

'Seeing Like a Citizen'
International Reflections on Participation
DRC on Citizenship, Participation and Accountability



**Sharing an international
perspective from**

- **Development Research Centre on
Citizenship, Participation and Accountability**
- **LogoLink – work on citizen participation in
local governance around the world**
- **Champions of Participation**
- **Previous dialogues of what can be learned
internationally**

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The Current Paradox

- **On the one hand: Uptake of citizen participation agenda at the local level, e.g**
 - Duty to involve
 - Growth of participatory budgeting
- **On the other hand, national democratic crisis**
 - Growing recognition of democratic deficits
 - Growing distrust of Parliamentary institutions
- **Yet most proposals for reform remain institutional**
How can we link the citizen engagement agenda to democratic reform?

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The democratic dichotomy: Triumph or deficit?

- **One view - The 'democratic century'**
 - 120 electoral democracies with universal suffrage in place at the end of the century compared with none at the beginning
- **Another view - widespread concern with democratic deficits**
 - Declining political participation
 - Failure to meet challenges of poverty and inequality
 - Scepticism and distrust
 - Hollowed out forms of engagement
- **Democracy with adjectives: Which democracy are we talking about?**

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Taking a Citizens Perspective

- A neo-liberal market approach – citizens as consumers
- A state-based approach – citizens as users of state services
- A thin 'democracy' approach – citizens as voters
- A civil society (NGO) approach – citizens as beneficiaries of projects and programmes

Reversing the Telescope: Seeing Like a Citizen

- Sees citizens themselves as key social actors and sources of knowledge about democracy building
- Asks how citizens perceive their rights and identities as actors for democracy and how they engage with the institutions that affect their lives.

Taking this perspective gives us a very different view - in some cases the institutions being strengthened by external assistance are the very ones seen by citizens as anti-democratic

Active citizens build responsive states, not (only) the other way around

Citizens can help to build democratic institutions, legitimacy, responsiveness, capability, accountability

- So the challenge is how to 'build' active citizens
- And, how active citizens mobilise to deepen democracies, change national policies, build responsive states.

Rights and participation activate citizenship and deepen democracy

Participatory citizenship	The right to participation	Citizenship and rights
Moves beyond passive engagement in elections to more active engagement in policies and decision-making	Considers citizens as the 'makers and shapers' of policies, not only the 'users and choosers' of development, or as 'clients' of others	This are seen as 'attained' through action, not only 'bestowed' by law – as actor based, and as practice based.

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One solution: Fighting democratic decline with more democracy

- A return to classical debates
- With emerging arguments from the South
- And a concern for 'deepening democracy' through
 - Inclusion
 - Engagement
 - Deliberation



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Three dimensions of deep democracy

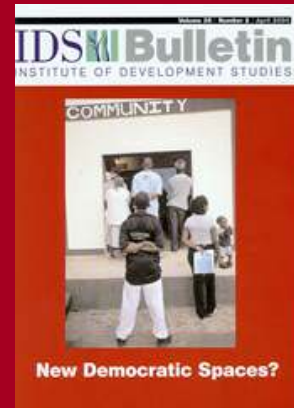
adopted from Fung and Wright

	Thin Democracy	Deep Democracy
Elections and Representation	Weak parties, disengaged electorate	Egalitarian, engaged elections
Associations	Bureaucratic corporatism	Associative democracy
Direct Participation	Plebiscitary referenda	Empowered Participatory Governance

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Deepening democracy through participatory governance

- Bringing civil society into the state –from advocates to co-governors
- Emergence of a host of ‘new democratic spaces’
 - At local levels
- Beyond invitation – participation as a legal right
- How can this be scaled up?



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Forms of Citizens' Political Engagement

Category	Individual	Constitutive Mediation		Representative mediation			State
Layer	Potential participation	Associational life	Social movements	Interest groups	Participatory mechanisms	Electoral process	Executive, Legislative & Judiciary
Case 1							
Case 2							
Case 3							
Case 4							
Case 5							
Case 6							
Case 11							
Case 12							

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Deepening democracy through deliberation

- **Emphasis on reason and dialogue in public spaces, not only the state**
- **Trade offs of 'participation' and 'deliberation'**
- **Spawned a host of innovations in practice in both north and south –**

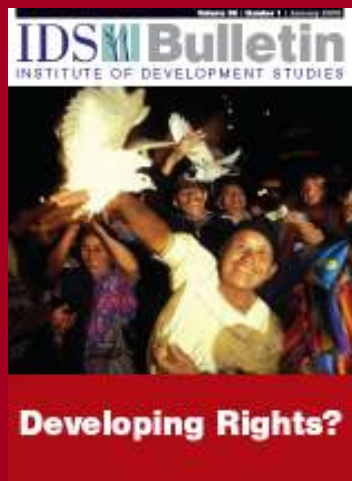


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Deepening democracy through building civil society

- **Civil society seen as independent of the state, adding checks and balances to it, and creating new rights within it**

Examples – many different civil society campaigns mobilising for democratic reform



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Citizen Based Accountability

- Increasing role of ‘watchdog groups’ - some with legal rights
- A variety of mechanisms:
 - Community monitoring
 - Report cards
 - Social audits
 - Participatory media
- Importance of information and transparency



Linking national legislation and local participation in India

Winning Change: Citizen Mobilisation and National Policy

(www.ids.ac.uk/go/citizens)

<u>Case Example</u>	<u>Positive Gains</u>
National Campaign for Land Reform – Philippines	Six million hectares of land (half of country’s farmland), redistributed to 3 million poor households
Treatment Action Campaign	Public recognition and debate’ 60,000 people benefiting from publicly supplied ARVs’
Right to Information Campaign – India	National Right to Information Bill passed in 2005, and in nine of 28 states – contributing to greater public accountability
Campaign to reduce Maternal Mortality – Mexico	Put issue on national agenda; contributed to major budget shift; changed ‘paradigm’ of delivery

Winning Change (con)

<u>Case Example</u>	<u>Positive Gains</u>
Right to the City Campaign – Brazil	Established national framework for participation in urban planning
Child Rights and social policies – Chile	New framework, resources and social policies for children, leading to concrete improvements in child poverty
Re/forming the Penal Code for Women's Rights- Turkey	New Turkish Penal Code with 35 amendments for women's sexual rights
Campaign for Reform of the <i>Moudawana</i> - Morocco	Reform of Islamic family law affecting women's rights

Lessons for National Policy Change

- Building and protecting political space is critical
- Change rarely happen from inside or outside alone – alliances are critical
- Global framing of rights can strengthen national action – but not always
- Contentious Issues require contentious politics
- Sustainable policy change requires robust campaigns with deep citizen engagement

The current challenge:

- How do we apply these lessons to the current challenge of revitalising democracy?
- How do we link the gains in community participation agenda to national democratic reform?
- Where are the opportunities for deepening democracy through greater citizen engagement?

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