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COMPAS P.O. Box 64,
3830 AB Leusden, The Netherlands
Tel: + 31 (0)33 4326000
Fax: +31 (0)33 4940791
E-mail: compas@etcnl.nl
www.compasnet.org

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The six-monthly Endogenous Development Magazine is free of charge for those individuals and organisations interested in the role of culture, indigenous knowledge and worldviews in agriculture, natural resource management and rural development.

Editorial team

Sara van Otterloo (acting editor-in-chief),
Claire Boonzaaijer, Frank Heijster,
Wim Hiemstra

Lay out and design

Marijke Kreikamp

Printing

BDU Barneveld

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Western notions of democracy stand in the way of endogenous development

Motion for debate in Endogenous Development Magazine No 4, June 2009



Explanation of the motion

Democracy (meaning rule of the people in Greek) as a concept in the west stems from a tradition that includes political pluralism, equality before the law, the right to petition, civil liberties and human rights.

The current government in Bolivia, headed by Evo Morales (see photo), presents itself as 'indigenous' and therefore different from western democracies. COMPAS partner Cesar Escobar elaborates: 'In the case of the Morales government, the proposed new constitution would enable indigenous peoples to exercise forms of governance in accordance with their own customs at the local level. Nevertheless, at national level western-style democracy will continue to predominate. At present, indigenous and western forms of democracy merely coexist.'

COMPAS partner David Millar reflects: 'In my view, 'good governance' is what we need to focus on. This is about good decision-making and above all loyalty and accountability. I wonder

whether in Africa our formal governments make good decisions and, more importantly, whether they hold themselves accountable for the decisions they make. Traditional institutions appear to be doing quite well (at least on the loyalty part), but how do these institutions maintain their credibility? Endogenous development offers us the opportunity to study traditional institutions, systems and structures and how they operate in their complexities.'

COMPAS partner Agnes Apusigah adds: 'What I see in Africa is a shady approximation of the traditional systems at the national level: democracy brewed in the Africa Pot, perhaps. But whose interests does it serve? Can we talk of a true African system of democratic governance in our time? One that has not been misappropriated to serve interests other than those originally intended! I am optimistic that when we mature in our efforts to Africanise, the product will better serve African interests.' **Do endogenous forms of governance have the potential for greater accountability and loyalty?**

Join the debate

We invite readers to respond to the motion *Western notions of democracy stand in the way of endogenous development*. Contributions from Compas partners are already on the website, and a selection of the responses will be published in the ED-Magazine 4. Please restrict your contribution to not more than 200 words.

Post your views on www.compasnet.org or send an email to compas@etcnl.nl