

# **LOCAL AGENDA 21 ACROSS THE WORLD: The current state and challenges**

**Bob Evans**  
**Sustainable Cities Research Institute,**  
**Northumbria University, UK**

**ICLEI WORLD CONGRESS 2006 CAPE TOWN**

***1992 – 2006 - Fourteen years is not a long time, but much has been achieved....***

- ❑ Sustainable development is now widely understood and accepted as policy principle and ‘a way of thinking’**
- ❑ Local governments world wide have adopted LA21 and similar approaches**
- ❑ Citizen participation, partnership and capacity building are increasingly accepted as a way of local governments and civil society working together towards sustainability**

## ***Global and Regional initiatives underpin and support LA21, for example .....***

- The Earth Charter**
- The Habitat Agenda**
- The Millennium Development Goals**
- The Melbourne Principles**
- The Aalborg Commitments**
- LALA21 Network Latin America**

## ***Local Governments world wide.....***

- have been leaders and innovators in sustainable development, often in the face of national government inaction**
- are a source of knowledge and good practice**
- have demonstrated that sustainable development can work in practice**

## ***The challenge for sustainable development is overwhelmingly a political one....***

- ❑ Sustainable development is not primarily a scientific, technical or administrative project**
- ❑ At its very heart, sustainability is political in character**
- ❑ Sustainability implies ‘winners’ as well as ‘losers’**
- ❑ Thus, there will be many who oppose, ignore or marginalise those who seek to promote sustainable development**

***Think globally, act locally!***

**What challenges are we likely to  
face in the next few years?**

## ***At the local level.....***

- Nurturing effective local governance**
- Mainstreaming sustainability**

## ***What do we mean by governance?***

**“a process of open and inclusive public decision-making which actively seeks the commitment and engagement of citizens, stakeholders and interest organisations”**

***...and ‘good governance’ is***

**collaborative, consensual, democratic, and  
‘bottom-up’ rather than ‘top-down’**



## ***What are the key principles which underpin good governance?***

- Openness**
- Participation**
- Accountability**
- Effectiveness**
- Coherence**

***(European Governance – A White Paper, 2001)***

***But, to these we must add...***

- Principled Leadership**
- Dialogue**
- Trust**

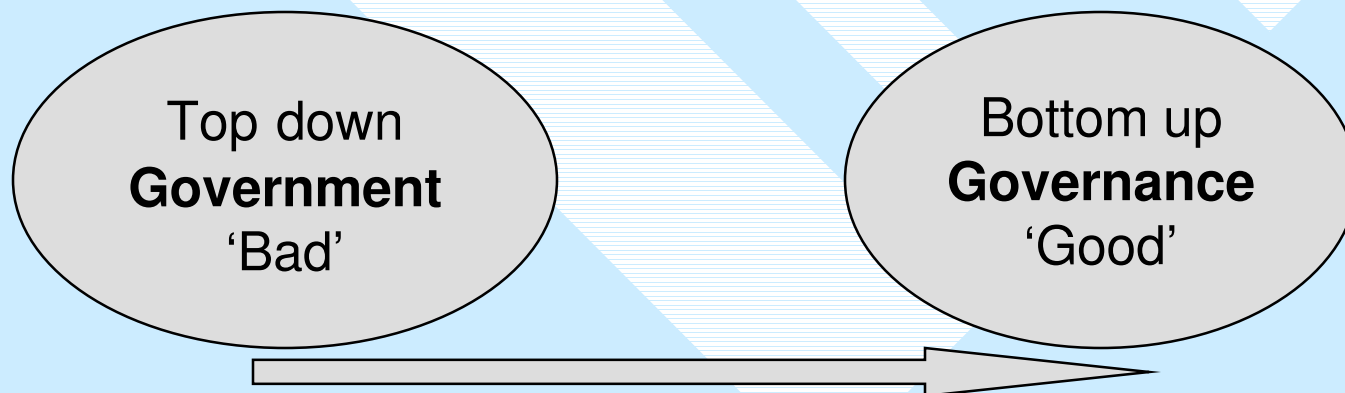
***....and crucially,***

- Democracy**
- Equity**
- Justice**

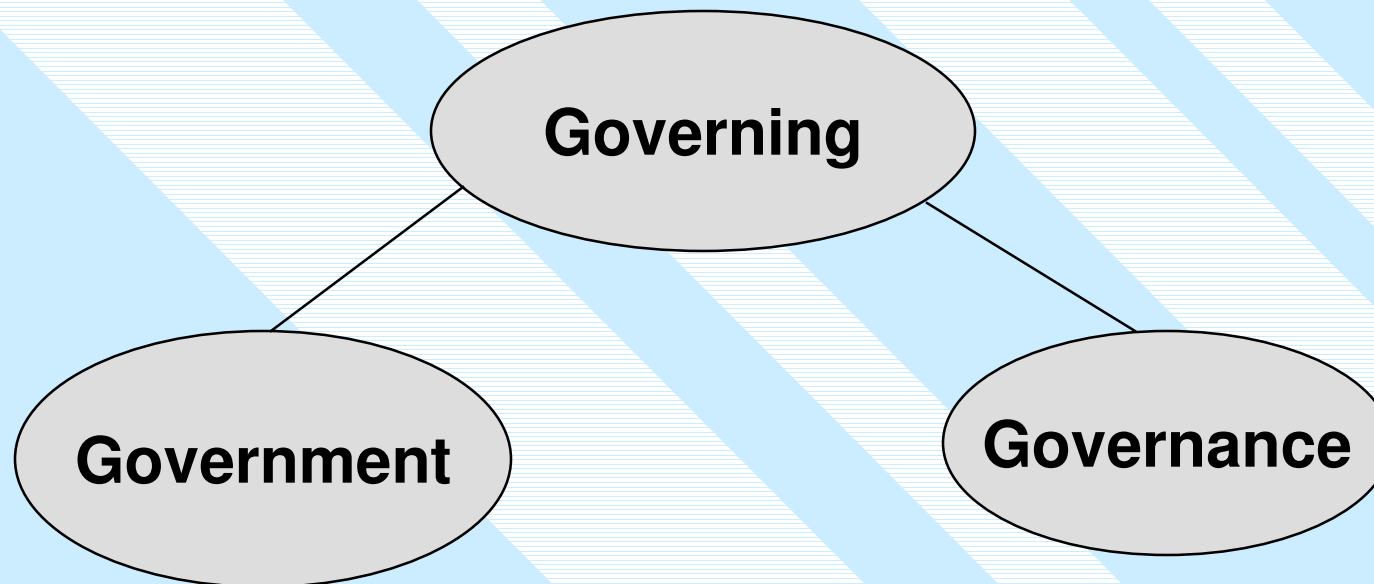
*Is governance.....*

- unarguably a 'good thing'?
- and somehow better than 'government'?

**The traditional/normative model: the government –  
governance continuum**



## *The DISCUS Model*



**From 'Governing Sustainable Cities' by Evans, Joas,  
Sundbach & Theobald, Earthscan Press, 2004**

## ***So governance is.....***

- ❑ part of the process of governing and it is**
- ❑ the sphere of public debate, partnership, interaction, dialogue and conflict entered into by local citizens and organisations and by local government**

## **Local government is the key to local governance**

- Effective urban governance is nurtured by local government**
- The governance process can build institutional capital**
- The governance process can build social capital**

## ***Institutional capacity is....***

- The knowledge, values, relationships, skills and wisdom which underpin action**
- Civic entrepreneurship and innovation**
- Dynamic leadership and policy drivers**
- A culture of learning and openness**

## ***Social capacity is.....***

- The process of civic engagement**
- Resilient social networks**
- Trust in local government**
- Confident and effective local community organisations**
- Social capital.....**



## ***Building local capacity.....***

- The sphere of local government**
- Local government autonomy**
- Investing in people**
- Building alliances**
- Looking outwards**

## ***Mainstreaming sustainability in local government.....***

- cannot be simply a ‘tick box’ process
- involves embedding sustainability as ‘a way of doing things’ – an ethos akin to the profit motive in the private sector
- must involve nurturing the independence, creativity and confidence of local government, respecting local diversity and needs

## ***The wider challenge is to nurture local resilience in the face of global change***

- Climate change mediation and adaptation**
- Energy security**
- Resource depletion**
- The realignment of the global economy**

## ***Our experience tells us....***

- that LA21 and local governments can make a major contribution to building resilient and sustainable communities**
- that regional and international networks and programmes can be effective in supporting cities' sustainability initiatives**

## ***But we also know....***

- ❑ that globally, ‘unsustainable behaviour’ still far exceeds ‘sustainable behaviour’**
- ❑ that we live in a rapidly changing world and we will have to adapt to this urgently**
- ❑ that the ‘sustainability transition’ will produce winners as well as losers. It will require extraordinary political skills to secure these changes**

**Bob Evans**  
**Sustainable Cities Research Institute**  
**Northumbria University,**  
**Newcastle upon Tyne, UK**

**[bob2.evans@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:bob2.evans@northumbria.ac.uk)**

**[www.sustainable-cities.org.uk](http://www.sustainable-cities.org.uk)**