preparations for elections in 2015.

Yes, it is important with support for political parties, because most of them are new, and we welcome your ideas.

Yes, we have had one party democracy for 50 years, and we must learn to operate a multi-party democracy, where Denmark can offer a lot of experience.

Yes, the commission will ensure free and fair elections, and the parties have to comply with the law and put national interests before individual party interests.

Yes, we hope that many people will vote, and we expect people to vote with their heads, not their hearts.

Member of Parliament in Denmark, Eva Kjer Hansen, emphasized the importance of educating citizens to participate in the elections, and the importance of having access to information from free and independent media. Citizens must be involved in a democratic dialogue.

Former Minister for Development and EU Commissioner, Poul Nielson, highlighted the importance of accepting that parties are different, and that the political dialogue must accept and manage disagreement. Lack of trust is a challenge for the political system, and we need to stimulate more trust.

Much more was said during the civilized and tightly choreographed meeting. A useful introduction to the thinking of the military rulers before our meeting with Aung San Suu Kyi.

MEETING WITH AN ICON

Sitting across from the Lady in a meeting room inside the Parliament enclave in Naypyidaw in November 2014 was a deeply emotional experience, similar to what I had felt when I met Nelson Mandela back in 1997.

Here she was - the democracy icon of Myanmar. We had followed her life through the media for more than two decades. First when she came out as the leader of the movement. Then when an attempt on her life fortunately failed. Again, when she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize and not allowed to travel to Oslo to receive it. When her husband died and she was refused to be at his funeral in the UK together with their children. Finally, when she was released from house arrest a few years ago.

She looked tiny and fragile in physical terms, but she had a commanding presence, with eyes that communicated strength and decisiveness. She made it very clear that there was no time for diplomatic small talk, and cut straight to the core of the issues, after welcoming our delegation to her country.

We referred to the many reforms that had been implemented; she would question if progress had in fact taken place, and we should not be fooled by the military.

We mentioned that in our experience, an electoral system based on proportional representation would serve the country best; she would argue that people did not object to the 'first past the post' system, and there are many examples of proportional representation leading to conflict rather than reconciliation.

We explained that our expertise was in the area of multi-party democracy, and the importance of dialogue and inclusion of all parties; she would point to her own NLD party as the only party that could effectively challenge the military.

WILL SHE BE ABLE TO DELIVER?

When I look at the photo taken with Aung San Suu Kyi standing with the Danish delegation, there is no doubt that she is the woman at the center of politics in Myanmar. The generals may succeed in denying her the presidency, but she is the leader the generals have to deal with.

Did we meet a leader, who would be able to deliver social and economic progress to the people? Would she be able to put an end to decades of violent conflict with ethnic groups in the border areas? How would she deal with Buddhist communities clashing with Muslim communities? Did she have the capacity to embrace and include the many new parties?

Was the Lady able to translate her iconic position both at home and abroad into the nation building and nation healing 'Mother' of Myanmar that Nelson Mandela had been able to as the 'Father' of democratic South Africa?

Difficult to say, and unfair to conclude after a short meeting. However, during the meeting, it struck me that she at times seemed quicker to judge and decide, and less inclined to listen and learn than I had seen Nelson Mandela being able to.

Time will show if I am right.

She won a more overwhelming victory in the November 2015 election than even the most optimistic supporters had expected. This is an important asset in her effort to be in control.

She also seems to have navigated the dangerous seas of the generals cleverly and decisively in the aftermath of the election. There will probably be groups within the military that have seen the writing on the wall and are ready to be flexible and cooperative.

Travelling the world to meet key political leaders, including those in China and the US, is a strong signal both to the world and to her own country that the reform process has now reached a point of no return.

Many dangers lie ahead. How to make the economy benefit the poor? How to curtail the privileges of the military? How to avoid Buddhist extremism setting the agenda? How to protect the rights of the ethnic minorities? How to put an end to violent conflict?

The challenges are of majestic proportions. We owe it to the people of Myanmar and to the Lady to support the transition as best we can, and this is what DIPD is in the process of doing.

A LINE IN THE SAND?

I first visited Zimbabwe a few weeks after independence in 1980. I lived there with my family in the early 1990s. I often visited when I lived in Botswana a decade later. I was therefore open to suggestions on how to support multi-party dialogue in Zimbabwe. The Board approved a proposal, and the work started. After four years of difficult, turbulent and frustrating efforts, the project threatened to fall apart. Had we finally reached the invisible line in the sand?

The article is based on reports written for the Board of DIPD in the process of monitoring progress in Zimbabwe, as well as personal notes from my missions to Harare, together with my colleague Egbert Pos from NIMD.

The photo shows a woman buying tomatoes on the roadside in rural Zimbabwe. The economy is imploding because of the inability of the government to find solutions to the social and economic needs of the people.

A PERSONAL APPROACH

Minister Didymus Mutasa received us in his office in the ruling ZANU-PF party headquarter building in Harare, not in his ministerial office. Correctly so, because the matter to be discussed this morning was not about the policies of the three-party coalition government, but about the relationship among the three parties. They had been forced into a governing coalition by the international community, but they were not on friendly terms.

The year is 2012. DIPD had joined hands with the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) to support the local Zimbabwe Institute (ZI) to manage a multi-party dialogue project. Through this, we hoped the 2013 elections would be more peaceful than had been the case with the previous election in 2008.

We greeted each other, and I could see in Mutasa's eyes that he did not remember me. Understandably so! It had been almost twenty years since we met in the town of Nyanga in the mountainous and picturesque Eastern Highlands. We had been there to celebrate the ten-year anniversary of the Zuwa Weavers Co-Operative.

The Minister was an old-timer in the party. He had been part of the liberation struggle and served as the first Speaker of the first parliament elected after Independence on 17 April 1980 – a few weeks before I visited Zimbabwe for the first time. Later he held several ministerial posts. Now he was both a minister and the head of the ruling party's organization. By definition, he was therefore close to President Robert Mugabe.

After formal introductions, Minister Mutasa gave the visitors from Europe and their local partner a vivid, animated and frank lecture about his views of the role of Europe and 'white people' in the history of Zimbabwe. Not good! Had it not been for 'our' efforts to pursue a neo-colonial and subversive policy, his country would have a bright future.

We listened politely. We understood that the minister was not talking about us as individuals.

"I consider myself to be partly Zimbabwean," I started my response, deciding to take a personal approach. "I was part of the Danish solidarity community supporting the liberation struggle; I worked and lived here for several years, supporting the development of your country; my son was born in Harare, at Avenues Clinic."

"Very good," the minister said and nodded.

"The minister would not remember of course, but we actually worked together on some occasions in the past," I continued, hoping to break the ice.

"Really...?" he said and looked at me, a smile lurking in the corner of his eyes.

Then I told him about the celebration of the anniversary of the weavers' co-operative in Nyanga, as well as other examples of practical support offered by Danish development workers.

Of course, this did not change the basic political economy of Zimbabwe. The ruling party was fundamentally reluctant to accept the idea that multi-party dialogue was useful and necessary. It sees itself as the only legitimate party and the owner of the liberation that resulted from the independence struggle.

Having a personal relationship with a key political actor was not a precondition for our work. On the other hand, at times it can come in handy, when you have to deal with the many obstacles that are inherent parts of the journey towards dialogue.

THE VOLCANO IS ERUPTING

Parliamentary elections in 2013 resulted in a resounding victory for ZANU-PF. This was partly the result of the party being able to control the electoral system and process. Partly, it was the result of the opposition performing badly.

ZANU-PF formed a majority government. Once again, all the political power to run the country as he wished was now in the hands of Robert Mugabe and his party. The opposition was weak.

What ended up defining the next phase was not only the electoral victory, but also the vicious battle among those in the ruling party, who one day wanted to be the successor to Robert Mugabe.

The first eruption from the ZANU-PF volcano came before the December 2014 congress. After a campaign orchestrated by people close to Mugabe, Vice-President Joyce Mujuru was ousted from the party.

With her departure, several Mujuru supporters also had to leave voluntarily, or they would be asked to leave. Among them was our contact in the party, Minister Didymus Mutasa. He did not mince his words of criticism towards his old comrades when he left the party.

The situation made it clearer than ever how fragile this type of work can be in a context like that of Zimbabwe. How much you need to invest without any guarantee that anything will come of it. How true it is that in our line of business, our funding is 'risk-willing capital'.

Does that mean we should not engage in situations and contexts as difficult, sensitive, unpredictable, volatile and fragile as what Zimbabwe presents?

I have no clear answer!

I have often argued that we should be part of the toughest stages of the race in order to play a key role when things calm down.

I have also argued that this should be based on sound analysis and due diligence. Yes, we should take risks, but they should be calculated.

The problem is that we never have the full truth and all the nuances. This makes it difficult if not outright impossible to know exactly when you are in the process of crossing the (invisible) line in the sand.

PLANNING FOR A SEMINAR

During the course of 2015, cutthroat competition within ZANU-PF threatened to put an end to our efforts to support multi-party dialogue. In fact, something similar to what was taking place in the ruling party also took place in the opposition parties. The perverse logic of the day-to-day politics required full attention to internal and personal matters. The politics of the social and economic survival of the country was parked on the sidelines, just like the population.

At the meeting in March 2016, the DIPD Board approved a recommendation of postponing the approval of a new project document. More discussions were necessary among the three parties. More clarity on the real commitment from all the parties was required. This was necessary to ensure a strong foundation for ZI, NIMD and DIPD to engage in a very tricky and sensitive operation.

Preparations for the next mission to Harare started right after the board meeting. There was intense communication between ZI, NIMD and DIPD. There was a clear agreement that a meeting between the three Secretary Generals should take place as soon as possible, to lend legitimacy to the process. NIMD and DIPD agreed that a two-day seminar, outside the capital city, with staff from all three parties, was necessary for a solid long-term activity plan to be developed.

It is rare that things take place as planned in the present political environment of Zimbabwe; this has been our working condition for several years, so we were not naïve. Based on signs and commitments, the two-day seminar was planned to take place in Eastern Highlands. Good facilitators were hired. Before going to the mountains, the Secretary Generals would meet.

While I was flying into Harare from Johannesburg, people from the parties were set to meet in the office of the minister now responsible for party affairs in ZANU-PF. The Secretary Generals

of the two opposition parties and our friends from ZI waited for more than an hour. Finally, a representative of the minister informed the delegation that things had to be postponed!

I do not know what took place between the delegations arriving at the office and the message of postponement being communicated. My own guess is that the minister came under pressure from groupings in the party that are not inclined to entertain any idea of a genuine dialogue with the opposition.

GETTING READY FOR THE KILL

At the end of the day, it was not clear if *postponement* indeed was meant to signal what the word is supposed to mean, or just a polite way of stating that ZANU-PF is *no longer on board* to continue with multi-party dialogue.

Independent media and commentators argued that the preparations for positioning the ruling party to beat the opposition convincingly in the 2018 election had already started. The strategy would be implemented with ruthless force as seen in the past.

This was necessary with an economy in a deadly downward spiral. Events included limits on cash withdrawals and the Zimbabwean Central Bank's effort to introduce bonds, in order to deal with the currency shortage. All of this taking place only seven years after the Zimbabwean dollar was suspended after spiraling to a 500 billion percent inflation. The opposition could exploit the increasing dissatisfaction of ordinary Zimbabweans, and the ruling party would not allow this to happen.

Efforts to institutionalize or formalize some form of dialogue among the three parties were a necessary casualty of such a strategy. Why dialogue, when we get ready for the kill?

In a party deeply divided, there would also be those who favored the dialogue. In my February 2016 report to the Board, I had stated that the three leaders we worked with had confirmed their commitment to a continuation of the dialogue process. While the ZANU-PF representative might use different wording than those from the two opposition parties, I still believed that the personal position of the ruling party representative was positive.

However, it was impossible to say if there was an official position at all. This would after all require the direct approval of the President, and while ZI, NIMD and DIPD naturally felt that this particular issue should be at the top of the list of priorities, it was most likely not a top priority for the competing would-be leaders of the ruling party.

IS DIALOGUE POSSIBLE?

The question of a line in the sand remained elusive. Were we standing on the line now? Had we already stepped over it? Could we reposition?

In a partnership like this, there were many stakeholders. At the end of the day, we had to make our own decision, listening to the views of our partners, NIMD as well as ZI. The opposition parties also had a legitimate right to be heard.

Did they operate with their own line in the sand?

The Movement for Democratic Change under the leadership of Morgan Tsvangirai (MDC-T) remains the biggest opposition party. The party has undoubtedly lost some popularity after taking part in the unity government. It has also lost its unique place as the one uniting voice of the opposition, after several key leaders have broken out of the party and formed their own. These breakaways have not always happened because of substantive policy differences, but because of clashes between personalities, and disagreements about how to position the opposition towards the ruling party.

The much smaller breakaway MDC party is led by Welshman Ncube, a gifted intellectual and an astute analyst of the politics of the country. Unfortunately, the party has suffered from further fragmentation and resignations.

These are the two parties in addition to the ruling ZANU-PF that we have worked with since 2012. In addition, there are now parties not represented in parliament that could end up playing a role after the 2018 elections. This would most likely in particular be the case of the party founded by former Vice-President Joyce Mujuru.

Following the postponement decision, we met with representatives from the two parties and tried to understand how they assessed the situation.

They pointed to the succession politics in ZANU-PF as the major obstacle. This has resulted in power dynamics shifting on a daily basis, and with it, perceptions and suspicions have taken center stage. Because it is enmeshed in the succession conundrum, the power balance within the party has been shifting, and we have seen a constant change of hands in respect of the personnel dealing with the multi-party dialogue programme.

It was clearly their understanding that the various factions in the ruling party, competing to fill the power vacuum imminent after the departure of Mugabe, now viewed each other with suspicion.

Despite these challenges, they continued to believe that inter-party dialogue could be key to solving Zimbabwe's problems. Not out of naivety, but because they had seen it

happen in the past. It was inter-party dialogue that led to the Global Political Agreement, which again led to the establishment of the Government of National Unity in 2008.

Consequently, the opposition parties wanted to move forward. They probably also saw numerous lines in the sand, but they seemed to believe that certain things could still be done to prepare the way for dialogue.

WHY WOULD ZANU-PF PARTICIPATE?

Zimbabwe Institute has been the local implementer. ZI staff have had to deliver progress under extremely difficult conditions. Today, there is no other institution in Zimbabwe that can deliver what ZI is potentially able to deliver.

Did ZI operate with a line in the sand?

Maybe they did not know the exact position of the line, and if they did, they did not tell me. As I understood the analysis, their point of departure seemed clear, simple and logical.

ZANU-PF today has a two-thirds majority in parliament. Since 2013, the party has increased its representation in parliament to over 80%, due to opposition infighting and boycott of all by-elections. Because of the overwhelming political control, and the fragmentation of the opposition, the party is in a position to do whatever it feels like, and the politicians therefore currently behave with an attitude of both arrogance and complacency.

Within the current complex political narrative, it is extremely difficult to clearly understand the attitude and strategic position of ZANU-PF regarding dialogue. ZI would point to past experiences that indicate that:

The party has participated from time to time, and often it has been represented by high profile politicians. This was the case in 2015, when a delegation with representatives from all parties visited Ghana, to learn from a political system, where the two large parties have alternated to run the country. In the last two elections, the winner has received only a little more than 50 % of the votes cast.

Given the centralization of power in the party, none of the programmes would have taken place without the express knowledge and approval of the President. This indicates that there are some forces inside the party that believe in the need for a dialogue, not necessarily because they love it, but because it would benefit the country.

The ruling party has not at any point formally withdrawn from the dialogue. They have given excuses and frustrated the process. Formally, it has never withdrawn.

For ZI therefore, the challenge was how to manage risks in such a way that programmes take place without compromising the values and principles of the project. Not an easy thing to do.

POST SCRIPTUM

During the summer of 2016, Zimbabwe entered a new phase, with reminiscences of the past, but also with new dimensions.

Among the old dimensions were those of the economy, plunging further into the abyss, and with no improvements in sight. Less than a quarter of the work force enjoys a formal job. The majority of people struggle their way through the informal sector. If they live in the rural areas, they work hard to eke out a living on the edge of subsistence. Without remittances from abroad, most families would suffer even more.

How long will the poor remain silent?

How long will public servants accept that their salaries are not paid at all, or paid with great delay?

New political dimensions and movements have sprung up in recent years and months, not initiated or directed by the opposition parties, but by citizens and civil society. They have proven that it is possible to mobilize people, and that some are willing to defy the repressive habits of the regime and enjoy their constitutional rights to march peacefully through the streets.

All of this coincided with the message in August 2016 that the ruling party had given a green light for the multi-party dialogue. A formal letter came from the minister.

The seminar Eastern Highlands finally took place. The framework for a new three-year dialogue programme was discussed. The European Union in Harare was ready to fund part of such a programme.

In October 2016, I travelled to Harare again. Enjoying the purple flowers of the fabulous jacaranda trees lining the streets, I was trying to locate the line in the sand one last time. I needed to do this to advise my board about what to do.

I knew what my heart told me to do.

Before I landed in Copenhagen, I would need to ask my head if this would work?

PARTIES AND THEIR SISTERS

The DIPD mandate states that activities should be equally divided between support for 'sister' parties and support for 'multi-party' initiatives. After a few years, the Board decided not to use the term 'sister parties', preferring to talk about 'party-to-party' partnerships. This was a reflection of the reality meeting Danish parties in the field. The term 'sister' created an illusion of a shared political ideology. Our experience is that two parties working together can still benefit from each other, irrespective of ideology.

The article builds on the discussions that have taken place within DIPD over the years, discussions in the international networks we have participated in, as well as discussions with parties in Africa and Asia.

The photo shows the former leader of the Conservative Party, Lars Barfoed, and the Deputy Mayor from the Social Democrats in Hillerød, Kirsten Jensen. They joined me on a mission to Bhutan in November 2015.

DIPD WALKS ON TWO LEGS

In the community of party support institutions, we have some that only work with those they basically agree with ideologically, some that primarily work with multi-party platforms, and then a few that use both of these approaches in a balanced manner.

DIPD belongs to the last group. This was the result of negotiations among parties in the Danish parliament, who learned about the different experiences and set-ups in other countries, when the establishment of the institute was prepared and negotiated. Some Danish parties preferred a Swedish model, where funding from the government is channeled directly through the international department of each of the parties. Others felt that a model building on the Dutch experience with multi-party platforms would suit Denmark best.

The compromise model was a small secretariat that would manage the multi-party work and help facilitate the party-to-party work, with both approaches defining their objectives within a common strategic framework. In addition, a board with representatives from all parties in parliament, academia and civil society would ensure that the activities of the two streams would flow together and benefit from each other as much as possible.

Recent research supported by the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD), the British version of DIPD, once again highlights the critique being levelled against the sister party approach. Some of the critique is not dramatically different from what Thomas Carothers and others have raised over the years. As always, I believe it is useful for the community to be reminded, and then to respond to the critique in a productive manner.

The WFD researchers summarize like this:

"The limited research we have accumulated to date suggests that the results of political party support are at best limited, and rarely transformative. There is some evidence that other forms of party support can make a difference, but scepticism about the value of sister-party programmes is particularly deeply entrenched. This is partially because democracy promoters are often working in countries where the left-right ideological spectrum that has defined politics in the West is blurred or non-existent. In such a context, finding genuine sister parties can be a stretch."

To be fair, the researchers then go on to add that under the 'right' circumstances, it is possible to achieve results. Being 'right' means that *"political parties share not just ideology, but something more"*.

DIPD has been conscious of this from the very start. The Danish parties intuitively understood that ideology no longer was what it used to be. Parties are increasingly programmatic or issue-based (if anything at all) rather than ideological in

the traditional meaning of the concept. Being socialist, social democratic, conservative or liberal can mean different things in different countries.

Consequently, it is difficult for the children of liberal or socialist mothers to find their sisters or brothers, nephews or nieces. It is easier to find parties you have something in common with and trust enough to start some form of cooperation to strengthen needed capacities.

KENYA AS A TEST CASE

The difficulty of finding a sister of flesh and blood was an issue in the early stages, when DIPD was still learning to walk. One of the Danish parties was eager to work in Kenya, because Kenya is old territory for official Danish development cooperation, because there is a strong resource base on Kenya in Denmark, and because of the vibrancy of the multi-party environment.

Some would probably argue that the large number of political parties (we are talking about around 50 registered parties), and the ever changing positioning of the parties, was an expression of excessive vibrancy. Rather than being focused on ideas of an ideological origin, the majority of parties seemed to focus more on the personality of the leader, the territorial home of the supporters, and the ethnic leaning.

Consultations with observers and parties led to the conclusion that many parties were like chameleons, being able to change colors when required. Of course, some parties were, what they claimed to be; a rainbow of different groupings, coming together to win.

In Kenya, like elsewhere, winning is after all more important than having the right political ideology!

Rather than working through one particular Kenyan party, the Danish party decided to forge a partnership with many parties in Kenya through the multi-party platform of the *Centre for Multiparty Democracy*. Through CMD, ideas for involving youth in the parties and developing strategies for how to communicate effectively to young people were disseminated to the entire rainbow of political parties.

Liberal-leaning or socialist-oriented parties will of course communicate different political ideas to their young members. However, the experiences of a Danish party on how to mobilize and communicate with the youth does not necessarily have a liberal or socialist flavor. First of all, they need to be appropriate, relevant, and effective.

Four years down the road, it is clear to me that it was a wise decision by the Danish party to choose a multi-party

approach, and it was equally wise of the board to support it, although it was not the intention of the founding fathers of DIPD. As a result, many parties in Kenya today have more capacity to involve youth and communicate with youth in a democratic and peaceful manner.

'HAPPY' PARTIES IN BHUTAN

During one of my early missions to Bhutan in 2012, I engaged in discussions on the new political party system emerging because of the multi-party democracy defined by the new constitution. It was clear that the fathers of the new constitution did not want a copycat version of the multi-party systems found in other countries of the region. What exactly did the would-be politicians want?

"We would like to start a social democratic party like you have in Scandinavia," one would-be politician told me. He then added buzzwords like equality, welfare, free health care and education for all, a strong role of the state and protection of the environment to qualify what he believed were basic social democratic positions.

"And of course our party will build on the concept of Gross National Happiness," he added. "This is the basis for everything we do in Bhutan!"

Indeed, any party in Bhutan wishing to win an election will have to refer to the GNH. This is the development discourse par excellence, invented and communicated to the rest of the world before multi-party democracy was kicked off.

So far, the country has been through two elections, first in 2008 and recently in 2013. There are five registered political parties, and it is of course possible to position the parties on a traditional left-right continuum. This would make it possible to compare with Danish parties, but it would not really make much of a difference.

Analyzing the two elections, there is little evidence that political ideology is important to the electorate. Citizens care about the leader and the leadership the party can provide. They also care about some key issues of the day – creating jobs, attracting investments, building roads and other types of infrastructure. Being correctly 'liberal' or 'socialist' is not what the electorate worries about.

So finding the right 'sister' is not necessarily at the top of the list for the new parties. It is more important to find the right 'mentor', who can offer advice on how to develop policies, how to link policies to basic values in the particular society, and how to communicate such policies effectively to the electorate.

AN 'ALTERNATIVE' MAOIST

We have seen this happen in a useful manner both during visits to Denmark, and when Danish politicians from different parties visit Bhutan.

It happened when a former party leader from the *Conservative Party* and a former mayor from the *Social Democratic Party* together ran a workshop for the five registered parties in Bhutan, sharing their experiences on how to develop the right leadership, how to involve members in the development of the party programme, how to communicate effectively to the electorate. Nothing ideological about this. What matters is what works.

It also happened in Copenhagen, when members of the five parties had the opportunity to meet with the eight parties represented in the Danish parliament. Privately they would offer reflections on which of the Danish parties they felt most comfortably with ideologically, but at this stage of their journey towards a multi-party democracy in Bhutan, they also stated that they benefitted most from picking ideas for inspiration here and there, not worrying about it coming from left or right, red or blue parties.

I have no doubt that at some point in the future, some of the parties in Bhutan will get in touch with one of the liberal Danish parties and ask for ideological inspiration to develop their policy positions; and other Bhutanese parties will knock on the doors of the parties to the left for similar reasons.

When they do, both sides will be better equipped to manage the situation of looking to the same mother without believing they should dress the same way as all of the sisters and brothers.

I also have no doubt that what will be exciting in the future journey of DIPD will be the unorthodox or unexpected partnerships. One such example is the one formed in early 2016, when the newest party in the Danish parliament, the *Alternative Party*, decided to join hands with the new party in Nepal, the *New Force*, with the former Maoist leader Baburam Bhattarai at the helm.

The two parties come from very different ideological corners. However, they have one distinct feature in common, which completely overrides ideology: they both want to do politics in a different way.

They want parties that contribute to real dialogue, not politicians who polarize.

They want the grassroots involved in defining policies, not just decisions taken by the top leadership.

They want youth and women fully involved, not everything run by old men.

To achieve this, the new party in Nepal needs to communicate in new and different ways. This is what the Danish Alternative Party has already proven that they can deliver. This is what the partnership is about.

They are neither sisters nor brothers, but they share a genuine concern about the need to re-think and re-design politics, to encourage citizens to re-connect with the political parties, and with our democracy.

OFF-ROAD WITH THE MINISTER

My first experience with democracy support comes from working with civil society. Then, working for the UN, I had the opportunity to advise the government of Botswana, considered to be one of the most democratic in Africa. This gave me an opportunity to reflect on the democratic governance challenges facing a developing country and a young nation. Today, I know that many of the challenges are similar to what we experience at home.

This article was written in 2014, intended for readers of a Danish daily newspaper. This did not work out, and it is only now being published in English.

The photo was taken on a UN Aids Day celebration in rural Botswana in 2003. In the middle you see President Festus Mogae, and speaking is the head of UNAIDS. The Minister mentioned in the article is not seen on the photo.

MEETING THE CONSTITUENCY

We had found our way to the bar in the only guesthouse available in this village, far away from Gaborone, the capital of Botswana. After a long, warm and dusty day of celebration, the cold beer felt fantastic.

The occasion was one of the many UN days that we rarely celebrate in Denmark. In a country like Botswana, such days are used to communicate to the citizens.

It is not a forum for *dialogue* with the leaders of the country, and certainly not an opportunity to *criticize* the leaders. The occasion is nevertheless important. Citizens are entitled to hear from their leaders what they intend to do to improve people's lives. In particular areas that challenge the basic cohesion of society, like inflation, the drought, unemployment, hospitals, schools.

The audience had no doubt had a dreadfully long day, sitting unprotected from the sun on the ground, while we were in the shade drinking water. Listening to people in the audience, it was also clear that they were proud of the local dance groups performing, and they were looking forward to the food they would be offered when ministers and diplomats had spoken and left.

"Great day," the minister said when I asked him. "It is important to meet your constituency and tell them what we are trying to do to solve the problems we know people are worried about. They should know that I am also worried!"

The building blocks of politics and democracy are no different in Botswana from those we use in our own society. It may be a banal conclusion, but we still tend to forget it, when we start developing our support programmes.

POLITICIZING CIVIL SERVANTS

Later that evening, we continued our exchange in a more informal setting, just like politicians and diplomats all over the world do. Taking the temperature on the condition of democracy requires a certain informality.

We were not really friends, but we trusted each other enough. I had no problem addressing my concerns more directly to him than I would normally do.

"Your country is always hailed as one of the most democratic in Africa, if not the most democratic. The UN system agrees. But looking into the future, what is the major challenge to democracy in Botswana?"

His answer came immediately, with a clear voice.

"I see the increasing politicization of our top civil servants as a danger. You will not reach the top without showing your allegiance to the ruling party, my own party. If you are publicly seen to be friendly with the opposition, there is no chance you will get to the top."

I had expected several other responses – the increasing distance between leaders living in the capital and citizens in faraway villages; the fact that well educated young people are turned off by politics; a lower and lower rate of participation in elections; and politics being seen as doing favors to your friends. Diseases Botswana shares with most other countries around the world.

No, the minister saw the cancerous cell eating away at the democratic culture being the recognition that he could no longer be sure to get the objective facts he needed as a minister to serve his people correctly.

"I am elected to chart out the direction of where this country should go, together with my president and my party. How we share our wealth from the diamonds; the balance between what the state does and what the municipalities should do; how progressive our tax system should be. The civil servants must serve me with substantive and evidence-based facts."

He was not sure if the system would work if civil servants effectively were members of his party. Would his decisions still be balanced? Would there still be a meaningful dialogue in parliament? Would people trust him?

This is not a problem facing democracy in Botswana alone, nor developing countries in particular. The problem is universal. In Denmark we also discuss how party political civil servants should be allowed to be.

A DE FACTO ONE PARTY SYSTEM

Early next morning we started our daylong drive back to the capital, through a landscape that hardly changed as the hours passed. We had time to talk.

"What do you think is the most important for us to be aware of, if we want to maintain our position as the most democratic country in Africa?" he asked me.

Diplomats really do not like this type of question. They would prefer to list the many strengths and weaknesses, possibilities and threats, just to be on the safe side. Highlighting

one issue in particular, and doing it in an honest manner, could make life difficult for you.

Since my arrival in Botswana, I had met with a diverse group of people to get a sense of the mood of the country. I had made a preliminary conclusion for myself.

"Your country needs to experience an election, where the ruling party is beaten in a free and fair contest. It is not healthy for your democratic culture that your party has held power since independence in 1966. In a multi-party democracy, the opposition should get a chance to govern. If not, voters will lose faith and respect."

Not even a high-level UN representative will get a lot of credit for taking the position that a ruling party deserves to lose after having been in power for 40 years. If the election is free and fair, it is the right of the ruling party to rule happily forever. This is also true in our part of the world.

Unfortunately, we know all too well that *free and fair elections* are the exception rather than the rule in many parts of the world. Ruling parties enjoy flexing muscles when the election campaign starts, intimidating opposition candidates in all kinds of creative ways, and letting the Election Commission know how to conduct its affairs. Ruling parties also have easy access to state owned vehicles; they have ways of controlling state owned media – as well as those daring to run independent media.

The truth is that many multi-party systems function as de facto one-party systems. The control of the state and the electoral system allows the ruling party to control the resources needed to reach the voters. In first past the post systems, the dominance of the ruling party is further strengthened of course.

DIALOGUE AMONG FRIENDS

The minister was not at all convinced about my solution to the future of democracy in Botswana, although he admitted that it could be a challenge to the popular understanding of democracy that his party controlled more than 80 percent of the seats of parliament with only slightly more than 50 percent of the popular vote. He concluded in the same way that ruling parties all over tend to conclude and advise the public:

"It would be totally irresponsible to leave the reins of government to parties that have never tried to manage the resources of the state."

Many countries in Africa face this challenge. The parties that took over at the time of independence are not willing to hand

over power voluntarily. Their leaders – as well as the members and supporters - see the power as an entitlement.

Botswana and Tanzania face this challenge, but it is an even more deadly challenge in Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Namibia, Angola and South Africa, where the parties first elected to rule grew out of independence and liberation movements. Their own understanding is that the power to rule and the use of state resources is a historic entitlement.

As partners in development for democratic governance, we cannot avoid responding to such arguments. We have had some success in supporting the establishment of institutions, rules and procedures. We know we have seen less progress with regard to the democratic culture. To be a partner to this, we need to participate in a dialogue that is honest and realistic. We should not be silent because we are afraid of annoying old friends.

RISING TO THE OCCASION

Before we return to the capital, we have covered a multitude of other challenges facing Botswana right now.

The many Zimbabweans crossing the border into Botswana, to escape poverty and persecution.

The long-term sustainability of a small land-locked country depending on mining and sale of diamonds.

The arrival of Chinese investments on a larger scale than before, and how to deal with this.

The management of natural resources along the Zambezi and other rivers, a shared responsibility of many countries.

The HIV/AIDS epidemic, with rates of infection higher than in any other country in the world.

HIV/AIDS was the nightmare of Botswana. The pandemic was a challenge to the security and financial sustainability of the country. Not to mention the human tragedy of thousands of children growing up without parents.

To begin with, the epidemic was seen as a medical challenge. If we could get the medical logistics in order – testing patients, distributing medicine, ensure monitoring – then we would be able to manage the situation. Now the minister stated:

"Maybe this was really our most serious democratic challenge, because it was a question of the duties of the state versus the rights of the citizens. Should all patients have access to free medicine? Should women have the same rights as men? How should civil society participate in service delivery? What

legal rights did employees have if tested positive? The list of questions was endless."

Former president Festus Mogae and other political leaders in Botswana should be praised for their courage to finally take leadership, after years of hoping that the epidemic would miraculously disappear by itself. They accepted that this was about sexual relationships and traditions, more than about medicine.

In the process of finding the right response, they realized that without the state paying for the cost of medicine for all citizens, the epidemic would be impossible to contain. People needed to know that they could survive on drugs and that they could afford the drugs. If this was the case, they would get tested.

They also understood that the state could not do everything. In some cases other institutions could in fact do it better. The role of government was to establish the governing framework, and within this framework, minority groups, those tested positive, civil society and private companies would find their particular place to contribute.

The most effective progress in democratic governance is often seen when we focus on a particular issue. It can be HIV/AIDS, land use management, girls having access to schooling, etc. This also means that the community working on democratic governance issues is much larger than we normally think.

PARTIES AND CIVIL SOCIETY

Civil society has been a key focus and funding area for donors. One reason is that civil society organizations are often effective and flexible vehicles for service delivery. They have also been beneficiaries of much support for democracy, not least in countries with authoritarian regimes and a weak opposition. In some countries, civil society has become the only opposition with some muscle. However, this is not the ideal role for civil society in a vibrant democracy.

The Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy is one of DIPD's partners in Bhutan. In 2013, I was asked to reflect on the different roles of and relationship between political parties and civil society in a BCMD publication. This is an edited and slightly expanded version.

This photo was taken on June 5, 2015 when partners of DIPD joined in a walk through the city of Copenhagen to Parliament, to celebrate the 1915 Constitution, which finally gave women the right to vote.

DEFINING CIVIL SOCIETY

The key mandate given DIPD by the law is to offer support for democratic political parties in developing countries, to strengthen their capacity to be representative and accountable, and to encourage them to engage in peaceful and constructive dialogue with other political parties.

In a broader perspective, civil society organisations (CSOs) are also key partners of DIPD. They are important and necessary institutions in their own right in a vibrant democracy; even when political parties disagree with them, they are important partners of political parties, not least with regard to information on substantive policy issues; they are essential for the democratic culture.

Before elaborating on this argument, it is useful to clarify what exactly is meant by the term 'civil society'. Some use the term 'third sector', meaning all organisations and institutions that are not part of the state and for-profit business operations, or are political parties seeking power to govern. Activist environmental or women's organisations will be part of civil society, together with expert think tanks, local community groups, and many more.

In a sense, civil society is therefore characterised by *diversity*, in terms of the issues covered, the size, type of governance, funding situation, and in terms of being national or international. Such diverse organisations may be able to agree on the legislation governing the work of civil society in general, but not necessarily much else.

Logically, the key strength of civil society is therefore precisely its *diversity* rather than its *unity*.

CSO's SEEN AS A THREAT

It is my experience from decades of work in the field that strong and accountable political parties need self-confident and creative civil society organisations to make them even stronger and more relevant. Most parties do not have the resources to know everything about every issue. They need civil society organizations to help them.

The reverse is true as well! Civil society is at its best, when organisations can work with strong and self-confident political parties. They rarely perform at their best if forced to play the role of an otherwise non-existing political opposition.

The ideal just described is obviously a western conception. The relationship seen in most developing countries is based on a different understanding of the very concept of a civil society. Those in power treat the civil organisations as potential

enemies; they see them as opposition groups; in some cases they see 'Trojan horses' for sinister forces of both national and foreign origin.

Developments in recent years underscore this. We have witnessed country after country tightening the space through new legislation, to the extent that many CSOs have had to close down. In particular, those depending on funding from western donors have suffered, with funding cut off and leaders detained and imprisoned.

Organisations with links to the international community and working in politically sensitive areas have been targeted as enemies of the state. The targeted groups vary from country to country, but they often share one feature: a focus on a rights-based approach to development. This could mean working with ethnic minorities; promoting women's empowerment; exposing corruption in the government; protecting the right to freedom of expression.

Such organisations play a role as watchdogs. In the parliament, this is what the opposition should do. In the wider society, this is what the media, the ombudsman, and the courts should do. If the opposition, the media, the ombudsman and the courts have been silenced, then only CSOs remain. They will then also be targeted.

Bhutan is different, although Bhutan still needs to find its own approach to the roles to be played by a vibrant civil society. This is a small contribution to this.

COMPETING FOR IDEAS

To begin with, it is important to accept that political parties and civil society organisations have different roles and responsibilities in a society.

In societies where democracy is severely challenged, the difference can be less than clear-cut. People's confidence in parties may be very low, and CSOs are rightly or wrongly perceived as being more representative than parties. This is usually caused by parties acting irresponsibly, rather than by civil society demanding to play the political role being forced upon them.

To begin with, political parties are indispensable institutions in a democracy, because they are expected to be capable of performing key functions like: aggregating and representing citizens' interests in broad terms; forming the government after an election; taking responsibility for governing; holding parties in power accountable for decisions made on behalf of the citizens.

CSOs obviously share some of these characteristics, but not as manifestly as parties do. Competing for *political power* is often seen as the major difference.

Competing for *ideas and solutions* is a different matter, and this is definitely an area where political parties and CSOs can legitimately be seen as potential competitors. Civil society organisations can therefore also be seen by citizens, alongside political parties, as organised expressions of public opinion. It may not be the case with all, but it could be a position taken by certain sections of the public.

However, normally there will be a major difference in approach when you look more closely. Parties need to address all issues that concern citizens, based on a party programme: Health, education, climate, transport, taxation, employment, youth, foreign policy, and much more.

CSOs normally limit themselves to certain topics, like education *or* health *or* agriculture *or* environment *or* human rights – *or* in some cases even specific areas within these categories, like forests within the environment, organic agriculture within agriculture, public transport within transport.

Therefore, parties as well as CSOs perform socialising and mobilising functions in a society, around issues that are important to all of us. The key difference is that political parties need to take a much broader approach than the CSOs.

In addition, the advantage of the CSOs will normally be that within their more limited territory, they have much more knowledge than the parties do. They will know the technical details of their particular area of interest. They are the experts in particular areas.

The sum of useful knowledge resting with all the CSOs in a country could be monumental. Political parties need to understand how to harvest this knowledge in a constructive manner, for the benefit of society in a wider sense, but also for the benefit of their own capacity and ability to make informed decisions, or what we also call 'evidence-based policy making'. This ideal is, by the way, one we continue to emphasize, although there seems to be a global tendency among parties and politicians not to be too committed to evidence.

This is one reason why it makes sense to strengthen the interplay between political parties and civil society. The CSOs know things that political parties need in order to deliver the solutions citizens request.

Too often, this does not happen, simply because ruling parties (and opposition parties hoping to rule one day) are afraid of or uncomfortable with the role CSOs define for themselves in advancing accountability.

ISSUES RATHER THAN IDEOLOGY

It is often argued that new trends place new challenges on political parties and influence the relationship between civil society and political society. This is probably true, both in the Global North and the Global South.

Parties are traditionally based on a more or less coherent ideology (liberal, social-liberal, socialist), and the principle of collective representation of interests. Significant cultural, technological and political trends are challenging this. Growing individualism plays a role, resulting in the decline of close identification with political parties. For young people, being a card-carrying member of the 'family party' from birth to burial is no longer considered something to be proud of.

Many citizens therefore turn to civil society and single-issue organisations or movements to have their voices heard and exert political pressure. CSOs often demonstrate a far larger membership, a higher level of voluntarism, a more conducive environment for debate than people perceive political parties can offer. Citizens appreciate that they are directly active with various projects in their own communities, whereas political parties tend to work through government programmes and institutions to reach their goals.

If the *power* dimension fascinates you, political parties can deliver better than CSOs.

If you prefer to focus on the *substantive issues* that you believe are important for our society and future (like climate change, women's role, education, health), then the CSOs have more to offer.

New social media technologies are undoubtedly doing a lot in terms of narrowing the gap between individual and collective representation, allowing citizens to be much more directly in contact with political representatives and leaders. This also has the potential to strengthen local party branches.

Technological advancements also allow for new forms of interaction between political parties and civil society organisations. Social media platforms can help establish useful dialogues in a cross-party, cross-country and cross-sectorial manner.

A diversity of CSOs can thus make important contributions to political parties in terms of developing policy positions and policy programmes; accessing knowledge and research on critical themes; getting access to different groups of citizens; acting as loudspeakers on key reform issues; putting an ear to the ground and understanding the electorate; innovating on voter articulation and representation; calling for accountability of political leaders.

All of this will not necessarily lead to more people signing up as members of one particular party. However, it could help strengthen the way people see the parties, respecting them for engaging and searching, for listening to others and sharing their own ideas with the public.

We should also accept that CSOs present many alternative avenues for political participation and help build leadership for trusted positions. Similarly, political parties can make important contributions to the work of civil society, providing a political channel for advocacy on key reform issues.

Yes, parties and CSOs are competitors in some respects. However, we should remember that both of them should understand their roles as guardians of a vibrant democratic culture!

THE ART OF MEASURING CHANGE

The party support community is often criticized for not reporting convincingly about the results. How did we move from here to there? What has improved during the last year? Give us indicators and numbers to document your contribution! This is what democracy and governance indexes ideally can help us with. Unfortunately, what some assessments and indexes have in common is an 'obsession' with ways of reducing the complexity of social change to numbers.

This presentation was written in early 2012, as part of an internal discussion on theories of change, including how we can communicate progress in what we are doing to a broader audience. The time of writing is before the optimism of the Arab Spring started to fade.

The photo is taken on a mission to Nepal in February 2013. Meeting partners in the field has always been what I have enjoyed most, to discuss the changes they dream about, and how we can support them.

NORWAY BEATS DENMARK

There is both good and bad news for Denmark in the numbers presented in the 2011 *Democracy Index*, published recently by the Economist Intelligence Unit.

The good and not very surprising news is that Denmark once again belongs to the group of countries termed *fully developed democracies*. Howev'er, some would argue that it is bad news that compared to 2010, Denmark maintains the third place, behind Iceland in second place and Norway in first place. A few might be pleased to know that Sweden only came fourth!

Once again, Norway can shine at the top of the list, as Norway also does every year, when the UNDP launches the index for *human development*. Measuring human development, it is in particular the longer life expectancy that makes the difference in favor of Norway.

In the measurement on democracy, Norway wins on higher political participation and stronger civil rights. This gives Norway a score of 9.80 on a scale of 1 to 10, while Denmark has to do with a score of 9.52.

We (Denmark) will survive this battle of the numbers! We (Denmark) still belong to the group of 25 countries of the 167 included in the index that score above 8. We belong to the *democratic super group*.

Maybe we should be more concerned with some of the countries we work with in the European Union, like Portugal, France, Italy, Greece, Latvia, Poland and Rumania. They all belong to the group called *broken democracies*. A large total of 53 countries belong to this category, scoring 6 to 8.

Based on this, you can conclude that 78 countries with slightly less than half of the global population are democracies of varying quality. The other half lives in 37 *hybrid regimes*, and 52 countries that are *authoritarian*, also with varying intensity.

INDICATORS OF DEMOCRACY

It is necessary to be extremely careful with any index you put your trust in, and in particular, you need to be careful with an index trying to measure degrees of democracy. Numbers can never provide you with the full and only truth about the state of democracy in a country.

To understand the numbers, you need to know how the creators of the index have decided to measure. Then you will find out that in many cases, what is actually measured is not the objective reality (like the number of people who voted), but the perception of a person if this or that is good or bad.

There is no globally agreed and certified manner of defining and measuring a democracy. We can say that there is a broad agreement about what would be useful to measure, if you would like to make a verdict on a specific country's performance in the area of governance and democracy. In the same manner, there is some form of global agreement on what constitutes 'human development', so we can meaningfully compare the performance of different countries in that area.

So when we measure democracy, we should always involve certain *institutions* (the performance of parliament, political parties, courts, newspapers), certain *processes* (the performance of regular national elections, local elections, laws vetted and passed by parliament, access to information), as well as rights and values (performance in areas of human rights, minority rights, gender equality).

Together, these dimensions form a democracy and a democratic culture, without necessarily arguing that one particular system is the one we should all pursue or measure against.

In reality, different democracies have chosen to mix institutions, processes and rights in different ways. This allows for different assessments of a country being more or less democratic. We can ask questions like this: Is it good enough to conduct elections on a regular basis, if media is silenced and the opposition not allowed to campaign freely? The answer would be like this: No, that would not result in a high score.

Depending on the number of areas you include in your index, we can differentiate between 'thin' and 'thick' ways of measuring the state of democracy. The index referred to in this article is an example of a 'thick' approach, using five comprehensive categories.

Electoral processes and pluralism. The focus here is on being able to choose freely among different parties; if all citizens above a certain age are allowed to vote; the minimum number of votes needed to be represented in parliament.

Functioning of the governance system. Where you focus on finding out if those elected are actually able to make the decisions required; allowing the citizens to hold the decision-makers accountable is also important.

Political participation. Being able to vote is of course important, but we assume that democracies with a high voter turnout is better than a low turnout; we are also interested in knowing the level of representation of elected women.

Democratic political culture. This is a more elusive group of issues, often based on opinion polls: how do citizens see the role of the military in society; what do they think about way politicians behave and interact.

Civil rights. Again, we have a group with many dimensions, and not all of them can be easily measured objectively: How is the access of citizens to information through different independent media sources; what is the levels and forms of discrimination towards handicapped, minorities, women, etc.

Only a few examples of indicators have been mentioned here. In total, there are 60 indicators to cover the five categories. Results within each category are accumulated and calculated on a scale from one to 10. The result is a simple average of the five numbers.

Because each of the 60 indicators are measured in different ways (official statistics, opinion polls, expert assessments), the end result will in a sense be a mixed bag of apples and oranges. It is not easy to find a better way of doing it, if you think it is useful to develop a global index. If you refrain from drawing simplistic conclusions, it can offer a useful overview.

WHERE ARE WE GOING?

Looking at Planet Earth from outer space, you see a world community with an average score of mediocre 5,49.

The planet we live on is a *democratic hybrid,* with elections marred by irregularities and violence; governments making life difficult for the opposition; corruption being the name of the game in both political parties and the civil service; rule of law systems being manipulated by the rich and powerful; a weak civil society not being able to operate under the threat of persecution; journalists having to live with threats to their lives, and many actually being killed every year.

To be honest, none other than the dictators can be impressed with this average combination of institutions, processes and rights. The 0,03 growth from 2010 to 2011 is not impressive either. Most likely, it can be explained as a coincidence.

Only by digging deeper is it possible to conclude meaningfully about the direction we are moving in.

The first and most obvious conclusion is that events in the Arab world have been of a historical nature. They were unexpected, and they derived from local initiatives. None of the countries have moved into the democratic super-group at this point, but maybe it could happen, although it will take much longer than most people may believe and hope for.

Trust in the political institutions is moving in a downward direction in many countries. It is about the trust in the ability of governments to make decisions that will actually influence the

daily lives of people positively; it is also about trust in political parties generally, reflected in the dramatic loss of members, and the belief that parties practice corruption and nepotism.

Many countries experience growing social unrest. This has contributed to the changes seen in the Middle East, but it also affects Europe. It threatens democracy in many places, and it could very well end up as a major threat to more countries in the years to come. Much will depend on how the economic crises develops, including how the gap between rich and poor develops, and how the political systems respond to the challenge.

The US and the UK are located at the bottom of the best group. This reflects increasing polarization among the main political groupings, and the inability of the political systems to deliver credible, effective and sustainable solutions to what citizens are concerned about.

Countries in the Eastern part of Europe continue the democratic downturn, with Hungary as a visible example. Nationalist parties with authoritarian elements are on the rise, political institutions are losing their independence from the government, and changes in election laws undermine the opposition and the smaller parties.

With countries in Latin America being at the forefront, some countries experience political violence combined with drug related violence, pushing democracy towards the wall. Democratic institutions and processes have not been able to curb the simultaneous increase in inequality and concentration of power.

These trends serve to dampen the euphoric optimism resulting from the Arab Spring, and the resulting hope for a new democratic wave to take over from what started with the revolution in Portugal in 1974. The reality is that democratic institutions, processes and rights are under serious pressure.

What is the situation like in some of the countries Denmark is cooperating with? This will also include countries where DIPD is active, and where support for democracy and good governance is important.

TANZANIA IS NUMBER 90

Tanzania is an example, placed as number 90 in the index, with a score of 5,64 and thus at the top of the *hybrid group*.

Tanzania became independent in 1961, and Denmark has cooperated with this country in Eastern Africa from the start of independence. A few years ago we celebrated 50 years of development cooperation.

When you start crunching the numbers, you will note that from a formal point of view, things are fine with the institutions and processes. However, the reality is that the system of governance lacks transparency, corruption is a part of life, and citizens distrust the authorities. Political participation, political culture and civil rights need a lot of work. Democratization of the internal workings of the political parties is urgent.

There is undoubtedly a lot that Danish support can still help to improve in Tanzania.

KENYA IS NUMBER 103

Kenya is a neighbor to Tanzania, but the country only scores 4.71 and ends up as number 103. This means that Kenya is at the bottom of the *hybrid* group.

The explanation seems to be that the framework for elections and the environment for a truly multi-party political system is as bad as in authoritarian regimes, and the violent aftermath of the 2007 elections still impacts on developments. Back then, thousands were killed in ethnic-based violence. Add to this the endemic corruption and a political scenery dominated by nepotism. On a positive note, the new constitution is mentioned as a good opportunity for Kenya to move in a different direction.

There is undoubtedly also a lot that Danish support can do to help improve the democratic culture in Kenya.

BHUTAN IS NUMBER 104

The small Kingdom of Bhutan in the Himalayas only started its transition from a full-fledged monarchy to a parliamentary democracy in 2008, when the first election involving political parties started. With a score of 4.57, Bhutan ends up just below Kenya as number 104.

Those who know a bit about both Bhutan and Kenya would probably agree with me that this does not seem to be fair. Contrary to Kenya, the framework for free and fair elections is much stronger in Bhutan. Corruption probably exists, but definitely not at the level known in Kenya.

The reason the score is very low seems to be that political participation is still not seen as a necessity by all the citizens in the world's youngest democracy. Many are still wondering if things were not better in the good old days, when the King was in charge. Today, citizens have new rights, and they have to learn to exercise these rights.

There is no doubt about the will of the government to move forward. With decades of close and friendly cooperation between Bhutan and Denmark, this is a country where Danish ideas can make a difference.

ZIMBABWE IS NUMBER 150

Zimbabwe is one of very few official partners for Danish development cooperation belonging to the group of countries judged to be run by *authoritarian* regimes – Afghanistan, Vietnam and Myanmar are some of the others. The score of 2.68 puts Zimbabwe below China and Vietnam, but above Afghanistan and Myanmar.

It is not hard to explain the low score. First, it is because of the excessively weak framework for elections and genuine multi-party democracy, combined with the readiness of the party of President Robert Mugabe to infringe on the opposition in numerous ways. The inability of the government to deliver any meaningful solutions to the deteriorating economic and social situation only makes the situation worse.

In addition, Zimbabwe is also an illustration of the limitations of an index like this to reflect the positive changes that are actually taking place. During the period measured, negotiations on a new constitution started (and was later finalized peacefully), and the three parties represented in parliament agreed to work together in a form of unity government (which ended in 2013).

Denmark has been engaged in Zimbabwe since independence in 1980, and Denmark can undoubtedly continue to contribute. Unfortunately, the road forward is not easy at all.

MEASURING CAN BE USEFUL

A global index on democracy can be useful when you need to get a quick and dirty overview, and a sense of the direction we are moving in. You can also use the index to highlight the good performers, and name and shame those not willing to perform.

Just like the grade book in school does not offer the full picture of how your child is doing, the index has the same weakness. You need a more thorough analysis to understand what is wrong.

What is needed is an analysis that different groups in society contribute to and can be held accountable for. Not only the ruling party and its friends in the opposition, but labor unions, church communities, think tanks, civil society organizations, minority groups, men and women.

The point is that unless an effort is made to develop a shared understanding of the reasons for the limited democratic quality of institutions and processes, it will be difficult to agree on the changes required. Of course, this is based on the assumption that there is room for dialogue at all, which is often not the case in authoritarian regimes.

Fortunately, we have seen exercises of governance assessments taking place in many countries, both on a voluntary basis and as part of regional or continental agreements. The so-called *Africa Peer Review Mechanism,* initiated in the 1990s, not only involved a broad selection of stakeholders in each country, but also involved other countries in a peer review process.

Unfortunately, so far it has been difficult to document real progress. For countries in the least democratic end of the index, there is little interest in subjecting your weaknesses to sensitive scrutiny by outsiders.

Still, such initiatives should be welcomed. They are also necessary. All experience shows how tricky external support for democratic transformations can be. You need sensitivity, humility, a principled stance, willingness to take risks and a large dose of stubbornness and stamina to be part of the global support system for democratic change.

A reasonable dose of honesty is of course helpful. This is what an index can offer. In particular if the index also points to weaknesses in democratic institutions, processes and rights in our own part of the world.

THE STATE AND I

This article is not an attempt to compare the welfare state model with other state forms. My perspective is a personal one, and therefore much more anecdotal than academic. It does not reflect any official position of DIPD. However, it has been interesting for me to learn how our partners from the global South intuitively understand the development of our political system, including the parties, as partly being the result of our welfare model, and the other way around.

This article was written for the Druk Journal, Volume 1, Issue 2, published in 2015. The Druk Journal is a new effort to stimulate debate about the new democracy in Bhutan, published by the Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy, a partner of DIPD.

The photo was taken on one of my many missions to Bhutan, where I often discussed the role of the state with friends and partners.

BUILDING THE WELFARE STATE

Time can be illustrated in many ways. In my case, it will be appropriate to mention the founding of the United Nations on 24 October 1945, with 51 states signing the charter. Today we have 193 member states. Together they form an *international community,* which needs to find ways to meet the many serious and dangerous challenges that we were not aware of, when the UN was founded.

All of this has unfolded more or less in my lifetime.

My parents were young students during World War II. They fell in love right after the war and married a few years later, at the end of the 1940s. I was born soon after they had married.

Both of my parents were the first in their families to get a longer education, both of them as teachers. By virtue of their own efforts and the support of the many different institutions of the state that were developed in the post-war era, they became members of a large and fast growing middle class of people that were beneficiaries of the Danish *welfare state*.

Some will refer to this state as a vision still being implemented; others consider it an *ideology* of socialist origin. In any case, globally it is certainly seen as a construction particular to the Nordic countries, hailed and celebrated by some, hated and criticized by others.

Recently, this has been mentioned in debates taking place in the US among the candidates competing to be the candidate for the Democratic Party in the 2016 presidential election. Some see it as an ideal to be followed, because it protects the poor and ensures some degree of equality; by others, it is seen as a socialist authoritarian state to be resisted, because it does not allow each individual the full freedom to define his or her life; and it does not allow the forces of the market (private companies and financial institutions in particular) to manage their affairs as they see it best from their own perspective.

I never saw my state in this antagonistic perspective. I grew up as it was being constructed, from being a dream by visionary (particularly social democratic) politicians and labor unions, to in fact being able to deliver on its promises.

My father was the son of a small farmer, who could only afford for one of his two sons to study. He ended up as a teacher, while his brother, my uncle, became a firefighter.

My mother was the daughter of a railway official, and she was also the only of two sisters getting the chance to study.

When I started going to school in the 1950s, Denmark had just introduced a new approach to education, which emphasized the role of education in our democracy, including the right of all to an education. We were two brothers, and we both had the *right*

of getting the education our energy and abilities deserved. The state invested heavily in new school buildings and training of teachers.

For a small country without many natural resources (this was before oil was discovered in the North Sea), education was a must. We needed to be smart to produce for export markets – and to get the money required for welfare: education, health, roads, trains, waste management, and much more. We also needed education for all people to have access to information, and thus be full members of our representative democracy.

I AM A BENEFICIARY

I first learned about the relationship between free education and health, and the payment of taxes, when we would visit my grandparents at the farm in the early 1960s. After dinner, the men would withdraw to the 'cigar room' to play cards and smoke cigars, and the children would manage the exchange of coins between grandfather, fathers and uncles, when the winners had to be paid. It was a secret and fascinating world for a small boy, although the thick and spicy cigar smoke would make my eyes run like a waterfall.

Often the discussion would be about why *taxes to the state should be higher or lower.* My grandfather was a member of the Liberal Party and a Chairman of the rural council. He believed in equality among men (maybe even women and men), but he also believed in the freedom of the market. My father did not really trust those forces, and he believed in strong shoulders paying more and weak shoulders paying less.

Overhearing the adults talking in the cigar room was probably my first lesson in what is one of the most fundamental contracts between the citizen and the state in a democracy: *paying taxes*! Closely linked to this monetary exchange was the *accountability* of the politicians and the authorities towards the citizens, allowing all of us to see in a transparent manner what *our* money was being spent on; giving us the opportunity to choose others to represent us at the next election if we were not satisfied.

By the way, in the early 60s, women were not allowed to sit in the cigar room at my grandfather's farm, and women smoking cigars and playing cards were not seen as acceptable female behavior. As I remember it, women would have their own discussions about children and housework in the living room, although my own mother was a strong believer in equal rights for men and women, even to the extent that she would be willing

to embarrass my father. He was also a believer, but not in the dramatic manner my mother could sometimes express it.

It was only in the late 60s and early 70s that kindergartens became the norm, very much thanks to the emancipation of women. The labor market required women to be part of the labor force, and the state had to invest in this, to ensure that the welfare state could continue to grow in scope as well as quality.

When I had my first child in the mid-1970s, she of course attended kindergarten. I considered this to be natural, as a right given to me as a *citizen of the state.* Although I was young and still not making a lot of money, and therefore not paying lots of taxes, I knew instinctively that seen over my entire lifetime, I would be paying my part to the functioning of the state.

Going to school and attending kindergarten are two examples of how I have grown up with my state. Free access to health is another feature I could have used as an example. My father died young from leukemia, and he spent years in hospital without my mother having to pay from her limited income. My brother had a daughter born with a brain disease, which has also required years of hospital treatment, without ruining the family financially.

LEADERSHIP IS NEEDED

Yes, I have indeed benefitted from the resources of the state in many ways. I feel we have established a very personal relationship. I also believe that I have contributed in many ways to our relationship, not only through my payment of taxes, but also through my participation in both national and local elections, writing books for children, sharing my ideas with others.

Looking back, it is easy to see the dramatic changes Denmark has experienced since I was born. We often state that *things today are much more global and therefore more complicated,* and therefore the manner in which the state behaves has to change. This is certainly true.

We also point to specific examples. One example is the transnational nature of production and trade, allowing companies larger than many nation states to manipulate with their status and avoid paying taxes to the state in *my* country. Another example could be the elusive and transnational nature of international terrorism, which requires states to cooperate closely.

The nation states most of us live in are too small or too weak to deal on our own with global threats like climate change,

terrorism, tax evasion, or failed states creating large movements of refugees. Whatever the Danish welfare state can afford to do, it will be like throwing a handful of sand into a river thundering down through the gorges of the mountains. *We need others* in an effectively coordinated effort to manage the global challenges and threats.

This understanding has been accepted by political leaders ever since the signing of the UN Charter in 1945. Today, it seems not be fully accepted by all of us. Many hesitate to hand over sovereignty to global institutions.

As argued above, I have a very personal tax-based contract with my own state, and I can hold my elected representatives directly responsible and accountable.

Is this possible when we move some parts of national sovereignty to the EU in Brussels?

Is it possible when the major powers in the Security Council of the UN in New York take decisions?

Probably not! This is a large step away from what we are used to, what we can understand based on our own daily experiences, and what we feel comfortable with.

Still, this is a step we need to take.

My grandfather spent most of his life in a state that did not have the strong welfare dimension. My parents had their first child when the foundation of the welfare state was built. I had my first child when the vision of a welfare state had become a reality, and my children will spend a major part of their lives in a welfare state that needs to adopt to global challenges that were never discussed when I was a child.

There are all kinds of technicalities involved in calibrating a new relationship between the state and the need for a global state-like authority as convener, arbiter and decision-maker. What will be most important (and also most difficult) to deliver is the *political leadership* required to explain to citizens what is happening. We need leaders who can lead in the global village 2015. This is a challenge very different from the global village 1945, about seventy years later.

Leadership in its old-fashioned sense, with leaders being able to explain, direct and comfort the people, is required precisely because this is a democratic challenge, not just a technical exercise. Moving decisions from the national to the regional and global levels, while at the same time making decisions transparent and accountable as we know it at the national level, is a democratic challenge of extraordinary proportions.

For citizens in small nations like Denmark and Bhutan, the challenge is monumental, almost frightening. We can all agree that terrorism, climate change, cross-border tax speculation, and waves of refugees crossing borders, are issues that no single state can manage on its own.

Precisely because these challenges are of such horrific proportions, many will instinctively seek refuge in the local and the national; seeking safety by looking inward. I understand that this is a natural reaction. From my own analysis of where the world is going, it is not a logical reaction. The opposite is in fact necessary.

A few weeks ago, a majority of Danes voted no in a referendum about transferring sovereignty in certain areas to the European Union. It was not a huge no, but it was clear enough with 53 percent voting against what the old traditional political elite had recommended.

This is precisely the issue that our democracy now needs to find solutions to. How do we bring the caretakers of the state into dialogue with the citizens of our democracy, so we can find solutions together, even though we may disagree on a lot.

Certainly not an easy challenge; but the challenge is standing right in front of us, right now, whether we like it or not.

IDEAS THAT CAN INSPIRE

The DIPD strategy titled "Ideas that can inspire" builds on experiences and lessons learned during the first three years. In particular, it focuses on what we believed DIPD would be good at, branding the organization as one with particular 'Danish' competencies. This was what our partners had been asking for from the very beginning. "Show us something you believe can be useful!" they requested. Has it worked?

This article was originally written in the early part of 2016, as a contribution for internal reflection among staff of DIPD and a few individuals outside of DIPD as well, at a time when the Danish government was planning a new Danish strategy for development cooperation.

The photo shows members of the Bhutan delegation to the June 2015 celebration of 100 years of women in politics, standing alongside Danish women wearing dresses like those they would wear in 1915.

OUR POINT OF DEPARTURE

For decades, development practitioners have emphasized the need for investments in free elections, capacity support for parliaments, legislation to protect the role of civil society and a strengthening of political parties to play their role confidently. Good governance and democratic institutions are preconditions for the Millennium Declaration adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2000; as well as for the Sustainable Development Goals of Agenda 2030, adopted by the General Assembly and most heads of state in 2015.

Academics have never been as convinced as the practitioners about the link between the economy and democracy. They have not seen the strong and positive correlation between democratic development and social and economic development. As evidence, academics point to the huge number of poor lifted out of poverty in China, thanks to an authoritarian and centralized form of governance.

DIPD referred to this debate in its first strategy document adopted by the board in 2011. We understood that the heated discussion about what comes first – democracy or economic development – would continue as a tug of war for years to come. We also made it clear that this would not be decisive or divisive for the legitimacy of our work.

For the founding fathers of DIPD, what was most important was the fact highlighted by the so-called Barometer surveys all over the world:

The majority of ordinary citizens, irrespective of gender, ethnicity, faith or profession prefer to live in a democracy rather than in an authoritarian regime. They prefer politicians rather than generals.

To this should be added that there are limits to the patience of citizens if what they expect to be delivered by those in power is in fact not being delivered.

A BRIEF REFLECTION ON DANISH AID

Much has been tried out since the Danish parliament approved the first law for official development assistance (ODA) in 1962, around the time when other Western countries started as well. Understandably, the international community confronted the challenge with some uncertainty. How could we contribute to development in newly independent nations far away? Was it like rebuilding Europe after World War II?

We were entering unchartered territory. In a way, we would have to find solutions as we moved forward.

Slowly, programmes were implemented and ideas were tested, and after some time the results of evaluations were published. This resulted in changes in programmes, the introduction of new ideas, and often a change of focus.

Every decade had its particular obsession about a certain approach, or theme, or the sequencing of interventions. Private sector versus state? Agriculture versus industrialization? Democracy versus economic development? Human rights and gender equality as cross-cutting requirements? Just to mention a few of the discussions.

Theories of modernization developed in the 1960s based on experiences from development in the West fuelled a belief in a generic and universal model of development. Why would the new category of developing countries that achieved independence after World War II not modernize in the same way?

Neither this nor other similar approaches have survived the relentless judgment of history. More than 50 years after the kick-off of development cooperation, it is rather depressing to look at the indicators for social, economic, human and political development in a country like Tanzania, despite the huge investments from Denmark and many other countries.

Sure, progress can be documented, and the situation could very well be much worse without our engagement. But is there enough evidence to conclude that the resources invested through development cooperation have made a large enough difference?

Why the results in some countries are mediocre and in others only reasonably good cannot be explained in simple terms. Part of the explanation could be that to begin with, we saw ODA as a short-term fix. It also contributed that for decades, ODA was part of the political East-West divide, when support was offered for political reasons and the quality of aid was less important than whether a government chose to go down the communist or the capitalist path.

Undoubtedly, we have also been inclined to attach too much importance to the independent role of ODA. Of course, we have always known that private investments, trade and security were more important, and that development cooperation was affected, negatively or positively, by initiatives in those areas.

Still, many of us have overestimated the ability of aid itself to transform a society, and underestimated other forces at play pushing in the opposite direction. We have certainly not been realistic about the magnitude of corruption among local elites, including high-level politicians that we have cooperated with, who have in some cases been unscrupulous in their ways of diverting resources, both those coming from ODA and those deriving from the exploitation of the natural resources that some countries have been endowed with in abundance.

Documentation now offered by the Panama Papers indicate that the amounts stashed away in foreign accounts and through manipulative practices far exceed the transfers made through aid. I have no doubt that many of the people we have depended on for the implementation of our development cooperation programmes have also been at the centre of the divertive and manipulative practices now being exposed. Not all of this may be illegal according to national and international law. However, it is certainly unethical.

All of this should not been seen as an attempt to diminish the importance of aid and *development cooperation*. I have always been a strong supporter, and I continue to be a strong supporter of *international cooperation*, including *development cooperation*. The intention is alone to remind us that we need to establish a realistic understanding of the possibilities, as well as the limitations of aid when we move forward.

ABOUT 'IDEAS THAT CAN INSPIRE'

DIPD was established as an institute with limited financial resources, considering the number of stakeholders involved in the work. The largest parties represented in the Danish parliament receive around 300.000 USD a year to support their partners, and the smallest parties less than half of this. This means that even a large party cannot use funding as a key argument to attract a partner. Many of the organizations we normally compare ourselves with have access to much larger funds.

It was therefore from the very beginning clear that DIPD was not *in the business of money changing hands*, but rather needed to brand itself as an institute being *in the business of ideas changing minds*.

Our key competencies and our methodological approach had to be our ability to inspire our partners with interesting, relevant and transformative ideas – not to ensure the daily running of party offices paying the rent and the salaries, and certainly not to finance election campaigns or campaigns to recruit more members.

Inspiration is about the ability of the Danish parties and the secretariat to communicate key aspects of Danish democracy to our partners in such a way that they open their eyes, listen attentively and request more information. It is also about being able to point to competencies that have the capacity to survive the journey from the shores of Denmark to the mountains of Himalaya.

Inspiration in itself is not enough. It only becomes good enough and useful when the desire to inspire is combined with

the capacity to analyze the broader context. Meaning to analyze how we ourselves have developed, thus ensuring that we will not end up in a superficial and uncritical dissemination of experiences, processes and institutions, so unique to Denmark that it makes no sense whatsoever to use them elsewhere.

It is worth remembering that inspiration, planned or accidental, was a strong driver for change during the third wave of democracy starting in the early part of the 1970s. During the three decades following the fall of the dictatorship in Portugal in 1974, we experienced the most dramatic increase in new democracies ever registered in history. Not engineered through projects deliberately designed by organizations, but because the spirit of democracy spread by itself, as an idea that merited copying, after it had left the bottle in Portugal.

SOME GENERIC IDEAS

DIPD is part of a global community of institutions supporting democracy and political parties. They are too many to mention here, but they include *National Democratic Institute* and *International Republican Institute* based in the US; institutions connected to the political parties in Germany and Sweden; the *Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy* in the Netherlands. In addition, there is the Stockholm based *International IDEA*, which is an inter-governmental entity. Organizations like the UNDP and the EU have also established specific democracy support initiatives.

From the very start, DIPD has worked closely with as many of these organizations as our resources have allowed. We have benefitted greatly from participating in meetings with colleagues from other organizations; we have noted their achievements.

Not surprising, most of us work with the same generic approaches to the building of democratic capacities, often based on the universal declaration on human rights and other UN declarations. We also refer to the only UN document detailing the UN understanding of democracy, published in 2009 as the *"Guidance Note of the Secretary-General on Democracy"*.

The note refers to the 2000 Millennium Declaration and states that democracy and human rights *"belong to the universal and indivisible core values and principles of the United Nations"*. It is a useful document, which more people in the field could benefit from reading.

It makes sense that all of us refer to the basics and the generics, not least because we operate in sensitive and contested territory, where the borderline between what you could consider to be capacity development or political support and/or interference admittedly can be very difficult to establish.

Nevertheless, the generic approach also presents one obvious limitation. It does not offer the reality check, which a country specific experience can offer, and which partners are asking for in their search for solutions. For DIPD, this realization resulted in a search for the particular characteristics of our own democratic history, institutions and processes. In short, what you could define as our *democratic competencies.*

SOME INSPIRATIONAL IDEAS

If you asked Danes in the street, you would most likely get many different suggestions for what competencies in particular we should include in our toolbox. In the DIPD strategy, we have emphasized four areas.

Youth wings of the political parties: Over decades, Danish political parties have developed strong and influential youth wings. There is not one Danish model, but actually as many models as there are parties. Some youth wings are fully integrated in the mother party; others are very independent. They all play a role in being a nursery for new generations of politicians; they also tend to generate ideas that are provocative compared to the policies of the mother party.

Local party branches: Through more than 100 years, the parties have relied on local branches run by local volunteers to present ideology and policy to the local communities. The branches help communicate the positions to the local members, and they mobilize the volunteers that are crucial in election campaigns. Again, there is not a single Danish model, but different degrees of independence and influence.

Women in politics: It could be argued that this area is less unique than youth and local branches, but we have seen that it still has inspirational strength. This is probably because the 100 year journey since women were given the right to vote in 1915 has resulted in a reasonably decent level of women's representation both at national and municipal levels, without the use of quotas. Our experience also points to the need for legislation from the top and mobilization from the bottom to work together to achieve sustainable progress for women.

Coalitions and long-term agreements: We have become used to (and some would argue that most of us are very happy with this) coalition governments of two or three parties; often such coalitions do not even have a majority, but need the votes from other parties. We also have a long tradition for finding solutions together, across ideological divides, in areas requiring long-term planning and investment.

Our electoral system contributes to this state of affairs. It is a proportional representation system, constructed in such a way that it allows for an almost perfect mathematical representation of the parties participating in an election. Furthermore, a relatively low threshold allows new parties, with new ideas, to be able to get representation. We have never seen one party get more than half of the seats in parliament. Consequently, whether we like it or not, Danish politics has had to learn to master the art of coalition-building to perfection.

The intention is not to argue that we (Denmark) have *unique* experiences (meaning that no one else can claim the same). The thinking is that we have *Danish* experiences in these four areas that we believe can be inspirational. In fact, to start with, all four themes have been identified as inspirational by our partners.

The coalition-building theme can serve as an example. During a study tour to Denmark, members of six of the parliamentary parties in Nepal were presented with the coalition and long-term agreement traditions at both national and municipal levels. They asked for more information, also about the historical background. We agreed and developed a document, which so far has been launched in Bhutan, Myanmar, Nepal and Tanzania. The political diversities among these countries also indicate that the usefulness of the coalition experience will vary greatly from country to country.

Just as obvious as it is to use these competencies as points of departure for a dialogue with our partners, it should be equally obvious that the form of communication must be neither self-congratulatory nor self-sufficient.

We know that even within what we consider to be our best democratic competencies, there are weaknesses, defects and limitations. Youth wings of political parties may experience an increase in membership right now, but young people in general prefer to join movements rather than parties. Local party branches are not today able to mobilize the number of supporters that they used to in the good old days. The number of women elected for parliament and councils is not increasing, on the contrary. The dialogue across ideological divides may not be as vibrant as we have seen it in the past.

There is not necessarily a contradiction between presenting our key democratic competencies as inspiration for others, and doing this in a self-critical manner. You could even argue that being ruthlessly honest is a competency that is part of our brand!

MUNICIPAL COUNCILLORS IN NEPAL

The Nepali politicians wanted to know more about Danish experience with coalition governments and agreements, and they also wanted to know about our experiences with local branches of political parties. Not in a ten point 'do this' or 'do that' manner, but explaining the rationale for the different set-ups as they have unfolded, been developed and refined in Denmark over the years.

This was not a purely theoretical decision, but one based on what they had seen and heard during their first study tour, and probably in particular based on the personal friendships they had established with their hosts from various political parties in different parts of the country. These were municipal councilors and volunteers in the local branches. They represented the grassroots practitioners of Danish democracy; the people managing the membership fees in a cigar-box; the volunteers who brought coffee and cake to the meetings.

While hugely different in numerous ways, the six parties in the platform DIPD supported in Nepal agreed that they needed something similar in Nepal. Not necessarily in the same form and shape, but certainly with a purpose and spirit resembling what they had experienced first-hand during their time in Denmark.

A project was launched. From the outset, it was agreed that the local level of Nepal (villages, districts, provinces) is a world apart from the local level in Denmark (municipalities and regions). Culturally, religiously, ethnically, socially and economically, Nepal is a conglomerate of hundreds of diverse worlds – contrary to the homogeneous nature of Danish society, despite all talk of diversity increasing in Denmark due to immigration. To make sense of how Danish experiences could be introduced in a Nepali reality, the group charged with the project was made up of both Danish and Nepali representatives. This also helped create the necessary ownership in Nepal.

It took two years to develop the material in both an English and a Nepali version. For a small institute like DIPD, it was a huge but necessary investment in both time and money. Compared to the thousands of local level politicians, party officials and members that are the potential beneficiaries of the ideas presented in the guide, it has been a small investment.

When the publication was launched in Kathmandu in 2014, top leaders from the six parties participated and committed to use this as a key resource in their work to develop more democratic parties at the local level. It addition, the guide is also being used as a resource in other countries, and a Kiswahili version has been published in Tanzania.

Recently a small delegation of Danish councillors travelled to Kathmandu. They represented different parties that

have different ways of managing their local branches; some have experience as Mayor of a municipal council, others have only known how it feels to be in opposition; some come from small rural communities, while others deal with large budgets in big cities. They have all been part of the process, and they were therefore not received in Kathmandu as experts you need to be respectful towards because of their knowledge, but as friends you know and can trust.

We need to wait a few years before we can report on the real results of this adventure. We are dealing with long processes of change that require large amounts of patience, but not necessarily large amounts of money. The new Constitution of Nepal states that local elections need to be held soon, and this will be the first time since 1997. The parties believe they can benefit from the new knowledge and inspiration as part of this process. They also know that you cannot change everything overnight.

YOUTH POLITICIANS IN MYANMAR

In the case of Nepal, it was not the institute that singlehandedly and unilaterally decided to develop the training material about local party branches. The same was the case in Egypt, when it was decided to develop a teaching material about how youth wings in Denmark operate. This was a proposal from youth politicians from political parties in Egypt, visiting Denmark when the 2011 parliamentary elections took place.

The Egyptian youth were products of the Arab Spring and the euphoric belief in (almost) everything and anything being possible after the revolution. This included the hope that a diversity of new and untested political parties, unscarred by years of dictatorship, would be represented in a newly elected parliament; and a belief that the voice of the youth would be heard loud and clear, considering that the youth had a major share in the making of the revolution.

The approach was similar to that chosen in Nepal. A working group with representatives from Egyptian and Danish parties was entrusted with the responsibility of developing the material, supported by a consultant. Seminars were held in Denmark and in Egypt. The final material did not only reflect the different approaches of different party youth wings in Denmark, but the wishes and expectations of the new generation of Egyptian youth engaging in party politics.

The DIPD Guide on *"How to build a youth wing. 30 topics to debate and consider"* was published in an English edition in 2012 and an Arabic version in 2013. In 2015, it was also published in

a Burmese version for the work with the multi-party platform in Myanmar. It has been published in cooperation with the Danish Youth Council (DUF) and the Danish-Egyptian Dialogue Institute (DEDI), who are the partners of DIPD in this area.

Developments in Egypt have taken a more dramatic and less encouraging turn than the Egyptian youth had hoped for and dreamt about in 2011. The notion of using Danish competencies was of course based on an understanding that the military no longer had a monopoly on power, that both religious and secular thinking would find their place in a new Egyptian reality, that the elders did not monopolize politics anymore.

Today we have to realize that these notions were too optimistic, if not outright wrong. The military is back in control. The room for inspiration has been closed, tighter and tighter.

Despite dangers, young Egyptians have decided to continue a dialogue with their Danish counterparts. Ideas continue to be shared. Seeds of inspiration continue to be sown.

Interestingly, a 'Burmese Spring' started growing parallel to the 'Arab Spring'. Not initiated in the same way as we saw it happening in Tunisia and Egypt; not with the same suddenness and violence; not with the tens of thousands in the streets, defying the military force. It was rather the result of a deliberate, planned and controlled strategy to transition the crude military dictatorship, outlawed and sanctioned by the international community, to some form of democracy, which would include a role for Aung San Suu Kyi, the Nelson Mandela of Myanmar.

After decades of being closed to the outside world and political parties sidelined, Myanmar was facing a new and more hopeful reality. This required new capacities. The majority of politicians belong to the generation that know the taste of democracy from before 1988. A new generation of politically active youth is needed, to help develop and root the new democratic institutions in a democratic culture, which will be needed in a country facing numerous challenges.

Maybe Danish experiences could help?

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION

The decision to focus on women in politics was taken by the institute, knowing very well that many others around the world have made this a priority focus for decades. This includes the different parts of the UN system, but certainly also specialized women's organizations, and of course most of the institutions working with democracy and political party support.

So why join the cause?

Because this is a fundamental dimension of a democracy.

There are many ways of achieving the goals set out by the international community, and the Danish way is one of those.

In the global statistics, Denmark is not at the top. Close to 40 percent of members of parliament are women; and a little more than 30 percent of municipal councilors are women. Certainly not fantastic after 100 years of hard work, although still good enough to merit presentation without embarrassment.

Conferences were organized for our partners in both 2012 and in 2015. The first time to help a newly established institute to bring its global partners together for the first time; in 2015 to celebrate the 100-year anniversary of the 1915 Constitution that gave women the right to vote. When delegates arrived in Copenhagen for this conference, Denmark for the first time in our political history had a female Prime Minister.

What we were offering, in a sense, was what the Prime Minister of Bhutan, Tshering Tobgay, on the occasion of the launch of the video *Yes, Madam Prime Minister*, produced by the Bhutanese film producer and now Member of the National Council, Kesang Dorji, called *the 100-year model*. This was his way of paying tribute to the economic, social and political developments in Denmark that gradually had achieved results for women's participation and representation in political life. At the same time, he indicated that other countries, including his own, should not necessarily use 100 years to achieve the same.

Unlike the guides on youth and local branches, DIPD decided to publish a reader with a global perspective, focusing on the particular challenges for young women, women at local level, and women in conflict-affected countries. A fourth chapter highlighted the key dimensions of the Danish model. The publication was later published in Nepali and Burmese versions.

FOCUS ON SHARED VALUES

Focus in the 2012 and 2015 conferences on women in politics was on what we can do *together* to meet the *shared* challenges. Recognizing that these are in fact really *shared challenges* is an important part of the type of partnership, we have made an effort to develop, in order to achieve change, and to define *common solutions*.

This is not the same as responding in the same way in every country. However, we all confront a reality where fewer girls than boys are involved in politics; where women politicians are met with various forms of violence; where men are endowed with more resources to campaign.

Such challenges have been center stage when Danish politicians visit our partners in countries like Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar, Tanzania, Kenya and Zambia. Every MP or councillor will have his or her very personal take on these issues, while also being able to present what the Danish framework can offer to help break the barriers.

DIPD has consistently pointed to two principles of our approach to democracy support.

The first is that you can *neither* export *nor* import copies or clones of democratic institutions from Denmark or other Western countries, but it is possible to support partners in their search for ideas and approaches.

The other is a logical consequence of the first: we do not have a list of solutions for what a democratic system must look like in our tool box.

Our presentation of particular Danish competencies is rooted in the fundamental and universal values enshrined in the UN Declaration on Human Rights, as well as other UN conventions. Certain *rights* are obviously of key importance, like the right to organize, the right to assemble peacefully, the right to be informed, the right to speak out, the right to practice your religion, the right to vote in elections, the right to be respected as a minority.

Fundamental values of a democratic culture are more important that the specific organizational or institutional design. Could it be argued that part of the Danish attraction is the balanced combination of the two?

COMPETENCIES COMING TOGETHER

Cooperation with the *Danish Youth Council* and the D*anish-Egyptian Dialogue Institute* in Egypt has shown that bringing different actors together can be an enormous strength. For obvious financial and logistical reasons, but primarily because you suddenly command many more perspectives and nuances that partners can benefit from. The Youth Council offers expertise on the ways Danish youth organize and operate; DIPD offers expertise on political parties and democracy more broadly; DEDI offers great knowledge on developments in Egypt..

Similarly, we have seen how the *Association of Municipal Councils* is a useful partner when talking about local branches of political parties.

The Danish Parliament, *Folketinget*, is helpful in areas that require expertise on parliamentary technicalities.

Political parties need to know about the role of the media, and *International Media Support* has been able to help us on that.

Much of the work we have done on women in politics has been co-facilitated by *KVINFO*, a key Danish institution for research and information on gender issues.

Offering our partners access to all of these Danish institutions and competencies is key to the successful study tours we have conducted in Denmark. It is not possible to do it in the same way and at the same level, when we travel abroad to our individual partners. Still, much can be done through strategic partnerships, as we have done with the *Danish Youth Council*.

IDEAS IN A NEW GLOBAL SETTING

We have reached the sixth decade of official development cooperation, more than 50 years after the first Danish development workers (or 'volunteers' as they were called then) travelled to newly independent nations in Africa in particular.

These volunteers were nurses, doctors, carpenters, masons, farmers, teachers, auditors. They were professionals, asked to communicate their Danish competencies to people and institutions in recently independent states now in the process of nation building.

Numerous evaluations have documented numerous mistakes. People, who are ignorant about how difficult it is to get development cooperation right, will be confirmed in their prejudices. Those of us who have been direct participants know that mistakes are unavoidable, but also that some mistakes could have been avoided, in particular if we had understood that development cooperation is more about politics than about technicalities.

Personally, I believe that much more than we can actually measure objectively remained as ideas in the heads and hearts of people high and low. Even if the institutions we built together ended up being crippled or torn down, because they represented a threat towards the vested interests of ruling elites, individuals would still be around to keep the ideas and inspiration alive.

Today, our challenge is to find new ways of positioning the needed transfer of competencies globally, at a time when countries and people are becoming increasingly inward looking, self-centered, and afraid of sharing. This will make it harder to continue development cooperation as we have known it for half a century. Global solutions to global threats that affect people and nations negatively (whether the Trumps of the world believe it or not) in areas like equality, environment, crime, terrorism, and tax evasion to mention a few, need to find new ways and formats.

Development cooperation as we have come to know it has now existed for half a century. For most other issues or products, you would expect radical changes both in form and content over a 50 year period. Maybe time has come to find an entirely new framework for our global efforts to eradicate poverty, support democracy, gender equality, the environment and much more in what we could call for *global public goods*.

The search for development cooperation 2.0 has to begin, with enthusiasm and determination.

In the process, we will meet new challenges because this is not only about *offering* our distinct competencies intelligently, but also about putting the competencies *at risk* in competition with others. Our ideas will be challenged by nations with other values and competencies. They will offer (good) governance with an emphasis on control rather than trust, and institutions that are effective but care little about the rights of the rights-holders.

Developing countries are increasingly questioning if the approach to democracy presented by the UN system is legitimate at all. Is it not in fact a Western invention?

This puts institutions like DIPD under a lot of pressure. How to respond honestly and effectively to this challenge, at the general level as well as at the level of specific programmes, must be at the top of our to-do list in the years to come.

BRING DEMOCRACY SUPPORT HOME!

I have written about support for democracy *out there,* at a time when democracy *back home* seems to need new inspiration and support as well. This is extremely frustrating for someone who has argued that our legitimacy stems from our ability to use our own democracy as a positive example of what is necessary, possible and useful. I offer no magic bullet for how to deal with this challenge, but on the last pages of the book, I hope to be able to offer a few ideas for further reflection and action.

This article is an original contribution to the book, bringing some of the ideas suggested in other articles together to indicate a way forward.

The photo of an old man listening attentively to party leaders speaking at a rally has become a symbol to me of how important ordinary people consider politics to be. For them it is more than a 'theater'.

DEMOCRACY UNDER PRESSURE

We were euphorically excited in early 2011. The Arab Spring was unfolding before our eyes, and through television and social media, we had a sense that we were turning a historic corner, and that we were directly involved. Sure, we were watching from a safe distance, but we also felt that we were in a sense 'shareholders' in the transformation of one of the last bastions of authoritarian rule.

In the last part of 2016, we are witnessing a world divided and confused, with leaders uncertain about what direction to take to manage monumental challenges like climate change, international terrorism, civil war, state failure, tax evasion on a global scale, uncontrollable flows of refugees.

Many countries experience pressure on democratic institutions and human rights. Authoritarianism is on the rise. Populism is showing its face all over. Nationalism is perceived as a solution to all evils. 'Trumpism' is setting new standards for how we define truth, politics and decency.

At a time when globalism and sharing of ideas globally is more needed than ever, globalism and sharing is getting weaker and outright unpopular.

For those who have read some of the articles in this book before they ended here, reading about my reflections for the way forward, I believe it is clear that I consider myself as a *Globalist*. This is how I have lived my life. This is what I have dedicated my life to. This is the basis for how I think and hopefully act.

This has also defined my understanding of how *Danish ideas can inspire* others around the world. Not by feeling superior or being arrogant, but by being willing to listen and dialogue. It is our responsibility at national level to decide our own destiny, but this is always linked to larger regional and global realities.

My suggestions for how to address some of our challenges are set within this type of thinking.

1. BRING DEMOCRACY SUPPORT HOME

It is clear that democracies all around the world are facing serious problems, including our own. Political parties are losing members; trust in politicians is low; institutions are fragile and dysfunctional; polarization rather than finding solutions together is the name of the game. How does this affect our work with democracy support?

In my view, the legitimacy of DIPD and other democracy support institutions is closely linked to how our own democracy performs. The closer our own democracy is to the ideals embedded in our Constitution, and the more vibrant our formal and informal

democratic cultures are performing, the more legitimate will our partners consider us to be.

Let me be perfectly clear: I do not subscribe to the argument that unless you have a perfect or ideal democracy at home, you cannot legitimately 'spread the gospel' about democracy around the world. Taken to its logical extreme, such a position means that the resources for global sharing of ideas would dry out very quickly.

My point is a different one. We are not as different as many would like to believe. The challenges facing countries like Nepal, Bhutan, Kenya, Ghana and Bolivia are in principle very much like those facing old democracies like Denmark and the United States. For sure, the degree, form and shape of a challenge will often differ. A new democracy like Myanmar has to wrestle with multiple challenges without yet having a solid foundation in place. Because our foundations are more solid, it should be easier for the US and Denmark to find back to the roads that can lead us in the right direction.

However, the assumption about a deep divide between democracy *'out there'* and democracy *'back home'* is no longer valid. This assumption has been a basis for the democracy support community for several decades. We need to let this thinking rest in peace. We also need to look at ourselves in the mirror in a sober and honest manner. Only if we have the will to do that can we re-position our work realistically to address the challenges we are facing right now.

Ideally, you could consider having a section within DIPD dedicated to helping Danish political parties develop their membership strategies, communication with citizens, dialogue with other parties, etc. This should not be funded with money from development cooperation budgets, but from the resources already being allocated to all political parties from the state.

To get started, however, it is probably more realistic to think small and be creative. DIPD could ask partners around the world to help us analyse, diagnose and suggest solutions. We could do this when partners visit Denmark on study tours around election time or for Constitution Day.

One good opportunity will be in November 2017, when municipal elections take place. There are likely to be representatives from around 50 political parties in 14 countries in Denmark. We could ask them to compile a report on strengths and weaknesses; present the report to high-level representatives from all parties in Parliament; and then ensure a follow-up, just as we do with our partners. I am confident that Danish parties would be willing to engage in such an experiment.

2. UNDERSTAND THE MARKETPLACE

The days when the 'marketplace' for democracy support was an open playground for Western powers are over. Today, Western democracies have to operate alongside or in competition with authoritarian regimes with a longer and stronger international reach than they had a few decades ago. How can we manage this new situation?

This is not only a challenge for the democracy support community. This is something the entire Western development community has to deal with.

Over the last decade, countries like China, India, Indonesia, Brazil and South Africa have entered the international scene with determination and confidence, driven by the need to secure resources for their own growth. Although these countries are members of the UN and have signed up to the conventions and declarations referred to elsewhere in this book, they do not seem to engage with a strong commitment to human rights and basic democratic principles.

In fact, they have made it their trademark not to present any conditionality whatsoever regarding governance and the rights of citizens. They do not see this as a legitimate part of their cooperation, in the way we have done. Rather, they see it as neo-colonial or neo-imperialist interference in the internal affairs of a country. In some cases they have a point.

Power is moving from the West to "the rest", as expressed by Thomas Carothers, who has written intelligently about this change in the configuration of the global marketplace. This is not in itself all negative, on the contrary. However, I agree with his observation that *"Western policymakers and aid practitioners have been slow to come to grips with the realities and implications of this new situation."*

Maybe it is because we have erroneously expected this to be no more than a brief deviation from the 'normal' way of doing things. This has proven to be wrong! We have a 'new normal', and we must seek to understand the implications for the territory we are trying to operate in.

Personally, I saw it coming in Southern Africa more than a decade ago. One positive consequence was that Western thinking about development and governance was challenged, and this was healthy for the countries searching for a way forward. Why should Chinese, Indian, Indonesian, Brazilian or South African ways of doing things not be just as good as our way? Did Western countries not use force or intimidation as well?

However, it soon became clear that ruling elites used the presence of the new players to widen their own authoritarian territory, silencing critical voices in the media, shrinking the

space for civil society, making sure that critical voices in the ruling parties were silenced.

Most of us do not have the power to compete in the new marketplace, but we need to understand what is happening. Long-term, our strength is that we have access to a broad diversity of stakeholders rooted in existing democratic cultures, however weak or strong.

3. INCLUDE CIVIL SOCIETY

Many new democracies have spent most of their money and energy on building formal institutions like parliaments and parties, and holding elections than can be seen to be free and fair. At the same time, they deliberately forget to develop a genuine democratic culture. In too many countries, civil society is seen as a threat to the political establishment, not as the social capital it could ideally be. This is where our experience could make a difference.

Many democracy institutions work with both political parties, parliaments, and civil society organizations. The mandate given to DIPD also makes it possible for us to engage with CSOs, and we have done so.

In countries like Bhutan and Egypt, we have worked with them because they could deliver in areas where parties could not.

In countries like Nepal and Myanmar, we have encouraged cooperation between parties and CSOs, because both are stakeholders in a democratic culture, and both stand to benefit.

For our partners, what they have found useful and surprising when visiting Denmark are at least two aspects of this 'reluctant marriage' between the two sides.

One aspect is the ability of CSOs to mobilize citizens, not least young citizens, around important societal issues. The largest Danish membership CSO has as many members as all the nine parties represented in parliament combined. The question that begs to be answered is simple: What can CSOs do that parties cannot?

Another aspect is the capacity of CSOs to articulate why we need to address important issues, and how it can be done. Throughout modern political history, Danish CSOs have often worked closely with political parties to define agendas that need to be legislated. This is not about the two sides agreeing, but about playing different roles in our democracy.

This dimension is already part of DIPD programming, but both party-to-party and multiparty programmes need to focus more on this, especially at a time when the formal institutions of democracy is under pressure all over the world.

The effort must not be based on an idealistic understanding of parties and CSOs playing the same role in our democracy. It should be based on bringing the comparative advantages together in a constructive manner, like I have indicated in another article in this book.

Key to this is that CSOs are at their best when they generate new ideas based on thorough analysis; and parties are at their best when they are able to aggregate the diversity of opinions and interests that exist among citizens.

It is therefore also important to strengthen and deepen the dialogue and cooperation between the community working with social and economic development, and the community working with support for democracy. Too much work intended to strengthen social and economic development is implemented without the participants recognizing that this is also about 'politics'. Similarly, democracy supporters are not always aware of the broader social and economic context of the countries they engage in.

Creating a dialogue that can benefit both communities should not really be too difficult.

4. GET THE 'THEORY OF CHANGE' RIGHT

The less money you have to invest, the more you need to know about the territory you are entering – formal as well as informal aspects of the political system; how genuine party leaders are about reforms; willingness to adopt a democratic culture. How you think you can get from A to B is what change theory is about. How to do it is the secret.

From the beginning, wise women and men on the board of DIPD have taken the position that much of what we need to do can be compared to an investor making *'risk-willing capital'* available in the market. Of course, before we decide on the investment, we analyse the market carefully. With all the barriers and spoilers we can identify, how do we envisage moving from A to B to C? So yes, the risks we take are of course carefully calculated.

However, the reality is that most of us do not have the luxury of being able to analyse enough; there will always be important information that escapes our eyes.

This is yet another argument for making sure that the leadership of a political party is both informed and committed. A theory of change scenario only makes sense if it is developed as a joint venture between the Danish party and the local party. You need to know how things are assessed by those with intimate knowledge of the local political scene; you also need to be clear about what competencies the Danish partner can bring in.

Because it is expensive and time-consuming to get the analysis or baseline right, there is a need for institutions like DIPD to work with others much more closely than we have done so far. Our partners could be sister institutions in other countries. They could also be think tanks, research institutions and universities.

It is not easy. Donors like to pay for activities, and research and reflection is not seen as measurable activities by all donors. However, this does not make the argument less valid, especially when you operate in a difficult and sensitive territory.

5. COORDINATE WITH OUR FRIENDS

During my years with the UN, I learned the importance of organisations coming together to deliver programmes in a coherent and coordinated manner. One policy, one strategy, one programme, one monitoring system! I have often been surprised about how little the actors in the democracy community know and care about this.

The development community has talked about coherence and coordination for two decades. Principles and procedures have been developed, and some progress can undoubtedly be documented. In many countries, the transaction costs for a developing country of working with bilateral and multilateral donors have been reduced.

After all, how do you expect a country like Tanzania, with a state the size of the City of Copenhagen, to be able to monitor, control and benefit from more than twenty donors? If you add the international and national NGOs and CSOs, the number easily rises to more than one hundred. By the way, how would the City of Copenhagen react if more than a hundred foreign donors decided to undertake projects around the city, without accepting any form of coordination?

Coordination is not primarily something you should entertain because *we* can benefit. The logic is rooted in the understanding that it will benefit the *nation*, making interventions more transparent, more effective, more sustainable, and more democratic. Simply because it will be easier for the recipient or partner to be in control.

In DIPD, we have always shared our plans with friends in the democracy community. This has been true at the global level as well as at the country level. The response has been very positive at the global level, and this has been an important resource for DIPD in the initial stages of starting the institute.

However, at the country level it has been much more difficult. Many institutions have been very protective and

secretive about their plans with both platforms of parties and individual parties. Rarely have there been any systematic effort to coordinate in the way the development community at large has become accustomed to.

One consequence is that there are too many examples of duplication of effort; there is also a risk of lack of coherence in the efforts undertaken. At the end of the day, it means that resources are wasted or used ineffectively.

Back in 2012, DIPD took the initiative to organize a Nordic Forum, where party support institutions could meet annually to reflect and share. Over time, I hope that this could also result in parties and institutions coming together, when partnerships require more muscle than one institution is able to deliver.

Maybe this could also lead to formalization of country level coordination mechanisms, of course with our partners at the table as well. I know that it sounds bureaucratic, but it does not have to be. My experience is that in the best-case scenario, it can also help 'democratize' the business of democracy support.

Why not?

RECOMMENDED READING

I recognize how indebted I am to those, who have analyzed and explained the territory of democracy support. The literature on democracy is vast, and I have only touched the surface. Some of the books have been of particular importance to me, because they have offered reflections and perspectives that I have found thoughtful and useful. In fact, I have presented many of their findings in the articles published in this book, without always paying direct tribute to them. For this I apologize!

Nepal is not only a poor country; it is also a country with beautiful sceneries. Nagarkot outside Kathmandu is one of the places where I have been privileged to enjoy moments of tranquility and reflection with good friends.

ON DEVELOPMENT IN GENERAL

Acemoglu, Daron and James A. Robinson: "*Why Nations Fail. The origins of power, prosperity and poverty.*" Profile Books, 2012.529 pages.

People in the democracy support community tend to neglect the links we need to establish with the broader development community. How economic and social development depend on or fuel the development of democratic institutions is a decade-old debate, and it is likely to continue for years. This book does not end the debate, but it argues convincingly that development is about institutions, not climate, geography or culture.

Mills, Greg: Why States Recover. *"Changing Walking Societies into Winning Nations – from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe."* Picador Africa, 2014. 689 pages.

With analysis of more than 40 countries, Greg Mills is able to cast light on the causes of state failure, and how and why recovery has also been possible. In most cases, both economic failure and recovery stem from political decisions and institutions. He also looks at the role for both insiders and outsiders, and this is where the insights of the author becomes particularly relevant for us.

ON DEMOCRACY IN GENERAL

Diamond, Larry: *"The Spirit of Democracy. The struggle to build free societies throughout the world."* Henry Holt and Company, 2008. 448 pages.

In the book, Larry Diamond demonstrates that the desire for democracy runs deep, also in poor countries. It is an optimistic book, and I have referred to it in several of my articles. I acknowledge that much of my own thinking has been inspired and framed by reading Diamond's analysis of how the third wave of democracy unfolded.

Diamond, Larry: *"In Search of Democracy."* Routledge, 2016. 409 pages.

Larry Diamond has worked to understand the state of democracy globally for many decades, and his 2008 book is a favorite of mine. In his new book, Diamond uses recent data to assess the state of affairs at the beginning of 2015, and he explains why the world has been experiencing a mild but now deepening recession of democracy and freedom since 2005. Understanding why this is the case is important, if we want to find ways to turn the tide.

Diamond, Larry and Marc F. Plattner, editors: *"Democracy in Decline?"* Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016. 127 pages.

A brief overview of the present debate on how we should define the situation right now. Thinkers like Francis Fukuyama, Robert Kagan, Larry Diamond, Thomas Carothers and others present their positions. Why are many democracies not able to deliver better on the expectations of citizens? What is the attraction of the authoritarian countries now presenting themselves as an alternative with great self-confidence? Can we turn the present 'recession' around?

Fukuyama, Francis: *"Political Order and Political Decay. From the Industrial Revolution to the Globalisation of Democracy."* Profile Books, 2014. 658 pages.

This is the second volume in Fukuyama's work on the origins, evolution and decay of political institutions. It is fascinating to get the long-term perspective on how the three sets of key political institutions can be calibrated: a competent state, strong rule of law, and democratic accountability. Why did democracy spread? What are the major threats to democracy today? Where are we heading as a global community? These are questions the book offers great insights about.

Huntington, Samuel: *"The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century"*. University of Oklahoma Press, 1991. 366 pages.

Huntington is probably best known by his 1993 theory about "The Clash of Civilizations", of a post-cold war new world order. He argued that future wars would not be fought between countries, but between cultures, and that Islamic extremism would become the biggest threat to the Western world. This book on the 'third wave' was published a few years earlier, and while I disagree with much of his analysis, I have benefitted from this foundational book about the wave.

Keane, John: *"The Life and Death of Democracy."* Simon and Schuster, 2009. 957 sider.

Keane presents the first grand history of democracy for well over a century. He poses timely questions: how did democratic ideals and institutions come to have the shape they do today? Given all the recent fanfare about democracy promotion, why are many people now gripped by the feeling that a bad moon is rising over the world's democracies? Do they have a future? Is perhaps democracy fated to melt away, along with our polar ice caps?

ON DEMOCRACY/PARTY ASSISTANCE

Carothers, Thomas: *"Confronting the Weakest Link. Aiding Political Parties in New Democracies."* Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2006. 269 pages.

This book has greatly influenced my thinking about support for political parties. Carothers was one of the first who pointed to weaknesses in the way parties were supported. He is critical in a sobering manner, and constructive. Now ten years old, but the analysis and the recommendations for how to work differently remain relevant.

Mitchell, Lincoln A.: *"The Democracy Promotion Paradox."* Brookings Institution Press, 2016. 222 pages.

Most people agree that Western democracy cannot be *exported* or *imported*. However, we sometimes act as if it is possible! Mitchell is both a practitioner and an academic, and his experience is mostly based on US experiences and practices. He is a skeptic about democracy promotion, but it is useful to consider the paradoxes.

ON BHUTAN

Sithey, Gyambo: *"Democracy in Bhutan: The First Five Years."* Centre for Research Initiative, 2013. 203 pages.

The first critical and only comprehensive analysis of how institutions, events and policies played out from 2008 to 2013, during the tenure of the first democratically elected government. This was an interesting period, when the ruling party controlled 45 og the 47 seats in the National Assembly – leaving only two for the opposition. This was reversed in the 2013 election. The book shows both the strengths and weaknesses of the democratic system embedded in the young constitution. It was published with support from DIPD.

ON MYANMAR

Popham, Peter: *"The Lady and the Generals. Aung San Suu Kyi and Burma's struggle for freedom."* Rider, 2016. 440 pages.

Transitions are never about one person, but individuals can certainly play a decisive role. This is the case with Aung San Suu Kyi, and this book tells where she is coming from, how she

achieved the election victory in November 2015, and where she and her country is heading. The author is Suu Kyi's acclaimed biographer, and he has followed the development of Suu Kyi more closely than most.

ON NEPAL

Jha, Prashant: *"Battles of the New Republic. A Contemporary History of Nepal."* Aleph, 2014. 358 pages.

A fascinating narrative of the transition of Nepal to democracy, covering the period from around 1950 until today. While a personal and passionate story told by a fine journalist, it is clearly based on having followed events of the last decade very closely, allowing him to include many interesting personal accounts.

Pokharel, Bhojraj and Shrishti Rana: *"Nepal . Votes for Peace."* Foundation Books, 2013. 266 pages.

DIPD Representative in Nepal, Shrishti Rana, is co-author of this book, but this is not the main reason why you should read it! It is an excellent introduction to the transformation of Nepal from a kingdom to a multiparty democratic republic, and the holding of elections for the Constituent Assembly in April 2008.

ON ZIMBABWE

Dorman, Sara Rich: *"Understanding Zimbabwe. From Liberation to Authoritarianism." Hurst & Company, 2016. 347 pages.*

Dorman takes a broader perspective than most other recent books. She first looks at how the post-1980 government used state institutions to build its hegemony; then how societal groups respond to their political environment; and finally how the regime resists challenges to its hegemony. It is a very compact presentation, not always easy to digest, but it adds dimensions to the traditional explanations about Mugabe and his ruling party.

DIPD PUBLICATIONS

"Coalition Building. Finding Solutions Together." Edited by Hanne Lund Madsen. 2015. 63 pages.

Academics Denis Kadima, Flemming Juul Christiansen and Robert Klemmensen look at the global as well as the Danish

experiences in setting up coalition governments as well as finding long-term solutions to certain important issues in society.

"How to Build a Youth Wing. 30 Topics to Debate and Consider." Edited by Bjørn Førde and Karina Pultz. Consultant Vibeke Vinther. DIPD, DUF, DEDI, 2012. 58 pages.

Danish parties all have strong youth wings. Their experiences are gathered here, for inspiration for others around the world, and to be used with caution.

"Political Parties at Local Level. Danish Experiences for Inspiration." Edited by Bjørn Førde and Karina Pultz. Consultant Jørgen Estrup. 2013. 70 pages.

Experiences of Danish parties with local branches – how to form them, how to develop a programme, recruitment of members, and how to win elections.

"Women in Politics. Diversity and Equality for a Democratic Culture." Edited by Bjørn Førde. 2012. 61 pages.

Background reader for the Christiansborg Seminar, with a focus on young women (by Maryse Helbert), women at local level (by Sumona Dasgupta), women in transition countries (by Rumbidzai Kandawasvika), and the Danish way (by Jytte Larsen).

"Political Parties in Democratic Transitions." Edited by Greg Power and Rebecca A. Shoot. 2012. 94 pages.

This DIPD reader presents experiences with the role of political parties in transitions in Latin America, Turkey, Indonesia, Serbia and South Africa.

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