‘Seeing Like a Citizen: Empowering citizens, Delivering services, Deepening democracy

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For copies of studies and further materials:
DRC on Citizenship, Participation and Accountability:
www.ids.ac.uk/drc-citizen
Logolink (Participation and Local Governance):
www.ids.ac.uk/logolink
The Context of Participation

- Around the world a key crisis of legitimacy characterises the relationship between citizens and institutions that affect their lives;

- A key challenge therefore is the construction of new relationships between ordinary citizens - especially the poor and excluded - and institutions, especially government.

- In both rich and poor countries, a number of initiatives are seeking new ways of strengthening citizen participation, on the one hand, and government responsiveness on the other.
Constructions of citizenship

• A neo-liberal market approach – citizens as consumers
• A state-based approach – citizens as users
• A ‘thin democracy’ approach – citizens as voters
• A citizen-centred approach – sees citizens as actors, not as residuals of other institutions. Puts citizen empowerment at the heart of democratic process
Participation extends citizenship and deepens democracy

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Participatory citizenship</th>
<th>The right to participation</th>
<th>Citizenship and rights</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Moves beyond passive engagement in elections to engagement in policies and decision-making</td>
<td>Considers citizens as the ‘makers and shapers’ of policies, not only the ‘users and choosers’ of development, or as ‘clients’ of others</td>
<td>Are seen as ‘attained’ through action, not only ‘bestowed’ by law – as actor based, and as practice based.</td>
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Deepening Democracy through Empowered Participatory Governance

- Links concerns with participation and deliberation to a concern with how such spaces are created and supported by the design of public institutions

- Beyond invitation – participation as a legal right

- Examples:
  - Participatory budgeting and participatory health councils in Brazil
An emerging picture: Citizenship as...

- Robust not passive
- Multidimensional not only political
- Linked to recognition and identity, and around concrete issues
- Outside the state but with implications for the state
Lessons for inclusive participation

✔ Simply creating new ‘invited’ spaces for participation does not mean they will be filled with new voices

✔ Success involves linking:
  ▪ institutional design,
  ▪ political will,
  ▪ civil society mobilisation

✔ Beyond participation fatigue? Try putting real power and resources on the table
Strategies for Accountability

- Multiple citizen-based approaches to accountability which can interact with and strengthen state-based approaches
- Going beyond technical, ‘accountancy’ approaches
- Involving empowered citizens as monitors and watchdogs of public services
Assessing the outcomes: What difference does citizen participation in local governance make to social justice?

- From voice to presence to influence
- Measure both developmental and democracy building outcomes
- Combine community empowerment and government reform approaches
Results of linking citizen empowerment with local governance (from six countries)

• Increased action by citizens and by newly elected leaders and officials for improved services and accountability;
• Some examples of redistribution to poorer communities;
• New alliances between citizens, officials and policy makers;
• Stronger more inclusive civil society organisations;
• Broader changes in government policy above the local level;
• Increased respect for cultural pluralism and diversity in political and public life
Lessons and implications

• Go beyond citizens as ‘residuals’
  – *Put citizens at the centre of the process*

• Go beyond the ‘institutional design’ approach to empowerment
  – *Recognise the importance of power, identity and mobilisation*

• Work both sides of the equation
  – *Link community empowerment and government reform to strengthen social justice*

• Understand deepening democracy as constructed through action from above and below, over time
  – *Find and support the change agents inside and outside government who will help it emerge*

Development Research Centre on Citizenship, Participation, and Accountability
Key Lessons for government

- The importance of enabling legal provisions
- Working both sides of the equation
- Clear rules and roles of engagement
- Improved incentives for engagement
- Support from non-governmental allies
- Naming and addressing power relations
- Taking time and going slow