Towards Participatory Local Governance:
Assessing the Transformative Possibilities [∗]
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<u>Introduction</u>

For the last twenty years, the concept of 'participation' has been widely used in the discourse of development. For much of this period, the concept has referred to participation in the social arena, in the 'community' or in development projects. Increasingly, however, the concept of participation is being related to rights of citizenship and to democratic governance. Nowhere is the intersection of concepts of community participation and citizenship seen more clearly than in the multitude of programmes for decentralised governance that are found in both Southern and Northern countries.

Linking citizen participation to the state at this local or grassroots level raises fundamental and normative questions about the nature of democracy and about the skills and strategies for achieving it. The literature is full of debates on the meanings of citizenship and of participation, on the role and relevance of 'the local', especially in the context of globalisation, and of course on the problem of governance itself. In this paper, I pose six challenges which point to the importance and potential for assessing the transformative possibilities of citizen engagement with local governance.

<u>Relating People and Institutions</u>

A first key challenge for the 21st century is the construction of new relationships between ordinary people and the institutions - especially those of government - which affect their lives.

Recently, a number of studies have pointed to the growing gap that exists within both North and South between ordinary people, especially the poor, and the institutions which affect their lives, especially government. For instance, the recent *Voices of the Poor* report, prepared for the WDR 2000/1, finds that many poor people around the globe perceive large institutions – especially those of the state – to be distant, unaccountable and corrupt. Drawing from participatory research exercises in 23 countries, the report concludes:

> *From the perspectives of poor people world wide, there is a crisis in governance. While the range of institutions that play important roles in poor people's lives is vast, poor people are excluded from participation in governance. State institutions, whether represented by central ministries or local government are often neither responsive nor accountable to the poor; rather the reports details the arrogance and disdain with which poor people are treated. Poor people see little recourse to injustice, criminality, abuse and corruption by institutions. Not surprisingly, poor men and women lack confidence in the state institutions even though they still express their willingness to partner with them under fairer rules (Narayan, et. al. 2000:172).*

The *Voices of the Poor Study* is not alone in its findings. Another study by the Commonwealth Foundation (1999) in over forty countries also found a growing disillusionment of citizens with their governments, based on their concerns with corruption, lack of responsiveness to the needs of the poor, and the absence participation or connection to ordinary citizens.

[∗] This paper builds upon previous papers prepared for the IDS Learning Initiative on Citizen Participation and Local Governance (www.ids.ac.uk/logolink) and the Development Research Centre on Citizenship, Participation and Accountability (www.ids.ac.uk/drc-citizen).

The empirical evidence on the crisis in the relationship between citizens and their state is not limited to the South. In a number of established democracies, traditional forms of political participation have gone down, and recent studies show clearly the enormous distrust citizens have of many state institutions. In the UK, for instance, a study sponsored by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation points to the

> *need to build a new relationship between local government and local people. There are two reasons for this. The first has to do with alienation and apathy. There is a major issue about the attitudes of the public, as customers or citizens, towards local government …This is a symptom of a lack of deeper malaise, the weakness or lack of public commitment to local democracy (Clarke and Stewart 1998:3).*

Other data in the United States, most notably the work by Robert Putnam, points as well to the decline in civic participation and the growing distance between citizens and state institutions.

Working Both Sides of the Equation

To rebuild relationships between citizens and their local governments means working both sides of the equation - that is, going beyond 'civil society' or 'state-based' approaches, to focus on their intersection, through new forms of participation, responsiveness and accountability.

As Fung and Wright (2001:5-6) observe, the right has taken advantage of the decline in legitimacy of public institutions to 'escalate its attack on the affirmative state…Deregulation, privatisation, reduction of social services and curtailments of state spending have been the watchwords, rather than participation, greater responsiveness, and more effective forms of democratic state intervention.' They and of course many others argue that the response to the crisis should focus not on dismantling the state, but on deepening democracy and seeking new forms for its expression. They argue that the 'institutional forms of liberal democracy plus techno-bureacratic administration - seem increasingly ill suited to the novel problems we face in the twenty-first century'.

However, those who have sought to deepen democratic governance have often been divided on their approach to the problem. On the one hand, attention has been made to strengthening the processes of citizen *participation* – that is the ways in which poor people exercise voice through new forms of inclusion, consultation and/or mobilisation designed to inform and to influence larger institutions and policies. On the other hand, growing attention has been paid to how to strengthen the *accountability* and *responsiveness* of these institutions and policies through changes in institutional design, and a focus on the enabling structures for good governance.

Increasingly, however, we are beginning to see the importance of working on both sides of the equation. As participatory approaches are scaled up from projects to policies, they inevitably enter the arenas of government, and find that participation can only become effective as it engages with issues of institutional change. And, as concerns about good governance and state responsiveness grow, questions about how citizens engage and make demands on the state also come to the fore.

In both South and North, there is growing consensus that the way forward is found in a focus on **both** a more active and engaged civil society which can express demands of the citizenry, **and** a more responsive and effective state which can deliver needed public services. In focus groups around the world, the Commonwealth Study, for instance, that despite their disillusionment with the state as it is, poor people would like to see strong government which will provide services, facilitate their involvement and promote equal rights and justice. The Commonwealth Study argues that that at the heart of the new consensus of strong state and strong civil society are the need to develop both *'participatory democracy* and *responsive government'* (76): the two are mutually reinforcing and supportive - strong, aware, responsible, active and engaged citizens along with strong, caring, inclusive, listening, open and responsive democratic governments' (82).

Similarly, Heller (2001:133) discusses the limits of both of the 'technocratic vision', with its emphasis on technical design of institutions, and of the 'anarcho-communitarian model', with its emphasis on radical grassroots democracy. Rather, he calls for a more balanced view (the 'optimist conflict model') which recognises the tensions between the need for representative working institutions, **and** the need for mobilised and demand making civil society. The solution is not found in the separation of the civil society and good governance agendas, but in their interface. The IDS study by Goetz and Gaventa (2001) extends this argument further by examining over sixty concrete cases of citizen voice and state responsiveness, and discusses further the mechanisms and conditions through which they intersect and interact.

Re-Conceptualising Participation and Citizenship

The call for new forms of engagement between citizens and the state involves a re-conceptualisation of the meanings of participation and citizenship in relationship to local governance.

Traditionally in representative democracies, the assumption has been that citizens express their preferences through electoral politics, and in turn, it was the job of the elected representatives to make policy and to hold the state accountable. In both North and in the South, new voice mechanisms are now being explored which argue as well for more direct connections between the people and the bureaucracies which affect them. In the UK, for instance, the White Paper on Modern Local Government puts an emphasis on more active forms of citizenship, and on the concept of community governance:

> *Local authorities are based on the principles of representative democracy, yet representative democracy has become passive. Rather than expressing a continuing relationship between government and citizen, the citizen is reduced to being a periodic elector. It is as if the idea of representative democracy has served to limit the commitment of the citizen to local government. At the same time, representative democracy and participatory democracy have been argued as mutually exclusive opposites. In fact, an active conception of representative democracy can be reinforced by participatory democracy - all the more easily in local government because of its local scales and its closeness to the local communities. (Quoted in Clark and Stewart 1998).*

Similarly, the Commonwealth study argues that:

> *In the past the relationship between the state and citizens has tended to be mediated and achieved (or thought to be) through the intermediaries, elected representatives and political party structures. But this aspect of participation in governance for a good society requires direct connection between citizens and the state. This interface has been neglected in the past. The connection between the citizen and the state must be based on participation and inclusion (82).*

As discussed in previous papers, linking participation to the political sphere means re-thinking the ways in which participation has often been conceived and carried out, especially in the development context (Gaventa and Valderrama 1999). In the past within development studies, the drive for *'participatory development'* has focussed on the importance of local knowledge and understanding as a basis for local action, and on direct forms of participation throughout the project cycle (needs assessment, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation). A wide range of participatory tools and methodologies have grown from this experience which now may have application in the field of *'participatory governance'*.

On the other hand, work on political participation growing out of political science and governance debates has often focused on issues largely underplayed by those working on participation in the community or social spheres. These include critical questions dealing with legitimate representation, systems of public accountability, policy advocacy and lobbying, rights education and awareness

building, and party formation and political mobilisation. Yet, the political participation literature has paid less attention to issues of local knowledge, participatory process, or direct and continuous forms of engagement by marginalised groups.
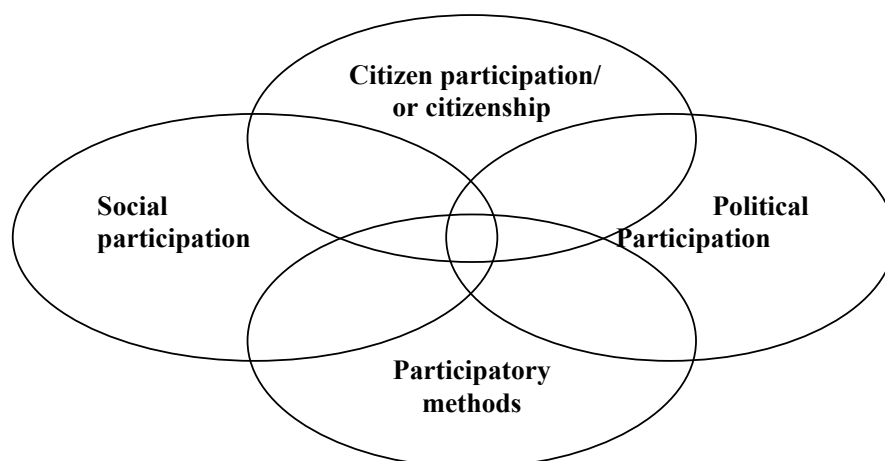

Fig. 1. Linking approaches to participation

Each tradition has much to learn from the other. Increasingly, they brought together, especially in the development field, under the concept of *'citizenship'*, which links participation in the political, community and social spheres. But the concept of 'citizenship', itself, has long been a disputed and value-laden one in democratic theory (Jones and Gaventa 2002; *IDS Bulletin* 2002) On the one hand, citizenship has traditionally been cast in liberal terms, as individual legal equality accompanied by a set of rights and responsibilities and bestowed by a state to its citizens. Newer approaches aim to bridge the gap between citizen and the state by recasting citizenship as practised rather than as given. . As Lister (1997: 41) argues, 'To be a citizen in the legal and sociological sense means to enjoy the rights of citizenship necessary for agency and social and political participation. To act as a citizen involves fulfilling the potential of that status'. Placing an emphasis on inclusive participation as the very foundation of democratic practice, these approaches suggest a more active notion of citizenship – one which recognises the agency of citizens as '*makers and shapers'* rather than as 'users and choosers' of interventions or services designed by others (Cornwall and Gaventa 2000).

Extending the concept of participation to one of citizenship also re-casts participation as a right, not simply an invitation offered to beneficiaries of development. As Lister also suggests, 'the right of participation in decision-making in social, economic, cultural and political life should be included in the nexus of basic human rights… Citizenship as participation can be seen as representing an expression of human agency in the political arena, broadly defined; citizenship as rights enables people to act as agents' (Lister1998:228).   Increasingly, this idea is invoked in development under the mantle of 'rights-based approaches to development'. The DFID strategy paper on *Realising Human Rights For Poor People (2000),* for instance, argues that rights will become real only as citizens are engaged in the decisions and processes which affect their lives. Underpinning the approach are three principles of a rights perspective: *inclusive rights* for all people, the right to *participation*, and the 'obligations to protect and promote the realisation' of rights by states and other duty bearers – a concept which links to that of *accountability*. Similarly the 2000 UNDP Human Development Report argues that 'the fulfilment of human rights requires democracy that is inclusive'.

For this, elections are not enough. New ways must be found to 'secure economic, social and cultural rights for the most deprived and to ensure participation in decision-making' (UNDP 7-9).

Other arguments extend the idea of 'a right to participation' further, suggesting that if rights and citizenship are attained through agency, not simply bestowed by the state, than the right to participate –e.g. the right to claim rights – is a prior right, necessary for making other rights real. And, while the liberal versions of citizenship have always included notions of political participation as a right, extending this to encompass participation in social and economic life *politicises* social rights - through re-casting citizens as their active creators. As Ferguson (1999: 7) asserts, for example, people cannot realise their rights to health if they cannot exercise their democratic rights to participation in decision-making around health service provision. Thus, while T.H. Marshall argued and others argued that social rights can be seen as positive freedoms in terms of enabling citizens to realise their political and civil rights, participation as a right can be seen as a positive freedom which enables them to realise their social rights (Ferguson 1999, DfID 2000, Lister 1997).

New Forms of Citizen – State Engagement

With the re-contepualisation of participation as a right of citizenship, and with the extension of the rights to participation beyond traditional voting and political rights, comes the search for more direct mechanisms of ensuring citizen voice in the decision making process.

Increasingly around the world, a number of these mechanisms are being explored which can foster more inclusive and deliberative forms of engagement between citizen and state. Earlier work by Goetz and Gaventa (2001) reviews a number of these mechanisms, arguing that they may be seen along a continuum, ranging from ways of strengthening voice on the one hand, while also strengthening receptivity to voice by institutions on the other. The 'voice' end of the spectrum, we argue, must begin with examining or creating the pre-conditions for voice, through awareness-raising and building the capacity to mobilise – that is, the possibility for engagement cannot be taken as a given, even if mechanisms are created.   Then there a series of strategies through which citizens' voices may be amplified in the governance process, ranging from advocacy research, to citizen lobbying for policy change, and citizen monitoring of performance. Then there are increasingly the arenas in which civil society and the state meet. These range from joint management and implementation and management of public services (through various forms of partnership), to legally mandated fora for participatory planning and joint decision-making.

Just as there are a number of mechanisms for amplifying voice, the paper argues, so these must also be strengthened by initiatives that strengthen the receptivity to voice within the state. These range from government mandated forms of citizen consultation, to setting standards through which citizens may hold government accountable, to various incentives for officials to be responsiveness to citizen voice, to changes in organisational culture, to legal provisions which in various ways make participation in governance a legal right.

At the intersection of the mechanisms for greater voice and the mechanisms for greater state responsiveness are a number of new legal or constitutional frameworks for participatory governance which incorporate a mix of direct forms of popular participation with more representative forms of democracy. There are numerous examples of innovations which arguably incorporate this approach, ranging from provisions for participatory planning at the local government level in India and the Philippines, to participatory budgeting and participatory health councils in Brazil, to citizen monitoring committees in Bolivia, to forms of public referenda and citizen consultation in the Europe. In many cases, the scale of these new fora is enormous. For instance, in Brazil, over 5,000 health councils were created by the 1988 Constitution, mandated to bring together representatives of neighbourhoods, social movements and civil society organisations, with service providers and elected representatives to govern health policy at the local level (Schattan, et. al. 2002.) (The IDS LogoLink project is currently undertaking a further review of these legal frameworks, forthcoming. For further information see www.ids.ac.uk/logolink.)

Such innovations go under various labels, ranging from 'participatory governance', to deliberative democracy, to 'empowered deliberative democracy' (Fung and Wright 2001:7) defined as:

o '*democratic* in their reliance on the participation and capacities of ordinary people,
o *deliberative* because they institute reasons-based decision-making, and
o *empowered* since they attempt to tie action to discussion'.

While such innovative mechanisms offer a great deal of possibility for strengthening citizen participation *as a right* in the governance process, their creation alone does not insure their transformative possibility. Far more information is needed. Whose voices are really heard in these processes? What about issues of representation and accountability within them? How will various forms of local governance accommodate differing meanings of citizenship that cut across gender, political, cultural, and social lines?

The Need for More Evidence

While the creation of new spaces for participatory governance holds out the possibility for transformative change, far more needs to be learned about how such spaces work, for whom, and with what social justice outcomes. In general, however, while there is some evidence of positive 'democracy' building outcomes, but as yet less evidence about the pro-poor development outcomes of participatory governance.

The promises on behalf of participatory governance, especially in the literature on democratic decentralisation, have been great. As Blair (2001: 23) summarises one line of argument:

> *the hope is that as government comes closer to the people, more people will participate in politics…that will give them representation, a key element in empowerment, which can be defined here as significant voice in public policy decisions which affect their futures. Local policy decisions reflecting this empowerment ill serve these newer constituencies, better living conditions and enhanced economic growth. These improvements will then reduce poverty and enhance equity among all groups.*

On the other hand, the evidence about the degree to which these outcomes have been realised is mixed.

Traditionally, the more pessimistic argument has been that democratic decentralisation simply opens up space for the empowerment of local elites, not for consideration of the voices and interests of the more marginalised. Obstacles of power, social exclusion, minimal individual and collective organisational capacity mean that few gains will be made by the poor. As Manor observes, he has 'yet to discover evidence of any case where local elites were more benevolent than those at higher levels.' (Manor 1999: 91, quoted in Blair 2001).

On the other hand, more recent studies of participatory forms of local governance have begun to point to some more positive outcomes. Blair's own study of democratic local governance in six countries, for instance, points to some gains in accountability and as well as participation and empowerment goals. Moreover, some improvement may be seen in 'universal services', such as education and health care - arguably because these served to benefit the local elites as well. Less success was seen in programmes targeted for the poor themselves, as these were more likely to be 'captured' by local elites.

Osmani's review of the literature, however, points to any number of examples of where 'truly participatory decentralisation' has contributed to both to greater equity and efficiency of local services, because it allows responsiveness to local services. But, he is also quick to point out that attempts to take such cases to scale have faced obstacles both of the unwillingness of those at the top to give up power and gaining involvement of the poor from the bottom.

Heller's study (2001:158) of democratic experiences in Kerala, Port Alegre, and South Africa is more positive, at least when it comes to what might be termed 'democratic process outcomes.' He finds that the synergy of state and society in local governance:

o   creates new associational incentive and spaces
o   allows for a continuous and dynamic process of learning
o   promotes deliberation and compromise
o   promotes innovative solutions to tensions between representation and participation
o   bridges knowledge and authority gap between technocratic expertise and local involvement

On the other hand, many of the experiments which are often held up as recent 'success' stories in participatory local governance are limited to a few places in the world, which often reflect contexts and conditions which are not widely found elsewhere. For instance, Heller's own study (2001) in Brazil, India, and South Africa points to three enabling conditions or participatory governance:

o   strong central state capacity;
o   a well developed civil society and
o   an organised political force, such as a party, with strong social movement characteristics.

Similarly, the work by Fung and Wright (2001) on innovative deliberative mechanisms in the US, Brazil and India, points to three principles that are fundamental to EDD (empowered deliberative democracy) and three which 'design principles' for institution building.

Principles of EDD (empowered deliberative democracy)

o   focus on specific, tangible problems
o   involvement of ordinary people affected by these problems and officials close to them
o   deliberative development of solutions to these problems

Design principles for EDD

o   devolution of public decision making authority
o   formal linkages of responsibility, resource distribution and communication
o   use and generation of new state institutions to support and guide these efforts.

However, they also point to one background enabling condition, that "there is a rough equality of power, for the purposes of deliberative decisions, between participants' (2001: 25).

What such studies begin to suggest then, is that while new spaces for participatory governance may offer some possibility for transformation and change, such spaces must be analysed in relationship to the larger power field which surround them. Power relations help to shape the boundaries of such spaces for participation, of what is possible, and who may enter, with which identities and with what discourses and interests.

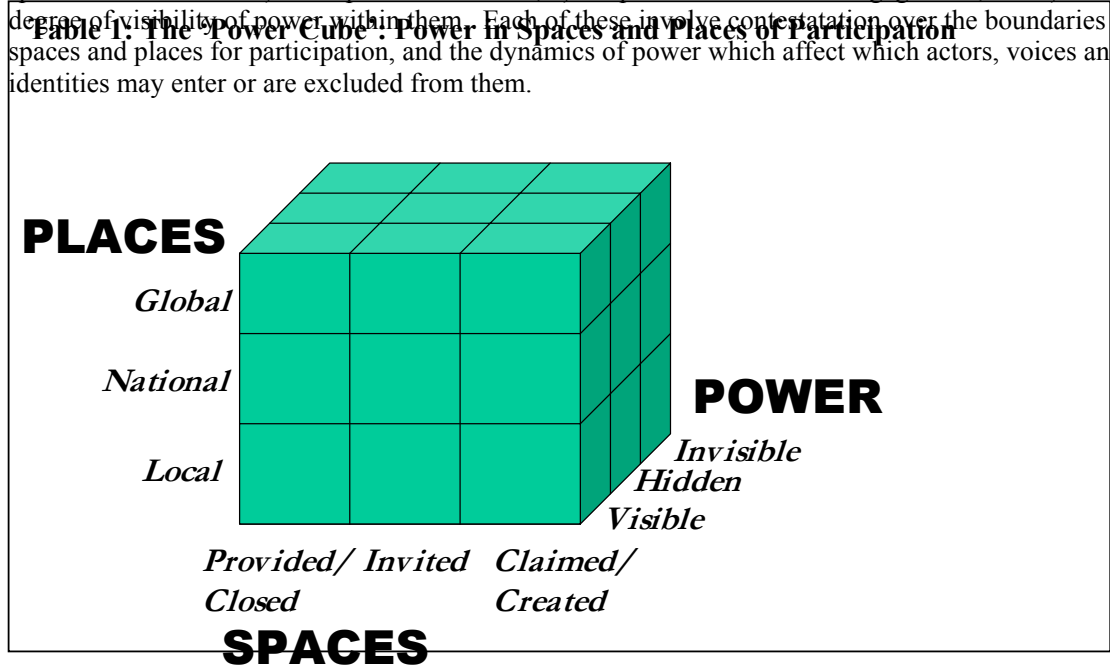**Assessing Power Relations in Participatory Spaces**

Power analysis is thus critical to understanding the extent to which new spaces for participatory governance can be used for transformative engagement, or whether they are more likely to be instruments for re-enforcing domination and control.

As Andrea Cornwall's recent work reminds us spaces for participation are not neutral, but are themselves shaped by power relations, which both surround and enter them (Cornwall 2002). She draws upon French social theorists (Lefebvre, Foucault, Bourdieu, among others) for whom the concept of power and the concept of space are deeply linked. Quoting Lefebvre:

'Space is a social product… it is not simply "there", a neutral container waiting to be filled, but is a dynamic, humanly constructed means of control, and hence of domination, of power.' (Lefebvre 1991:24).

Inherent in the idea of spaces and places is also the imagery of 'boundary'. Power relations help to shape the boundaries of participatory spaces, what is possible within them, and who may enter, with which identities, discourses and interests. Using the idea of boundary from Foucault and others, Hayward suggests that we might understand power 'as the network of social boundaries that delimit fields of possible action.' Freedom, on the other hand, 'is the capacity to participate effectively in shaping the social limits that define what is possible' (Hayward 1998:2). In this sense, participation as freedom is not only the right to participate effectively in a given space, but the right to define and to shape that space.

Building on these understandings of power, space and place, I suggest we need to look more closely at three differing continuums of power, if we are to assess the transformative possibility of political space. These involve a) how spaces are created; b) the places and levels of engagement; and c) the degree of visibility of power within them. Each of these involve contestatation over the boundaries of spaces and places for participation, and the dynamics of power which affect which actors, voices and identities may enter or are excluded from them.

Table 1: The 'Power Cube': Power in Spaces and Places of Participation

PLACES

Global

National

Local

POWER

Invisible
Hidden
Visible

Provided/ Invited   Claimed/
Closed   Created

SPACES

Spaces for Participation

In much work on power, the concept is understood as oppositional and in binary terms – as the powerful and the powerless; as hegemony and resistance; as inclusion or exclusion. Other work on power and spaces provides a more nuanced approach. It argues that those who shape a particular space affect who has power within it, but that those who are powerful in one space may in fact be less powerful in another. And, as Cornwall points out in her paper (2002), new spaces can be filled by 'old power' and vice versa.

So one dynamic we must explore in examining the spaces for participation is to ask how they were created, and with whose interests and what terms of engagement. While we are still seeking the appropriate terminology for these categories, our work seems to suggest a continuum of spaces, which include (Cornwall 2002; Brock, Cornwall, Gaventa 2001):

- **Closed or provided spaces.** Though we want to focus on spaces and places as they open up possibilities for participation, we must realise that still many, many decision-making spaces are closed. That is, decisions are made by a set of actors behind closed doors, without any pretence of broadening the boundaries for inclusion. Within the state, another way of conceiving these spaces is as 'provided' spaces in the sense that elites (be they bureaucrats, experts or elected representatives) make decisions and provide services to 'the people', without the need for broader consultation or involvement.

- **Invited spaces.** As efforts are made to widen participation, to move from closed spaces to more 'open' ones, new spaces are created which may be referred to as 'invited' spaces, i.e. 'those into which people (as users, as citizens, as beneficiaries) are invited to participate by various kinds of authorities, be they government, supranational agencies or non-governmental organisations' (Cornwall 2002:24). Invited spaces may be regularised, for instance in the case of the Constitutionally-created health councils in Brazil, or more transient, through one-off forms of consultation,

- ♦ **Claimed/created spaces.** Finally there are the spaces which are claimed by less powerful actors from or against the power holders, or created more autonomously by them. Cornwall refers to these spaces as 'organic' spaces which emerge 'out of sets of common concerns or identifications' and 'may come into being as a result of popular mobilisation, such as around identity or issue-based concerns, or may consist of spaces in which like-minded people join together in common pursuits' (24). Other work talks of these spaces as 'third spaces' where social actors reject hegemonic space and create spaces for themselves (e.g. hooks; Soja).

So, as we examine participatory spaces, we must not only examine by whom and how the space was created, but we must also remember that these spaces exist in dynamic relationship to one another, and are constantly opening and closing through struggles for legitimacy and resistance, co-optation and transformation. Closed spaces may seek to restore legitimacy by creating invited spaces; similarly, invited spaces may be created from the other direction, as more autonomous peoples movements attempt to use their own fora for engagement with the state. Similarly, power gained in one space, through new skills, capacity and experiences, can be used to enter and affect other spaces. In choosing whether to engage in certain spaces, these are constant trade-offs, on ever-shifting terrain, which can only be understood as the power behind the creation of the space is analysed.

Places of Participation

The concern with how and by whom the spaces for participation are shaped intersects as well with debates on the places, or arenas, where critical social, political and economic power resides. While some of this work (especially within work on gender and power) starts with an analysis of power in more private or 'intimate' spaces, much of the work on public spaces for participation involves the contest between local, national and global arenas as locations of power. There are some

that argue that participatory practice must begin locally, as it is in the arenas of everyday life in which people are able to resist power and to construct their own voice. There are others who argue that power is shifting to more globalised actors, and struggles for participation must engage at that level. In between, as well, there are debates on the role of the nation state, and how it mediates power; on how the possibilities of local spaces often depend on the extent to which power is legitimated nationally, but shared with the locality. A great deal of work in the area of decentralisation, for instance, discusses the dynamics of power between the locality and the nation state, while other literature argues for the importance of community or neighbourhood based associations as key locations for building power 'from below'. On the other hand, work by Mohan and Stokke (2000) for instance, warns us of the dangers of focusing only on the 'local' in a globalising world.

Attempting to go beyond these dichotomies, Wendy Harcourt and Arturo Escobar argue in a recent article (as have some others) that the term 'glocal' describes 'spaces that are neither local nor global'. They write:

> In a sense glocalities ought to be understood as descriptive of all places, because today no place is constituted wholly by local or global factors. At the same time glocal spaces, understood as strategic, have tremendous potential as a base for new and transformative politics and identities. Glocalities, the places and spaces produced by the linking together of various social movements in networks and meshworks of opposition, or the connection of places to global processes, are therefore both strategic and descriptive, potentially oppressive and potentially transformative. … Glocalities are simultaneously global and place-based, and their specific configuration will depend on their cultural content as well as on the power dynamics at play (Harcourt and Escobar 2002:13).

As we examine the dynamics of spaces and places for participation, we must also keep in mind this second continuum involving the locations and relationships of place, arenas and power. As with the earlier continuum, they show that these levels and arenas of engagement are constantly shifting in relation to the other, that they are dynamic and interwoven. Local actors may use global forums as arenas for action (e.g. Narmada Dam; Chiappas), just as effectively - or more effectively - than they can appeal to institutions of local governance (Edwards and Gaventa 2001). Conversely, expressions of global civil society or citizenship may simply be vacuous without meaningful links to the local. The challenge is not only how to build participatory governance at differing levels, but how to promote the democratic and accountable *vertical links* across actors at each level. As Peieterse puts it, 'this involves a double movement, from local reform upward and from global reform downward - each level of governance, from the local to the global, plays a contributing part' (quoted in Mohan and Stokke 263).

The visibility of power relationships

As we examine the relationships of place and space vis-à-vis participation, we must also examine the dynamics of power that shape the inclusiveness of participation within each.   Here much of the literature of power is concerned with the degree to which conflict over key issues, and the voices of key actors, are visible in given spaces and places. In earlier work, Lukes and later Gaventa (1980) explored the differences between:

♦ more pluralist approaches to power, in which contests over interests are assumed to be visible in public spaces, which in turn are presumed to be relatively open;

♦ a second dimension of power, in which the entry of certain interests and actors into public spaces is privileged over others through a prevailing 'mobilisation of bias' or rule of the game; and

♦ a third dimension of power, in which visible conflict is hidden through internalisation of dominating ideologies, values and forms of behaviour.

In more recent work building on this model, VeneKlasen and Miller (2002) argue more simply for distinguishing between the visible, hidden and invisible forms of power (See Table 1).

The importance of this for how we analyse the dynamics of participation in differing spaces and places is relatively obvious. Historically, many pluralist studies of power have mainly examined power in its visible manifestations. One looked at who participated, who benefited and who lost in order to see who had power. But as we have seen, power in relationship to place and space also works to put boundaries on participation, and to exclude certain actors or views from entering the arenas for participation in the first place. Or power, in its more insidious forms, may be internalised in terms of one's values, self-esteem, and identities, such that voices in visible places are but echoes of what the power holders who shaped those places want to hear.

Again, the relationships between the visible, hidden and invisible forms of power are dynamic, and vary across space and place. As James Scott's works reminds us, the discourse of the powerless in spaces created by the powerful may be very different from that in the spaces of resistance they create for themselves. In some, certain forms of language and voice are visible; while in others they may be more coded.

We might intuitively argue that as places grow more distant from local people, and move away from their own claimed spaces (e.g. to the upper left side of the matrix) that we will expect the dynamics of hidden and invisible power to be all the more present. However, this would be a simplistic assumption. We must recognise that this continuum of power affects all spaces and places – even those which at the local level (lower right hand column) where claim making processes can equally render certain members and issues at the more invisible than others.

While the relationships of power, place and space are presented here as a 'power cube', our current work on local governance suggests that it is very, very difficult to locate any single example of participatory governance within only one box within the cube. All of the cases point suggest that the complex dynamics of participation are shaped by the intersection of each of the continua – e.g. that the local, national, and global agenda affects the opening and closure of invited spaces; that visibility of power is shaped by who creates the space, etc. In any given issue or conflict, there is no single space or place for participation. Much depends on navigating their intersection, which in turn create new boundaries of possibility for action and engagement.

This makes the question of representation – of who speaks for whom across the intersections of spaces, and on what basis – a critical one. Representation is found in each continuum, as we look for instance at who speaks in the intersection between peoples associations' and invited spaces; between the local, national and global or on behalf of the poor and 'invisible'. Effective representation across spaces involves legitimacy, which may be drawn from a number of sources, as well as the ability to collaborate or negotiate across spaces. The politics of intersection is also about identity, and understanding which identities actors use in which spaces to construct their own legitimacy to represent, or how they perceive the identities and legitimacy of others who speak on their behalf. In general, we need to continue to unpack this question of representation, legitimacy and identity at the intersections of spaces and places.

Perhaps some of the most powerful stories of power, and how they constrain participation, are found when these several continua come together to re-enforce one another. For instance, it is the *combination* of the way that fixed spatial locations, in turn intersect with histories of closed decision-making spaces (as found in institutions of colonialism or apartheid), which intersect with the capacity to control the visibility of conflict, when power is seen in its most concentrated and hegemonic forms. Given that the history of many of the countries in which participatory governance is being used around the world involves many of these elements, it is no wonder than that the dynamics of participation in newly emerging democratic spaces are subject to all sorts of imperfections, manipulations and abuse.

However, intersections of spaces in different ways may also contribute to new possibilities for challenging hegemonic power relations. For instance, the opening of previously closed spaces can contribute to new mobilisations and conscientisation, which may have the potential to open those spaces more widely. Power gained in one space may be used to enter new spaces. From the point of view of social actors who are seeking to change power relations, we need also to investigate how this analysis of power and participation opens new entry points and possibilities for transformational change.

Conclusion

The widespread engagement with issues of participation and local governance creates enormous opportunities for re-defining and deepening meanings of democracy, for linking civil society and government reforms in new ways, for extending the rights of inclusive citizenship. At the same time, there are critical challenges to insure that the work promotes pro-poor and social justice outcomes, to develop new models and approaches where enabling conditions are not favourable, to avoid an overly narrow focus on the local, and to guard against co-optation of the agenda for less progressive goals. An analysis of the power relations which surround and fill new spaces for democratic engagement is critical for an assessment of their transformative potential. Only through such power analysis can we fulfil the broader agenda of understanding and promoting *both* participatory democracy *and* participatory development, for theorists and practitioners alike.

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