

Power, Empowerment and Participation: Annotated Bibliography

Archarya et. al (2005) Lessons on civil Society and Participation from Sao Paulo, Brazil. *World Development* 33(6): 951- 964 Elsevier Ltd.

Type of resource: A report of field work in Brazil on civil society participation, the results of which challenge conventional understandings of civil society participation in policy processes.

Conceptual framework: A 'polity-centred' approach is used, in contrast to the conventional 'civil society' approach, widely adopted in international development.

Research findings:

- 'Civil' organisations vary in their ties to 'non-civil' organisations with fundamental consequences: organisations with ties to the principle actors of representative democracy are the most likely to participate in formal or quasi-formal processes of public policy.
- The findings suggest that the dominant perspective on civil society and participation in international development – the civil society approach – is a poor conceptual guide to understanding contemporary patterns of participation. It lacks a differentiated view of civil organisation and is premised on a theoretical separation of *direct* and *representative* democracy that does not appear to exist in practice.

Key messages:

- The authors disagree with the notion that the most effective voice of the poor in policymaking comes from civil society organisations that are *independent* of political parties and the state.
- Detailed field work in Sao Paulo, Brazil shows that across different participatory institutions, the most active representatives of the poor are those well connected to conventional political actors, parties and state agencies because they have a) a greater chance to influence the design of participatory institutions and engineer their access, and b) greater facility in obtaining policy –related and political information, as well as legal and technical expertise.
- The authors call for a 'polity-centred' approach to understanding issues of participation and representation.

Batliwala, S and D. Dhanraj (2006) "Gender myths that instrumentalise women: a view from the Indian front line" in Cornwall et al. (eds) *Feminisms in Development: contradictions, contestations and challenges*. Zed Books

Type of resource: Research article and chapter in the book in Cornwall et al. (eds) *Feminisms in Development: contradictions, contestations and challenges*. Zed Books

Conceptual approach: This article explores how 'gender myths' – feminist ideas adopted and then distorted by development agencies and the state – are aiding both religious fundamentalism and neo-liberal economic reforms in a process that instrumentalises poor women in India and reframes their role as citizens.

Key messages:

- The authors examine the dynamic of two particular gender myths: (1) that giving women access to economic resources leads to their overall empowerment and (2) that with increased access to political power, women will opt for progressive and transformatory politics.
- The article analyses the operation of these myths in the context of two state-sponsored initiatives in India.
- It attempts to demonstrate that so-called economic empowerment programmes can both *depoliticise* and *disempower* poor women and shift the onus of poverty

alleviation from the state to poor women, while simultaneously delimiting women's citizenship.

- Finally, it then discusses how fundamentalist forces can and have seized the resulting spaces for women's political participation, mobilising women in support of their agenda. Based on their analysis of these specific experiences, the authors call for revitalised strategies to face these challenges and for critical reflection by feminists on constructions of female citizenship.

Bebbington, A.J. et al. (2006) The Search for Empowerment: Social Capital as Idea and Practice at the World Bank. Kumarian Press Inc.

Type of resource: This book explores the nature of bureaucratic change through a comprehensive review of the debates surrounding the concept of 'social capital' within the World Bank. Contributors include both long-time Bank insiders as well as external analysts and observers of the Bank's development policies.

Objectives: To review a) how social development concepts such as participation, gender equity, rights and empowerment have been incorporated into the development work of multi-lateral development banks and IFIs including the IMF, World Bank, InterAmerican Development Bank, Asian Development Bank and the African Development Bank and b) the efficacy of social capital concepts for the encouragement of more participatory and empowering forms of development.

Conceptual frameworks/approaches: Discourses of development (Escobar 1990; Ferguson 1995); Ethnography of development institutions and networks (Mosse 2004); Actor oriented approaches to development (Long and Long 1992)

Social capital within the WB:

For those wishing to broaden the social development agenda of the WB, social capital was a useful concept for a number of reasons:

- It drew attention to the political context through which local-level institutions were operating
- It moved discussions of state-society relations from polemical zero-sum discussions ('more' or 'less' is better) to sophisticated inquiry into the conditions under which the *complimentary* strengths of states and civil organisations could generate positive sum gain.
- It encouraged a consideration of the social relationships underlying governance.
- By appropriating an 'assets-based' discourse, where social capital was seen as an asset of the poor, it offered a language for talking both of governance and of poverty.
- It helped social scientists engage their economist colleagues on issues of local organisation and collective action.

Critiques:

- The concept was taken up unevenly. Not all sectors of the bank were discussing social capital, and those that were understood it to mean different things. Importantly, certain meanings could be kept alive only under certain conditions, one of the key factors being that key individuals and teams, committed to pursuing certain goals and sustaining certain meanings of their projects, remained *stable*. **The authors conclude that the effect of discussions about social capital, participation and empowerment depend critically on how certain commitments are sustained over time.**
- The debate over social capital is less an argument about definitions, and more a struggle between *competing paradigms* of development.
- **Critics would say** that efforts to make the concept of social capital more visible within the WB have been a waste of time. Some would go further to suggest that rather than forming a strategy to change the bank, interest in 'social capital' has been pursued as a strategy to "depoliticise development" (Harris 2002). At its core is the continuing refusal by the bank to entertain any serious discussion of redistribution or

of the developmental state. The result has been further colonisation of social development with economic principles and assumptions.

- Even if debates about social capital have opened up some space for change and, in some cases, led to important changes in projects and their effects, there remain significant structural constraints to translating social development concerns into practice in WB funded operations. These include: questions of power, real politics and institutional incentives.
- It will take more than a discursive shift for the WB to engage fully with social development issues. It requires pressure from outside: an 'insider-outsider' reform coalition (Fox and Brown 1998:534). Working from within the WB to change discourse, and hence practice, is important, but it is not enough.

Bebbington, A. (2006) "Social Movements and the Politicization of Chronic Poverty Policy". CRPC Working Paper 63 Chronic Poverty Research Centre (CPRC)

Type of resource: CPRC working paper no. 63

Discussion:

- Discussions of chronic poverty have emphasised the extent to which poverty is chronic because of the social relationships and structures within which particular groups of the poor are embedded. In this sense chronic poverty should be understood as a socio-political relationship rather than a lack of assets. In such an understanding, *processes of social mobilisation become central to any discussion of chronic poverty* because they are vehicles through which such relationships are argued over in society and potentially changed.
- Parting from this observation, the paper reviews the roles of social movements in addressing chronic poverty. It focuses on three domains in which such movements might influence chronic poverty:
 - First, it discusses their roles in challenging the institutions, social structures and political economy dynamics that underlie chronic poverty. In this domain, movements can play potential roles in changing the conditions under which accumulation occurs and attacking relationships of adverse incorporation. They can also change the relationships that underlie processes of social exclusion.
 - Second, movements have played important roles in the cultural politics surrounding chronic poverty. They have helped change dominant meanings associated with poverty, and influenced the ways in which the poor are thought of in society.
 - Third, in some instances movements – and in particular social movement organisations – have direct impacts on the assets that poor people own and control.
- All this said, movements themselves suffer many internal weaknesses that can limit their contributions to changing conditions of chronic poverty in a society. Furthermore, at times elite groups and others aim to aggravate these weaknesses in efforts to dissipate the effects that these movements might have on existing relationships of power and patterns of accumulation.

Key messages:

- Social movements' main contribution is, perhaps, that they politicize debates on chronic poverty. Any changes that they elicit owe much to this politicization and to the oppositional, contentious, and at times threatening, relationships between these movements and other social actors, government organisations and businesses. *This contentious nature of movements complicates the extent to which policy might work directly with them.*
- However, policy can do much to support environments that enable the work of, and protect the rights of, social movement activists and members. It can also provide more direct forms of support if and when movement organisations and activists shift strategies and ultimately take up positions in government – as has occurred in a number of regime transitions in the recent past e.g. Bolivia.

Chambers, R. (2006) "Tranforming Power: From Zero-sum to Win-Win" in *IDS Bulletin* 37 (6). Institute for Development Studies.

Type of resource: Article in IDS Bulletin.

Conceptual framework:

Chambers' approach is based on an understanding of *power as capability*, and thus as potentially infinitely expanding, as well as on a normative preference for cooperation rather than competition.

He introduces concepts of 'uppers' (a person who in a context is dominant or superior to a lower in that same context) and 'lowers' (a person who in a context is subordinate or inferior to an upper in that same context).

In distinguishing types of power, he uses the following framework:

1. Power over, meaning the power of an upper over a lower, usually with negative connotations such as restrictive control, penalising and denial of access.
2. Power to, also agency, meaning effective choice, the capability to decide on actions and do them.
3. Power with, meaning collective power where people, typically lowers, together exercise power through organisation, solidarity and acting together.
4. Power within, meaning personal self-confidence.

Discussion:

- Power over others can be used as *power to empower*. This requires changes in mindsets and behaviour, with actions like convening, catalysing, facilitating, asking questions and providing support.
- Through empowering others, those who are powerful also can gain: from better learning and realism, reducing the distortions and delusions of 'all power deceives'; from less stress; from better relationships; and from satisfactions which are fulfilling and enjoyable.
- It is overdue to pay more attention to 'uppers' – officials, political leaders, priests, teachers, professional service providers and pervasively to men – to enable them to gain from the win-wins of changing their behaviour, using their power to empower others. One big frontier in development thinking and practice is to evolve and apply a *pedagogy for the powerful*, for which five practical actions are suggested:
 5. Workshops, retreats and reflection
 6. Training to facilitate
 7. Face-to-face direct experience
 8. Peer influence between the powerful
 9. Well-being

Key message: there is nothing inherently bad about power 'over' others – it depends on how it is used; that in many ways power over others does not have to be a zero-sum game; and that perspectives and strategies for transforming power from below, vital as they are, should not distract from the potentials for transformations from above.

Collinson, H. (2005) *Where to now?: Implications of changing relations between DFID, recipient governments and NGOs in Malawi, Tanzania and Uganda*. Report of Joint ActionAID International and CARE research project.

Type of resource: Drawing on qualitative data (primarily interviews) from Malawi, Tanzania and Uganda, the report explores the *implications for NGOs* of the changing context of aid delivery since the late 1990s, as donors shift towards strengthening *the role of the state* and promoting 'national ownership' of the development process with broad *participation* (including

by poor people themselves) and the rise of *partnership* and *accountability* as key principles underpinning these policy shifts.

Key findings/recommendations:

- **New policy spaces have been created for NGOs** by PRSs and, in some cases, NGOs have been able to take advantage of this to influence government policy making. However the impact of civil society's contributions remains limited and small gains have been overshadowed by governments' failure to treat NGOs as serious partners. NGOs remain excluded from crucial policy dialogue between donors and governments regarding conditionalities and budget allocations.
- **Government (but not donor) accountability:** 'Poverty reduction budget support', intended to support recipient government leadership of PRS implementation, is based on the theoretical assumption that channelling aid through a recipient government's own accounting systems should improve government's domestic accountability over public expenditure. Recognising that domestic accountability will only improve if domestic constituencies demand it, donors have increased support for CSO policy and advocacy work so that NGOs are better able to hold governments to account. However, the research findings showed that *rather than increasing governments' accountability to their citizens, budget support had increased government accountability to donors*. This is linked to the harmonisation of donors which has created a more powerful donor bloc in-country. However, donors continue to side-step the issue of their own transparency and accountability at a country level by denying that they are political actors with any legal or moral obligation to engage with civil society at a country level.
- **NGO accountability and legitimacy:** A by-product of increasing emphasis on government accountability is growing pressure from donors and governments for NGOs to improve their own accountability and transparency. The issue of NGO legitimacy has also surfaced as an issue. NGO legitimacy largely derives from their experience of working on the ground with the poorest and most excluded communities through service delivery. This raises the questions: *Will an increasing emphasis on policy and advocacy, as opposed to service delivery, remove the very source of their legitimacy? Will NGOs need to establish new sources of legitimacy e.g. the ability to mobilise a large number of voices behind a particular advocacy message?*
- **NGOs and parliaments:** there is concern that NGOs role in PRSs has usurped the central role of parliaments in domestic accountability processes. However, the weakness of parliaments to scrutinise or challenge governments was a recurring theme in most interviews. Various donors are supporting initiatives to strengthen parliamentary capacity, often in collaboration with NGOs.
- **Changes in funding of NGOs:** there is now more emphasis on funding advocacy and campaigning activities and less on pure NGO service delivery. Recipient government funding for NGOs was found to be limited compared to the increase in aid flowing through government budgets. Some sub-contracting of district level NGOs for service delivery in Uganda and Tanzania continues.
- **Conclusions:** The study concludes that service delivery by NGOs that is *independent* of national plans may shrink in the future as governments take on an increasingly central role in service delivery. On the one hand, NGOs are being called upon to act as independent watchdogs of governments, on the other they are being asked to align their development and service delivery activities with those of governments and donors. The key question is: *can they do both?*
- **Recommendations:** 1) policy processes should remain open to non-state actors 2) dialogue between governments and donors regarding the use and allocation of aid should be opened up to public scrutiny 3) donors should maintain flexibility and a mixture of funding options in order to promote a diverse and innovative civil society 4) governments and donors should respect NGO autonomy and political independence 5) NGOs should demonstrate greater transparency with regard to income and expenditure programmes and planning.

Cornwall, A. and J. Gaventa (2001) 'From users and choosers to makers and shapers: repositioning participation in social policy' IDS Working paper no. 127

Type of resource: IDS Working paper 127 explores approaches to participation in social policy, setting them within broader debates on rights and responsibilities of citizenship

Discussion:

Drawing on studies of participation in a range of social policy arenas in the north and south, the paper explores the implications of a shift from a focus on clients or consumers of social policies as users and choosers to a *more active engagement of citizens* as agents in the making and shaping of the social policies that affect their lives. It asks the questions: *how to ordinary people, especially poor people, affect the social policies that in turn affect their well-being? What is the role of citizen participation in social policy formation and implementation in this era of globalisation? How do changing contexts and conditions affect the entry points through which actors in civil society, especially the poor or those working with the poor, can exercise voice and influence in critical aspects of social care, be they in the areas of health, education, welfare, social security, programmes for the disabled, low-income housing, or other significant social policy arenas?*

The paper examines four approaches to participation: (a) those in which beneficiaries of social services are consulted as users or consumers, (b) those that have emphasised self-provisioning through civil society (such as neo-liberal 'self-help' groups in Batliwala et al.), (c) social and advocacy movements through which citizens have advocated for social provisioning from the state, as a social right, and, (d) lastly, accountability approaches which emphasise new relationships between service providers and citizens through their active participation in processes of democratic governance.

The authors propose an approach to social policy that sees citizens not only as 'users' or 'choosers', but as active participants who engage in making and shaping social policy and social provisioning.

Key messages:

- The concept of 'social citizenship' that has often underpinned considerations of social welfare should be expanded to include not only concepts of *social rights*, but also of social responsibilities and social accountability through direct forms of democratic governance.
- The more functional concepts of participation, through which beneficiaries participate as users or consumers of pre-determined public services, are of limited utility. *Not only do they fail to include people in broader aspects of the policy process, but they also ignore their contribution to self-provisioning outside formal government arenas. Most importantly, they fail to recognise or realise the potential of more active citizen engagement in making and shaping social policy and with it opportunities for enhanced service responsiveness, transparency and accountability.*

Cornwall, A. and K. Brock (2005) *Beyond Buzz Words, "Poverty-reduction", "Participation" and "Empowerment" in Development Policy* IDS paper. Brighton: IDS

Type of resource: IDS paper.

Conceptual framework: power as *discursive power*

Discussion:

The fast-moving world of development policy, buzzwords play an important part in framing solutions. Today's development orthodoxies are captured in a seductive mix of such words, among which "poverty reduction", "participation" and "empowerment" take a prominent place. These words give today's development policies a sense of purposefulness and optimism. They suggest a governable, controllable world where everyone gets a chance to take part in making the decisions that affect their lives, where policies neatly map out a route for

implementation. But what difference do these words make? Has their use led to any meaningful change in the policies pursued by mainstream development?

This paper takes a critical look at how these three terms have come to be used in international development policy, exploring how different configurations of words frame and justify particular kinds of development interventions. It begins by investigating the form and function of development buzzwords in the statements of intent of development agencies, exploring their performative effects as well as their semantic qualities. Second, it discusses how these buzzwords have changed over time, and analyses their use in the context of two contemporary development policy instruments, the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Finally, the discussion broadens to reflect on the place of such terms in development policy more generally.

The argument put forward in this paper is that the terms we use are never neutral. They come to be given meaning as they are put to use in policies. And these policies, in turn, influence how those who work in development come to think about what they are doing. The way words come to be combined allows certain meanings to flourish, and others to become barely possible to think with.

Key message: *words that once spoke of politics and power have come to be reconfigured in the service of today's one-size-fits-all development recipes, spun into an politicised form that everyone can agree with. As such, the authors contend, their use in development policy may offer little hope of the world free of poverty that they are used to evoke.*

Source: UNRISD: News and Views

<http://www.unrisd.org/unrisd/website/newsview.nsf/>

Driscoll, R. and Jenks, S. (2004) <i>An Overview of NGO Participation in PRSPs</i>. London: ODI.*
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Type of resource: An overview of civil society participation in PRS processes, including key challenges for international NGOs.

Conceptual Framework:

The paper identifies four important determinants of NGO participation in PRS processes:

- Type of NGO
- The extent of participation
- The level of the PRS cycle
- The stage of the PRS cycle

Key findings:

- **The types of NGOs participating:** small local and intermediate NGOs have engaged in information sharing and awareness-raising but poverty analysis is left to academics and research institutes; large national NGOs in urban areas have participated in consultations about policy content but rural NGOs have participated far less; International NGOs have provided the bridge between governments and donors and national NGOs through sub-contracting roles or taking on key roles themselves where national NGOs are weak.
- **Extent of NGO participation:** In some cases NGOs have successfully influenced the policy content of PRSPs: NGOs have contributed to definitions of poverty; circulated information; participated in budget allocation and consultation processes, as well as facilitation of consultations. However, many NGOs felt there was a gap between consultation and the writing of the PRSP which they saw as a 'closed-door process'. Macro-economic policies were non negotiable (this supports Gaventa).
- **At what level are NGOs engaging?** *National level* participation occurs predominantly among umbrella networks that have campaigned vigorously and generated sufficient momentum behind their campaigns to put real pressure on governments e.g. Malawi economic justice network (MEJN) which reflects a strategic

collaboration between international NGO community and in-country networks. Others have been involved at the regional or sectoral levels.

- **Stage of PRS cycle:** NGO expertise in carrying out poverty assessments has been channelled into the early stages of the PRS cycle such as data collection, information sharing and consultations re policy content. Increasingly, NGO participation in monitoring poverty is occurring as PRSPs move into the implementation phase e.g. Christian AID in Mali carried out a project in to build the capacity of their Malian partners to monitor aid quality. Other NGOs are creating their own informal channels for monitoring PRS implementation. However, there are concerns among some NGOs that moving into 'watchdog' roles may compromise their recently strengthened relationship with governments that allow for greater policy influencing.

Challenges for INGOs

- Changing international governance structures: Many INGOs are making the transition from service delivery to influencing government policy in favour of poor people. However, PRS processes have forced many INGOs to question their own legitimacy as players in what are supposed to be country-owned processes of poverty reduction. The extent to which INGOs actually represent the poor, and are accountable to beneficiaries (as opposed to donors) is not clear.
- As many donors are turning to budget support, SWAPs and State-led service delivery rather than funding NGOs to provide essential services, INGOs need to take a hard look at funding scenarios for the future and decide where their comparative advantage lies.

Eyben, R. et al. (2006) 'Introduction: Exploring Power for Change', *IDS Bulletin* 37 (6).*

Type of resource: Introduction to IDS bulletin.

Objective: To provide an overview of conceptual and applied understandings of how power operates and explore the extent to which these can help development actors (governments, civil society, grass roots organisations, research and teaching institutes and international development agencies) in their efforts to reduce global poverty and make progress towards social justice.

Conceptual frameworks:

The authors are concerned with power as it relates to participation and social change. They reject the premise that there is a one-size fits all theory of power for achieving social change and recognise the utility of different conceptual approaches for exploring and explaining power in diverse contexts as well as engaging with differently positioned actors. Frameworks of power discussed include:

Power as consensual (Power 'to'):

The authors explore the question of whether people consent to power knowingly (because they are aware of their situation but feel they have no choice) or unknowingly (because they socialised not to challenge dominant forms of power).

- Drawing on the work of Bourdieu, Navarro uses the term 'misrecognition' to describe the process of mystification by which the powerful use of 'symbolic capital' to prevent individuals from recognising that their subordination is constructed rather than natural.
- Joy Moncrieffe explores this in the context of class and racial discrimination in Haitian society and concludes that while some internalise the stigma that power imposes on them (Gaventa's 'invisible' power), others still have and exercise their capacity to resist and even dominate such spaces. She also acknowledges that those who do not resist may not have internalised oppression, but rather rationally decided that it is in their best interests to consent to it. Fear of the violent consequences of resistance could be a reason for this.
- A rational decision to accept the social order, despite awareness of the cultural construction of power, may relate to perceptions of short-term benefits versus long-term radical change in the future. An example of this is the fact that, by accepting badly needed international aid, aid recipients confirm the economic and symbolic

dominance of the donor and hence the world social order that aid flows help to sustain.

- De Certeau (1988) and Scott (1987) point to tacit forms of power and resistance, and the ability of individuals to simultaneously adapt and resist.

Power as contested/challenged (Power 'over'):

- This understanding of power is often associated with struggles over finite resources (economic, military or human), even if the resources are understood to have no intrinsic value other than the meaning or 'symbolic capital' given to them by society (Navarro 2006). From this view point, to challenge power is to deny its legitimacy. Understanding power as produced through social relations that are reproduced through processes of socialisation provides an agenda for contesting power that concerns changing the way people relate to one another, and the meanings they give to those relationships.
- Gaventa's power cube adheres to this approach: power is understood as having three 'faces': visible, hidden and invisible, which operate in 'spaces', such as formal institutions or social movements and 'places', by which he refers to different arenas of political *struggle* from household, family or community level to national or global level.

Expanding power:

- This approach is based on a normative preference for cooperation rather than competition and asks the questions: *what if power was infinite? Could we then achieve harmonious and equitable relations without a fight? Can power be harnessed to secure win-win outcomes without any losers, in a process of securing greater equity and social justice or are changes in power relationships necessarily the result of contestation and challenge to the existing order?*
- Chambers argues that this approach to changing power relations involves the identification of win-win situations, for example, working with decision makers on the assumption that they are trying their best but are constrained by their own bureaucracies (2006).
- Pettit (2006) and Taylor and Boser (2006) agree and explore approaches to higher education that could potentially transform social relations. They focus on the importance of teachers and facilitators reflecting on their own power in promoting wider learning for change.
- Gaventa makes no assumptions that power does not have to be given up by someone, if power is to expand and points to the importance of horizontal alliances that link up different 'spatial' entry points for change.

Key messages:

- Changing social relations: the authors highlight the significance of personal transformation for changing power relations within wider society.
- Other important concepts are those of 'power with', which highlights the need for collective action and the mobilisation of support for change, which may involve finding common ground among diverse interests and values (Rowlands 1997), and power 'within' which depends on individuals unleashing their power through a process of self interrogation and reflexivity.
- Empowerment frameworks draw on all of the above concepts and point to the risks of practicing empowerment, such as the possibility that one's actions to support empowerment, from a position of power, are interpreted as helpful and creating power 'to' rather than an attempt to gain control or power 'over'.
- Self scrutiny and reflexivity, as well as trust and cooperation are key to the process of empowerment, but stress and conflict can block these. Taylor and Boser ask, *what strategies might enable us to maintain openness during times of conflict and what are the implications of this for leadership in participatory processes?*

Gaps in research:

- Analysis of the connections between the diffuse operations of power in society and the formal institutions that reflect, reproduce and potentially contribute to changing power.

- Analysis of how power shapes citizens' perceptions of state institutions and the potential role of such institutions in harnessing public power as a counter balance to patriarchal and other forms of oppressive societal power within families and local communities.

Ferguson, J. 1990 *The Anti-Politics Machine: Development, De-politicisation and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho*, Cambridge University Press, cited in Gardner, K. and D. Lewis (1996) *Anthropology, Development and Post-modern Challenge* Pluto Press.

Type of resource: Detailed case study of the workings of the "development" industry in one country, Lesotho, and in one "development" project.

Conceptual framework: Anthropological approach, drawing on the work of Foucault to reveal the powerful nature of development 'discourse'.

Key messages:

- Development, it is generally assumed, is good and necessary, and in its name the West has intervened, implementing all manner of projects in the impoverished regions of the world. When these projects fail, as they do with astonishing regularity, they nonetheless produce a host of regular and unacknowledged effects, including the expansion of bureaucratic state power and the translation of the political realities of poverty and powerlessness into "technical" problems awaiting solution by "development" agencies and experts.
- Despite all the "expertise" that goes into formulating development projects, they nonetheless often demonstrate a startling ignorance of the historical and political realities of the locale they are intended to help. In a close examination of the attempted implementation of the Thaba-Tseka project in Lesotho, Ferguson shows how such a misguided approach plays out, how, in fact, the "development" apparatus in Lesotho acts as an "anti-politics machine," everywhere whisking political realities out of sight and all the while performing, almost unnoticed, its own pre-eminently political operation of strengthening the state presence in the local region.

Source: University of Minnesota press

http://www.upress.umn.edu/Books/F/ferguson_anti-politics.html

Gaventa, J. (2004) 'Participatory Development or Participatory Democracy? Linking Participatory Approaches to Policy and Governance', *Participatory Learning and Action* 50: 150-59.*

Type of resource: A review of lessons learned from 8 years of *Participatory Learning and Action*.

Key messages:

- Increasing attention to state-society interactions (governance) and their role in development has led to the linking of concepts of participation and governance, and the recognition of citizens as not simply 'users and choosers' of public services and policies, but as 'makers and shapers' of policies themselves (Cornwall and Gaventa 2000).
- Consequently, participatory methods and approaches are focusing on policy processes rather than projects, 'rights-holders' rather than beneficiaries, and processes of democracy rather than programme implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
- Such shifts are underpinned by a concern with more active and participatory forms of citizenship and broader forms of accountability, as well as the assumption that, through improved governance, *participation will lead to improved development outcomes*.
- Within the expanding body of work on participatory governance, there has been a more recent shift from concern with how participation strengthens citizens' voice

through better generation of knowledge to *inform* policymakers, towards an emphasis on direct engagement of citizens as full participants of the policy process. Mechanisms for the promotion of direct engagement include: citizens' juries, consensus conferences, scenario workshops and, in local governance initiatives, participatory budgeting and planning.

- Rights-based approaches to development have led to discussions regarding participation in governance processes as a right. Some argue that the right to participation is potentially a more empowered form of engagement than participation by invitation (of governments or donors).

Notes of caution:

- In many Southern countries, it is the neo-liberal agenda for weakening the state that has led to processes of decentralisation, which in turn has opened up new opportunities for citizen participation in governance.
- Participatory governance is not simply achieved through the adoption of new policy statements (link to WB uptake of the concept of social capital).
- The challenge of representation – who speaks for whom? Not all spaces for participation have the possibility to become spaces for change or to be pro-poor. Participatory spaces are imbued with power relations affecting who enters, who speaks, with what knowledge/voice and who benefits.
- Despite the emergence of spaces for democratic engagement in policy processes, key decisions about economic policies (fiscal, monetary, privatisation, trade, labour, or foreign investment) are often kept 'off the table'.
- A focus on policy processes and outcomes (i.e. how participation led to decisions which may not have otherwise happened) can detract from the issue of how participatory governance actually makes a difference to the lives and material conditions of the poor or powerless.

Gaps/questions:

- What is the evidence that more participatory and inclusive research and forms of governance make a difference to the lives of the poor? Without that evidence, the spread and deepening of democracy will be hard to sustain.
- What are the pre-conditions for strengthening voice? Which approaches are appropriate for local cultures and realities? More work needs to be done on how key concepts such as participation and decision-making are understood in different local contexts.
- Further understanding is needed about which spaces offer the potential for meaningful voice and a shift in power relations: when does it make sense to engage within 'invited' spaces and when does it make more sense to remain outside? This information could support civil society groups in deciding whether and when and how to engage.
- Participatory governance success stories tend to come from Southern countries which share certain key characteristics such as strong or functioning states, strong civil societies and often social movements, party or strong political leadership which has taken steps to create new democratic spaces for participation. What are the strategies for building participatory governance in places with weak or non-functioning states?
- Greater understanding of the inter-relationships of different approaches to strengthening citizens' voice and power, such as strategies of deliberation, advocacy and participation.
- How can the gains that are made through participatory processes be sustained and institutionalised?

Gloppen, S et al. (2003) *Responsiveness to the Concerns of the Poor and Accountability to the Commitment to Poverty Reduction*. WP 9. Ch. Michelsen Institute.*

Type of resource: The paper was first developed as the issues paper of the conference: 'Responsiveness and accountability for poverty reduction: Democratic governance and the Millennium Development Goals', jointly organised by UNDP, Oslo Governance Centre and the Chr. Michelsen Institute. The authors are concerned with accountability relations between the poor and agents with explicit commitments to reduce poverty.

NB: Although *voice*, *responsiveness* and *accountability* are interlinked elements of an effective approach to poverty reduction, it should be noted that they also refer to separate processes, each with their own dynamics. It is useful, therefore, to disaggregate the process into its constituent parts and to focus systematically on each aspect. The *voice-responsiveness-accountability* typology allows us to acknowledge the overall complexity of the problem at hand, while facilitating a systematic focus on the key actors and mechanisms

Conceptual Framework: The paper develops an approach to poverty reduction based on three interlinked concepts – *voice*, *responsiveness*, and *accountability*. *Voice* refers to the articulation of the concerns of the poor and their conversion into political demands. *Responsiveness* addresses the sensitivity of decision-makers to the voice of the poor and its expression in action or inaction. *Accountability* pertains to the relationship between bearers of rights and legitimate claims and the agents responsible for fulfilling those rights and claims.

Discussion:

- It is becoming increasingly clear that democratic governance is both a right in itself and a means of ensuring basic human rights.
- *Responsiveness and accountability* are critical missing elements in our understanding of the relationship between the powerful elites and the disempowered poor who are asserting their rights.
- The authors distinguish between a broad range of actors with *poverty reducing mandates or obligations* at the **international level** (UN, IMF, World Bank, WTO, bilateral donors, international NGOs, international media, transnational corporations, foreign investors, international finance); **National level** (National Governments (executive branch, legislature, judiciary and other institutions of restraint, civil service), parties National NGOs, national media, national elites/opinion leaders Large national corporations, banks, business and labour organisations); and **Local level** (local government and administration, local parties, community based organisations, NGOs, local media, and elites Local businesses, financial institutions, business chambers, local organised labour).
- Rights can play an important role in ensuring accountability: There are examples of poor groups/NGOs successfully using court action to assert their rights, and of courts consciously promoting the interests of the weakest and most vulnerable. The Supreme Court of India has taken a lead in this regard, transforming itself into a "Supreme Court for Indians." It has done so without strong backing for social and economic rights in the letter of the constitution.

Gaps/Questions:

- To what extent can the accountability mechanisms at the national/local level described above be enhanced by external support? Political or governance conditionality has been on the agenda of the international donor community for more than a decade. However, we need to assess carefully how and under what circumstances the international community may enhance internal accountability relations.
- To what extent can the international donor community be held accountable to their commitment to poverty reduction? Table 3 below attempts to map the relationship between the international actors and their responsiveness to the poor and their accountability to the commitment to reduce poverty.

Hickey, S. and S. Bracking (2005) "Exploring the Politics of Chronic Poverty: From Representation to a Politics of Justice?" *World Development* 33(6):851-856 Elsevier Ltd.

Type of resource: Introductory article in a Special Edition of *World Development* entitled "Exploring the politics of poverty and poverty reduction: how are the poorest represented"?

Conceptual approach: Political science. Power as power 'over' resources.

'The concern with "who represents the poorest" becomes a search for "agents of justice" at local and global levels, and among state and non-state actors (O'Neill 2001), while the politicisation of poverty reduction is worked toward through its relocation within a project of social justice at national and global levels. (Hickey and Bracking 2005)

Key message: The ways in which poverty is currently represented within academic and policy discourses tend to offer apolitical readings of poverty and the means of its reduction. Hickey and Bracking advocate for poverty reduction to be relocated within a *broader political project of social justice* and suggest that the institutionalisation of chronic poverty within political, social and economic norms; relations; institutions; and processes requires a more thoroughgoing challenge than a technocratic focus on 'poverty-reduction' can offer. The authors conclude that concepts of 'chronic poverty' and 'destitution' may have the potential to move the debate beyond this stasis, given their implicit suggestion that poverty is long-term and is inherently socially constructed and tolerated, and also institutionalised within political processes and discourses. They also argue that 'participatory' international development has distracted from exploring the most legitimate and effective forms of representation available to the poorest members of society.

Discussion:

Chronic poverty and representation

- People who live in chronic poverty are, by definition (Hulme and Shepherd 2003) those most lacking in assets required to exercise a political voice and the least likely to gain political representation.
- They are most likely to trade away their agency in search of livelihood security, usually with more empowered and potentially exploitative political actors. Furthermore, they may view participation as risky and time-consuming (Hickey and Bracking 2005). This suggests that the participatory turn in international development over the last two decades – as exemplified by the World Bank's 'empowerment' agenda, comprising notions of offers little promise to the poorest people.
- The ways in which poverty is currently represented within academic and policy discourses tend to offer apolitical readings of poverty and the means of its reduction. The institutionalisation of chronic poverty within political, social and economic norms; relations; institutions; and processes requires a more thoroughgoing challenge than a technocratic focus on 'poverty-reduction' can offer. The authors suggest that concepts of 'chronic poverty' and 'destitution' may have the potential to move the debate beyond this stasis, given their implicit suggestion that poverty is long-term and is inherently socially constructed and tolerated, and also institutionalised within political processes and discourses.
- The paper suggests that it is the attachment to a *project of social justice* that is the most definitive characteristic of approaches that actively seek to represent the poorest.
- Social justice approaches resonate with rights-based approaches but offer a broader philosophical grounding. RBAs attach political rights and responsibilities to fundamental aspects of human need and seek to enforce minimum standards of social and economic rights. As such they constitute a political response to the problem of chronic poverty. However, the ethnocentric character of the discourse remains a problem, as does the problem of *how the weakest members of society mobilise to actively claim their rights.*

- A focus on the 'poorest' adds a useful layer of depth and nuance to more general research on politics and poverty, particularly concerning the role of political parties, local elites and political solidarity between different sections of 'the poor'.

Participatory Governance:

- In terms of political change, moves towards democratisation, good governance and human rights since the 1990s have arguably increased the political space within which citizens can organise and seek representation (Engberg Pederson & Webster 2002).
- The rise of new forms of participatory democracy - including decentralisation, participatory budgeting, citizens forums – have been heralded as reinvigorating and even transforming the tired and untrusted institutions of representative democracy (Fung & Wright 2003; Gaventa 2004).

The authors outline a number of critiques:

- While local anti-poverty interventions constitute new political spaces within which struggles for resources between and within elite and popular actors take place, national poverty policy is understandable only with reference to wider political project being pursued by a given regime. Current research and policymaking attention should be directed towards the ideological underpinnings and political constituency of ruling regimes, with a specific focus on the links and divergences with the international consensus on poverty reduction.
- The rise in direct democracy has been characterised by some as a fundamentally instrumentalist form of politics allowing neopopulist leaders to engage directly with unorganised parts of society in ways that undermine and weaken the institutions of representative democracy i.e. parliaments. There are also concerns that the 'localisation' of politics disempower ostensibly national level movements.
- New consultation processes, in the form of PRSPs have evoked similarly critical responses (Collinson) and raised questions with regard to the legitimacy of such processes.

Just Associates et al. *Making Change Happen: Citizen Engagement and Global Economic Power* Just Associates, Institute of Development Studies, Knowledge Initiatives, ActionAid International*

Type of resource: One in a series of short publications about the strategies and ideas shaping social justice work produced by Just Associates in collaboration with various partners.

Conceptual framework: Gaventa's power cube. This framework presents some of the multiple ways that the voice, interest and leadership of disenfranchised groups are marginalized from participation in public decision-making and suggests the kinds of comprehensive strategies needed to negotiate their inclusion and begin to shift unequal power dynamics.

- **Visible** faces and arenas of power such as polices, legislatures, government agencies, or court systems and emphasizes such strategies as lobbying, media, litigation and research and analysis. "But as our discussions have shown, power isn't just about 'winning' but also, keeping other issues off the agenda – the mobilization of bias."
- Moving beyond the uni-dimensional view of power, **hidden** power is exercised when certain actors or issues are explicitly excluded from the political agenda and public decision-making processes. Strategies to overcome these forces include combining community/union organizing, leadership development, movement building and participatory research – ways to build the organizational strength, legitimacy and voice of the poor and excluded.
- **Invisible** power is the internalized sense of powerlessness in the ways that were described in the case of the workers in Serbia—blaming themselves for unemployment — also in the case of small-scale sugar farmers in Kenya. It operates through belief systems and ideology. It is the most insidious because it not only works to control the agenda but also shapes people's consciousness and understanding of their roles, needs and ability to act.

These forms of power operate in continuums of ‘spaces’ in which decision making takes place. These may be closed, autonomous, claimed or invited. It also operates across ‘places’, which refers to different arenas or levels of political struggle from local household, family or community level to national or global level.

Key messages:

- In the last decade, increased openings for civil society participation in economic policy processes have presented opportunities for economic justice advocates to make their case in a wide array of spaces—consultations on Poverty Reduction Strategies, WTO and regional trade negotiations, IFI risk assessment panels, and more. But economic decision making is highly politicised and access to policymakers does not necessarily translate to influence. Policymaking is fragmented geographically and the “real” decisions often happen behind closed doors. As a result, challenges surrounding global and regional economic advocacy and campaigning—including issues of when and how to engage, who represents whom, and disconnects from local realities and people—have come into stark relief.
- Many concerned about economic justice question how INGOs can ensure the authentic voice of the communities marginalized by poverty and power that they seek to “represent.” Highlighting the fact that INGOs and marginalized groups do not have the same interests, one researcher described the explicit “buying off process” he saw around trade agreement negotiations where only “supportive” civil society groups were invited to participate. Those excluded were the groups directly with and representing people most affected by the agreements. Making participation and representation work requires citizen education and organizing that build community leadership and enable people to engage meaningfully.
- The best of popular education seeks to empower people to question and unpack myths and information generated by dominant ideologies using what they know from experience and new information (this is referred to as building critical consciousness). This process is integrated into long-term organizing so that learning and action are a perpetual process that builds collective capacity for political influence.
- Popular education is not a cure-all, and like many other strategies/methodologies it is sometimes converted into a stand-alone technical fix. While popular education historically grew out of resistance struggles, it is sometimes reduced to a set of participatory techniques devoid of a deeper analysis of power and disconnected from a broader political process or vision. Some educators and organizers have become disillusioned as a result, dismissing the importance of some of the processes and analysis associated with popular education.

Kabeer, N. (1999) Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment. *Development and Change* 30(3) Blackwell Publishing*

Type of resource: The article proposes a framework for understanding the structural parameters of individual choice and their implications for the analysis and measurement of women’s empowerment. It provides a critical analysis of *instrumentalist* (as opposed to *intrinsic*) approaches to the incorporation of feminist goals and women’s empowerment in development, as well as of the proliferation of attempts to ‘measure’ empowerment, to which such approaches have led.

Conceptual Framework:

- The notion of empowerment is inescapably linked to the condition of disempowerment and refers to a process of change by which those who have been denied the ability to make choices acquire such ability.
- The ability to exercise choice incorporates three inter-related and indivisible dimensions: **Resources** (material, human and social pre-conditions), **Agency** (processes of decision making, negotiation, manipulation etc.) and **Achievements** (well-being outcomes).
- This understanding of choice is further qualified by referring to the *conditions* (the possibility of alternatives and the ability to have chosen otherwise, closely linked to

poverty and inequality) and *consequences* (the significance in people's lives) of meaningful choice.

Measuring empowerment:

- Kabeer is interested in *inequalities* in people's capacity to make choices, rather than in *differences* in choices or preferences: 'A *lack of uniformity in functioning achievements cannot be automatically interpreted as evidence of inequality because it is highly unlikely that all members within a given society will give equal value to different possible ways of "being and doing"*'. It is important, when measuring empowerment, to distinguish between differentials which reflect difference in preferences and those which embody a denial of choice.
- A focus on **universally valued achievements** such as nutrition, health and adequate shelter has been thought to provide a way of doing this, however this confines the analysis to women for whom disempowerment is largely a matter of poverty. Alternatively, organisations such as the UN have attempted to go beyond survival-related achievements to include achievements that would be considered to be of value in most contexts, such as political representation. Kabeer warns that this entails a movement away from the criteria of women's choices and values to a definition of achievement that represents the *values of those doing the measuring*.
- **Formal vs. effective resource entitlements:** Resources are one remove from choice and represent potential rather than actual choice. The resource dimension of choice must be defined in ways which spell out the potential for human agency and valued achievements more clearly than a simple 'access' to resources approach does.

Internalised Oppression:

- The equation between choice and power (as absence of choice or as active discrimination) is complicated by forms of gender inequality that appear to be chosen by the women themselves, i.e. where women have internalised their lower social status, despite it having adverse implications for their own well-being and that of other women whom they might actively discriminate against.
- According to Kabeer, while this form of behaviour might be said to reflect choice, they are choices which stem from and serve to reinforce women's subordinate status. They remind us that power relations are expressed not only through the exercise of choice, but also through the kinds of choices people make. ***Power and dominance can operate through consent and complicity, as well as through coercion and conflict.***
- **Bourdieu's perception of 'Doxa'** is useful here. For Bourdieu, 'Doxa' referred to aspects of tradition and culture which are so taken-for-granted that they have become naturalised and exist beyond discourse or argumentation. This concept is useful because it shifts our attention away from the dichotomy between 'false' and 'authentic' realities/consciousnesses, towards a concern with differing levels of reality and the *practical and strategic* interests to which they give rise. Bourdieu suggests that as long as the subjective assessments of social actors are largely congruent with the objectively organised possibilities available to them, the world of 'doxa' will remain intact. The passage from 'doxa' to critical consciousness only becomes possible when competing ways of 'being and doing' become material and cultural possibilities, revealing the arbitrariness of the given social order. This adds a further dimension to the above discussion of the conditions of choice: in assessing whether or not an achievement embodies meaningful choice, we have to ask whether choices were not only materially possible, but whether they were conceived to be within the realms of possibility.

Gaps:

- How do attempts to change deeply entrenched structures, such as pitting the law against rules legitimised by custom and religion, translate into changes in individual agency and choice?

Luttrell, C. (2007) *Empowerment: An Overview Paper prepared for the Livelihood for Equity desk, SDC.**

Type of resource: Literature review.

Objective: to provide a discussion of the various debates regarding different definitions and conceptual approaches to power and empowerment, and the operational implications of these.

Conceptual frameworks:

- Rowlands's (1997) model of power emphasises the difference between 'power over' (resources), 'power to' (act to change power relations), 'power with' (collective action), and 'power within' (individual consciousness).
- Gaventa's three continuums of power: The Power Cube (2003). These include *spaces* (how arenas are created), *power* (degree of visibility) and *places* (levels of engagement). Such continuums challenge unhelpful dichotomies between those who 'have' power vs. those who don't, included vs. excluded, hegemony vs. resistance. IT also allows for a consideration of 'invisible' power through strategies of passive resistance (Scott 1985).

Key messages/debates:

- **Empowerment is multi-dimensional** and takes different forms: economic, human and social, political/legal, cultural (see Introduction for definitions).
- **Empowerment is more than a gender issue:** often linked to gender because of its relevance to WID/GAD debates, empowerment concerns a much broader range of processes of marginalisation based on age, social status, ethnicity, disability etc.
- **Multiple meanings:** empowerment can take on different meanings in different social, economic, political and historical contexts i.e. Latin American association of empowerment with neo-liberal policies and World Bank, and French 'populisme' critique of empowerment linked to participatory techniques and romanticising 'the poor'.
- **Empowerment as discourse:** There is widespread concern that concept of 'empowerment' has not brought about any fundamental changes in development practice and that the rhetoric is used by organisations to justify lack of attention to structural causes of disempowerment (Fiedrich et al. 2003). Its adoption as a development 'buzzword', linked in a 'chain of equivalence' to concepts such as social capital, has stripped it of any political potency (Cornwall and Brock 2005).
- **Understanding oppression:** understanding the dynamics of oppression, including internalised oppression, is crucial to understanding and operationalising empowerment: Shaffer's (1998) study in Guinea shows the way that women can perpetuate discriminatory social norms: both men and women recognise the inequality in women's work loads but neither perceives this as an *unjust* situation. This leads to the suggestion that, as women internalise cultural subordination, their own perceptions cannot be trusted. The practical implications of this are that change can only occur are part of a wider political struggle with some external influence.
- **Intrinsic vs. instrumentalist approach:** empowerment is understood and operationalised organisations as a process, an outcome and sometimes as both. An emphasis on *process* leads to a focus on organisational capacity building or an increase in participation of previously excluded groups in the design, management and evaluation of development activities. An emphasis on outcomes leads to a focus on economic enhancement and increasing access to economic resources.
- **Agency vs. Structure:** An agency approach leads to an emphasis on education and capacity-building, while a structural approach addresses power inequalities affecting entire social groups (for operational implications see table three on Pp 11). Clearly both are important. For example e.g. improving women's access to micro-credit does not necessarily increase their decision-making powers in the household or public sphere.
- **Measuring empowerment:** There is no one single accepted method for measuring and tracking changes, or the extent to which empowerment has been achieved. Indeed the actual process of M & E can in itself be *disempowering* if it is not done in a participatory way that promotes two way accountability. Waddington (2001) and Oxaal and Baden (1997) question whether indicators should even be used at all to measure

empowerment. The development of contextually relevant indicators requires an analysis of the local power structures in order to highlight which factors are the most significant in creating powerlessness in the first place. The definition of indicators is not only location specific, but, as empowerment is also a process, the relevance of indicators will change over time.

Moncrieffe, Joy (2001) 'Accountability: Ideas, Ideals, Constraints', *Democratization* 8 (3): 26-50.*

Type of resource: Article exploring conditions and strategies for building accountability.

Conceptual Framework: Two dimensions of accountability are explored: **ex-ante** (this refers to the responsiveness of representatives and the idea that in order to act effectively in citizens' interests, representatives must know what these interests are and allow for checks on policies and policy making through consultation) and **ex-post** (this refers to holding public officials accountable through the law and other sanctioning mechanisms). Both, it is argued, are important for quality representation, although conventional definitions of accountability tend to focus on ex-post accountability.

What is meant by representation?

The definition of ex-ante accountability relies on a particular concept of representation that proposes that:

- Elected officials have a responsibility to perform in the public interest, despite the difficulty in defining exactly what constitutes 'public interest'.
- Citizens are not always the most reliable judges of what is best for them. The desires of the electorate must be a significant but not exclusive consideration (*this differs from some claims that emphasise the unreliability of the electorate's opinions and also discount the importance of citizen/public involvement to accountability*).
- Citizen involvement is important for accountability and there is a need to implement mechanisms to ensure that citizens' opinions are heard and considered in government.

Key findings:

Direct relations between government and citizenry

- Accountability is critical to representative democracy.
- The politics of building accountability are complex.
- It is inadequate to merely advocate political equality while sustaining gross social and economic inequities and depriving citizens of opportunities to participate more fully in the political process.
- It is worth emphasising that institutions are institutions (means through which interests can be heard and channelled and through which government can provide information to the electorate) are critical for accountability.

Indirect accountability:

- Economic conditions can dictate how much can be spent on ensuring citizen participation, which places considerable demands on the state.
- Public accountability also requires the accountability of parliaments, private sector business and NGOs, which in turn requires financial and managerial accountability within and from appointed professional organisations. These areas are interconnected and improving accountability in one area may require prior, accompanying and/or long term strategies to improve accountability in other areas.
- The extent to which accountability exists and is feasible depends on the political, social, and economic conditions within the specific context. The objectives set, the tools used and the proposed speed of change must all be based in or reflect specific situations.

Nagar, N. and S. Raju (2003) *Women, NGOs and the Contradictions of Empowerment and Disempowerment: A conversation* Blackwell Publishing *

Type of resource: Written version of an ongoing dialogue between two academics: Richa Nagar, Department of Women's studies, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN, USA and Saraswati Raju, Centre for the Study of Regional Development, Jawaharlal Nehru Univeristy, New Dheli, India.

Key messages/questions:

- The ways in which feminist and empowerment discourses have been co-opted by the mainstream forces has raised some increasingly vexing questions for the women's movement in India.
- There are problems associated with 'doing' empowerment on the ground at a time when Southern NGOs are becoming increasingly professionalized and globalised.
- Definitions and meanings of empowerment and disempowerment in poor women's lives remain unclear (water example).
- There are political complexities associated with engaging in critiques of NGOs that are trying to empower marginalised women.
- The relationship of NGOs with the government in India is radically changing: NGOs have become an arm of the government. Or, as a bureaucrat in Hyderabad recently put it in an informal conversation, "the government has become the biggest NGO these days."
- Can NGOs act as agents of social change? Case study: An NGO in Punjab was supplying condoms to landlords who were engaging in unsafe sex with low caste agricultural women labourers. Far from challenging the exploitation, the NGO was reinforcing the hierarchy. The NGO claimed that social change was not on their agenda.
- Empowerment is more than social change, it is a process of undoing internalised oppression.
- Who, besides women, must be involved in women's empowerment and social change? Men? The broader communities? If the question is one of redistributing resources, the vision and agendas must move beyond women.
- Interventions to empower women in one sphere can lead to disempowerment in another sphere. Case study: low caste women trained as hand-pump mechanics gained status within their villages but at the same time were paid low wages to travel long-distances carrying heavy equipment and were working long hours away from their homes, children etc. Having entered a monetized and bureaucratized sector, they felt marginalised in new ways.
- What should be the role of the analyst, in terms of interpreting women's accounts of achievements or transformations in status? It is not adequate just to report women's interpretations in their own words (internalised oppression).

Navarro, Z. (2006) "In Search of a Cultural Interpretation of Power: The Contribution of Pierre Bourdieu" in *IDS Bulletin* 37 (6). Institute for Development Studies *

Type of resource: Article in IDS Bulletin. Following an overview of the theory of social practices Bourdieu developed in the course of almost 40 years as one of the leading social scientists of all time, Navarro offers insights about his cultural theory of power and defends its relevance today.

Conceptual Framework: This article presents the cultural interpretation of power proposed by the French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu.

Discussion:

For Navarro, power struggles (over resources) lie at the heart of all social arrangements. Culture is a battleground where conformity is contested and eventually materialises amongst agents, thus creating social differences and unequal structures (Navarro 2006). Struggles for

power are struggles over resources, although Navarro acknowledges that resources have no intrinsic value other than the meaning or 'symbolic capital' given to them by society. From this view point, to challenge power is to deny its legitimacy. In this way, sociology can become an instrument of social struggle by uncovering the social basis of power.

The case of the Brazilian Landless Movement (MST) is used to illustrate possible analytical routes to test the explanatory utility of Bourdieu's framework.

O'Neil, T. et al (2007). Evaluation of Citizen's Voice and accountability: Review of the Literature and Donor Approaches. London: DFID

Type of resource: DFID funded literature Review on donor approaches to evaluating citizens' voice and accountability: reviews existing literature and policy documents of six DAC donors in order to contribute to the design of an evaluation framework to assess the effectiveness of voice and accountability interventions.

Discussion:

In as much as poverty is defined by powerlessness, enhancing voice and accountability can directly reduce poverty. However, there are challenges, particularly around the role of external actors in strengthening citizen's voice and accountability. There is also uncertainty about the relationship between democracy and development outcomes (2007).

Definitions:

- Citizenship is, by definition, about the social contract between state and citizen, connoting the rights and responsibilities that a citizen can legitimately claim from the state and which the state can legitimately expect from its citizens. As Newell and Bellour point out (2002, cited in O'Neil 2007): 'Citizenship is in many ways the concept that brings accountability and participation (voice) together.'
- Voice refers to the ability of people to express their views and influence the way they are governed (2007).
- Accountability refers to the nature of the relationship between citizens and public officials, whereby those with delegated authority are answerable to those whose lives they shape. This entails an assumption about the roles and responsibilities of the state, as well as the rights and entitlements of citizens. It also assumes a level of empowerment of the citizens and responsiveness of the state. (2007).

Voice, accountability and development outcomes:

The donor literature on voice and accountability emphasises the instrumental value of voice and accountability for poverty reduction: there is a general consensus among donors that voice and accountability interventions contribute to poverty reduction, sustainable development and attainment of the MDGs, both directly, in that poverty reduction is in part directly caused by absence of voice and accountability, and indirectly, through the achievement of other objectives, such as better governance and democracy, that are thought to relate directly to poverty reduction (O'Neil 2007).

However, there remains uncertainty about the development impact of enhanced voice and accountability, given the lack of evidence regarding a causal relationship – positive or negative - between democracy and development. While the intrinsic value of democracy is generally widely accepted, the developmental benefits of democracy are much contested. According to Khan, it would be overly optimistic to assume that a democratic political system would force the state to act for the public good. Nevertheless, democratic states could still be expected to be more accountable in delivering services that *happen to be part* of the policy agenda (Khan 2005, cited in O'Neil 2007).

Where are the gaps?

- There is a need for donors to give higher priority to evaluation research and the development of systematic monitoring and evaluation. Generating systematic evidence about the effectiveness of donor activities in this area is of paramount importance and requires an awareness of four issues in particular:

1. Models are important for understanding processes of voice and accountability and their relationship to broader social and political change.
2. The fit between models and their actual functioning is determined by context.
3. Frameworks or typologies for understanding context can help reconcile the context specific nature of social and political processes and the need for programming to be grounded in models.
4. There are different levels of impact and it may not be possible to determine them all.

Theis, J. (2003) *Rights-based Monitoring and Evaluation: A discussion paper. Save the Children.*

Discussion:

- The first paper (2003) proposes a *rights-based approach* to monitoring and evaluating changes in human and children's rights, accountability, participation and equity.
- A rights-based perspective allows programme managers to measure the impact of interventions in terms of changes in a series of dimensions: in the lives of children and young people, in policies and practice affecting children's rights, *in children's ability to participate as active citizens and to enjoy non-discriminatory treatment*, and in the capacity of the community and civil society to support their rights.
- Monitoring, it is argued, is as an essential tool for the promotion of human rights. The collection and dissemination of data about unfulfilled rights and about rights violations puts pressure on duty bearers to meet their obligations to respect, protect and fulfil human rights.
- As much as possible, relevant tools and frameworks should draw on existing tools for measuring change, which can be found in the areas of gender, disability, participation and empowerment, advocacy, policy and legal change, behaviour change and governance.

Key messages:

A rights-based approach to development combines human rights, development and social activism to promote justice, equality and freedom. It holds duty bearers to account for their obligations, empowers people to demand their rightful entitlements, promotes equity and challenges discrimination.

Theis, J. (2004) *Promoting Rights-Based approaches: Experiences and Ideas from Asia and the Pacific Save the Children*

Type of Resource: Book based on Save the Children's experiences with rights-based approaches in East and South-East Asia and to some extent on work in South Asia and the Pacific. It also draws on the author's experience of attending more than 30 workshops and seminars on rights-based approaches to development, over a period of four years.

Key messages:

The paper explores the question: *What is the added value of a rights-based approach?*

- Throughout the book it is argued that RBAs reinforce the need to tackle the fundamental causes of poverty, injustice and exploitation and, in doing so, they *reach beyond the boundaries of conventional development and human rights work*.
- **Rights come with responsibilities.** Central to the idea of human rights is the relationship between rights holder and duty bearer. States (and other 'duty bearers') are responsible to ensure that the rights of all people are equally respected, protected and fulfilled. *This does not mean that the state is responsible to provide everything.* It does mean, however, that the state has an obligation to create the conditions that enable other duty bearers, such as parents, private sector, local organisations, donors and international institutions, to fulfil their responsibilities. *Rights holders are responsible to respect and not to violate the rights of others.*
- **Accountability and participation.** The primary role of a rights-based development organisation is to contribute to the fulfilment of human rights by *identifying relevant duty bearers and getting them to meet their obligations and by empowering poor and*

exploited people to claim their entitlements. Directly meeting needs and fulfilling rights helps people, but it does not necessarily strengthen the accountability of duty bearers. It also does not strengthen people's own ability to claim their rights.

- **Participation is a fundamental human right.** Every child, woman and man is entitled to demand her or his rights from duty bearers. The civil rights to information, expression and association are some of the instruments through which people can demand their rights.
- There are no blueprints for how an organisation should become rights-based. Every organisation has to do its own analysis of what a rights-based approach implies for its programme areas and for the *social, political and cultural context in which the agency works.*
- **Children and child rights should be concerns for all agencies and departments, not just child focused organisations.** Children's rights have, to a large extent, remained the domain of child welfare and child rights organisations. While no development or human rights agency can afford to ignore gender issues, many continue to leave children's issues to child-focused organisations.
- Analysing RBAs from a child rights perspective, Theis argues that there is much that child rights organisations can contribute to the broader discourse on rights-based approaches.

VeneKlasen et al. (2004) Rights-based approaches and beyond: challenges of linking rights and participation. IDS Working paper no. 235 Linking rights and participation series

Type of resource: This paper explores the growing trend of "rights-based approaches" (RBA) to development, drawing from interviews with a range of primarily US-based international human rights and development organisations as well as from insights through the authors' years of experience working with development and rights groups in the global south.

Conceptual approach:

- The authors understand RBAs as having three critical components: power, participation and rights.
- Questions of power and empowerment lie at the heart of work on rights and participation.
- The authors draw on Gaventa's 'power cube' in their explanation of how power operates dynamically at many levels to prevent people's participation and the fulfilment of their rights. Visible forms of power and decision-making such as legislatures, laws and policies can discriminate against and undermine rights and participation of certain groups such as the poor and marginalised while hidden forces of power operate, often undetected, under the table to set the political agenda and benefit privileged sectors of society. Invisible mechanisms of power are the most insidious because they shape meaning and notions of what is acceptable and who is worthy in society. They operate at a deeply psychological level to reinforce feelings of privilege or inferiority that, in turn, shape people's understanding of themselves, their world and their potential to act. Understanding and altering these power dynamics is critical to genuine participation and the fulfilment of rights.

Discussion: what exactly is a RBA and how exactly does it link with what is being done in the name of 'participation'?

- RBAs are a product of convergence between strands of rights and participation approaches to development. Yet, despite their increasing popularity, confusion abounds as to what "RBA" means in practice, what lessons it draws from rights and participatory approaches, and how it relates to questions of power, empowerment and "good governance".
- Many development organisations have integrated *rights language and advocacy* into their work rather than weaving together two distinct but interconnected approaches into a stronger whole.
- A shift towards rights and policy advocacy has led to the characterisation of 'traditional' community development and service delivery as treating symptoms rather than causes.

There is an unspoken assumption that promoting 'voice' and advancing rights will ensure better lives for the marginalised.

- This belief belies the crucial complementary role that development work performs in testing and crafting viable options to inequitable economic, social, political and cultural structures (not to mention addressing urgent, felt needs), particularly at a time when strapped or corrupt governments cannot provide even the most basic of services.
- Finding balance and synergy between these strategies and approaches will be fundamental to the success of change efforts. The growing recognition that human rights and community development concepts and approaches can be combined to improve strategies for addressing poverty and promoting social justice offers considerable promise but as the nature of poverty, inequality and governance shifts, it becomes imperative that strategies link rights, development and participation with a deeper understanding of power and social change to ensure that such promise be fulfilled.
- One way to understand their relationships more holistically is to view rights and advocacy as the political or policy side of development and participation efforts; and development and participation as the practical side of rights and advocacy work that gives rights concrete meaning in people's lives.

Linking rights and participation:

The links between rights and participation take on clearer meanings when they are envisioned as part of an *integrated social change process designed to transform power*. The understanding of rights as a political tool for use in the dynamic process of claiming resources and ensuring justice clearly suggests a link to people's active and engaged participation. Rights and participation have always been linked *implicitly*. The question is how to link them *explicitly* in ways that contribute to empowerment and lasting change:

- A deeper analysis of power and empowerment.
- A focus on citizenship and organizing as elements of legal and policy change. IF participation is detached from any kind of organizing or action, it loses its ability to strengthen people's critical understanding of power and their view of themselves as change agents.
- Recognition of the complementarity and synergy between rights and development (*rights and advocacy are the policy side of development and participation work, making government and other powerful institutions responsive and accountable. Participation and development are the practical side of rights and advocacy work providing concrete ways for people to live in dignity and health*).
- A sense of clarity about the interaction between needs, rights and responsibilities.

The history of participation: building on forgotten experience

Past experiences and approaches to social change seem relatively and surprisingly unknown to many development and rights practitioners who are seeking to link rights and participation in transformative strategies. The mainstreaming of participation over the last 25 years has tended to detach participatory methodologies from a long history of political processes and social movements, so that often even the most innovative practitioners are unaware of the many streams of participation history.

The authors cover the following selected broad traditions of participation experience:

- Popular education
- Participatory research and participatory action research
- Adult and non-formal education
- Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)/Participatory Learning and Action (PLA)
- Community organising and education for action

Popular education

The popular education stream took form in the 1950s and 1960s based on the thinking and work of the Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire (1972; 1974). He drew on an explicit analysis of power and class through his own experience with state repression and poverty. Freire believed that poverty was rooted in unequal structures of power and that education to gain critical consciousness about the systemic roots of inequality was a prerequisite for transforming those inequitable relationships.

Working with peasants, Freire found that socialisation and cultural formation affected rural people's consciousness about their place in the world, preventing many from seeing themselves as citizens worthy of rights and capable of action. On some levels, peasants internalised a belief that they deserved their subordinate position in society, blaming themselves for their poverty and marginalisation. This realization led Freire to place great importance on helping people develop a critical awareness of their own power and potential and a deeper understanding of politics and change. Though he did not incorporate a gender analysis into his thinking, his notions about consciousness-raising are similar to analyses made by feminists in the 1980s and 1990s about the invisible forces shaping women's consciousness and their subordination and exclusion. To confront this vision of power and powerlessness, Freire and his colleagues developed learning materials and dialogue processes that helped marginalised people reflect on their lives in critical ways to strengthen their confidence, sense of solidarity, hope, organisation, and skills of analysis and literacy.

Problem-posing in nature, Freire's approach tapped activist and community knowledge about themes of injustice, developing related images in the form of drawings or photos to promote dialogue and awareness. These images, combined with key words, were the basis for generating reflection, literacy skills and critical thinking that, in turn, served as a foundation for building and strengthening community organisations and social change movements. This approach to "liberation education" was contrasted with traditional "banking" education methods, where teachers or experts deposited knowledge into the minds of students, reinforcing passivity and the notion that people are empty vessels, ignorant, waiting for knowledge.

Critique:

- Feminist questioned his focus on class as the sole determinant of poverty and exclusion. Other analysts challenged some of his views on culture and consciousness. While they agreed that mechanisms of power shape how people see themselves, they believed that peasants' unwillingness to engage overtly in politics may be due to an implicit analysis of risk and power and not just to internalised attitudes of subordination. Instead of direct action, peasants may opt to resist oppression quietly.
- As is common with other approaches, popular education methods can be distorted. When popular education is reduced to a set of random participatory techniques and detached from any kind of organizing or action, it loses its ability to strengthen people's critical understanding of power and their view of themselves as change agents. In certain cases, popular education has been associated with revolutionary movements that have applied the approaches in rather formulaic ways and engaged people in limited discussions about pre-selected political themes. In some instances, this has been due to the difficult nature of the method, as it depends on the skillful facilitation of group discussions about complex social issues with people who are not accustomed to such conversations. In other cases, leaders were concerned that holding completely open discussions would result in questions or demands that they could not answer or increase criticism of their leadership. In other contexts, right-wing governments and dictatorships have adopted technical aspects of Freire's literacy method as an efficient and engaging teaching approach while eliminating the problem-posing and consciousness-raising discussion of social justice themes.

Participatory Research/Participatory Action Research

Participatory research, or participatory action research as it is sometimes described, emerged from the work of academics and activists concerned about specific relations of power around issues of knowledge creation, poverty and class.¹⁷ The approach evolved from international efforts that are often traced to researchers and educators in Tanzania in the early 1970s working to involve community people in research explicitly as partners and decision-makers. Together they investigated and analysed social problems such as health care, each tapping their own sources of knowledge and experience to create a more accurate, collective understanding of issues so that more effective actions could be taken in response.

Participatory research takes different forms but usually brings local people together with outside researchers and development activists to study issues of common concern and share

control over the process of inquiry and action. Like action research, participatory research rejects the positivist notion of one objective “truth” that should be proven by deductive reasoning and evidence, recognising instead that knowledge and reality are often socially constructed on the basis of deeply embedded values and worldviews. In contrast to some mainstream action research, however, participatory research is explicitly intended to promote more equitable relations of power and hence, is not neutral. For both these reasons, participatory research is open to challenge by traditional researchers and development practitioners.

Aimed at transforming structures of injustice, it is based on a collective analysis and creation of knowledge that produces new awareness, critical thinking and more effective strategies of social change.

Conclusion:

Certain aspects of rights-based approaches offer considerable potential for advancing work on rights and social justice, yet others raise important questions. By failing to break down the boxes that have separated rights and development, NGOs lose the potential dynamism and power that such integration offers.

Waring, M. (2004) *Civil Society, Community Participation and Empowerment in the Era of Globalization*. Association for Women's Rights in Development.

Type of resource: Account of the emergence of participation in development. The author takes a historical perspective and asks whether there is really anything new about civil society and 'participatory governance'.

Key messages:

While acknowledging the emergence of new ‘partnerships’ between civil society and governments, Waring notes several reasons for caution:

- The emergence and growth of ‘transnational civil society’ is not new. Social history reveals that political movements of communities of people organised across borders in pursuit of their rights is not new. While civil society ‘networks’ these days may operate at a greater speed, as email, notebook computers and business class air travel have replaced letters, antique type-writers and travel by ship, the language and issues of the feminist and other social movements of the 1960s and 70s have resonance now.
- The international community’s language of copout: ‘civil society’, governance and strengthening institutions, has birthed a whole new industry of NGOs and created another layer between implementers and ‘grass roots’ experts. Engaging with civil society should not be considered a valid replacement for consulting with the poor.
- Waring suspects that the focus on ‘civil society’ and governance is *not* an exercise in the subtle use of euphemisms by donors to insert civil and political rights into their programmes. It is about avoiding a rights-based approach, and also an exercise in control of NGO or civil society groups.