From Users and Choosers to Makers and Shapers

Repositioning Participation in Social Policy[1]

Andrea Cornwall and John Gaventa

1 Introduction

How do 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?

State-centred conceptions of social policy often view citizens as recipients of state-delivered programmes. Market-led versions focus on the clients of social welfare as consumers, who participate through exercising choice from a range of services. In this paper, we explore a view that argues for 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. To do so raises important conceptual issues about the nature of participation, citizenship, and social policy itself. We suggest that changing contexts and conditions – demographic change, an increased emphasis on decentralisation, privatisation of provisioning, and globalisation – challenge traditional approaches to participation in social policy.

In this article, we discuss these conceptual issues within a broader historical review of the strategies through which ordinary people have participated in affecting social policies and provisions. We argue that participation must be repositioned in light of current realities, which offer new spaces as well as new constraints for citizen engagement.

2 Changing Times, New Challenges

Global social policy, as Deacon *et al.* (1997) contend, faces a set of unprecedented challenges. As northern welfare regimes become increasingly embattled (Esping-Andersen 1996; Pierson 1998), southern countries face new challenges for social sector provisioning in the wake of economic reforms, globalisation and changing demography.

In a literature mainly concerned with northern and transitional economies, the absence of reference to poorer countries in the South is notable. Setting 'global social policy' in context requires that we move beyond debates that have conventionally focused on various types of welfare regimes, to take account of the complexities of welfare provisioning in countries where the configuration of state and non-state actors, and indeed the responsiveness and capacity of the state to deliver welfare services, is strikingly different.

Mishra observes that globalisation 'is dissolving the nexus between the economic and the social' (1998: 485). On the one hand, as Deacon *et al.* (1997) point out, the role of supranational institutions in shaping social policy in nation-states calls for an approach that treats these institutions not simply as the tools of powerful state interests, but as political actors in themselves. On the other hand, Deacon *et al.* point to the role of international civil society and the place that global political, legal and social rights play in creating a socially just new world order. While their analysis does not prescribe much of a role for 'participation' *per se*, there are clear resonances with recent work on participation (Tandon and Cordeiro 1998). Significant for this analysis is the part that strategies for increasing citizen participation in social policy might play in this broader project.

Deacon *et al.*'s focus on institutional reform, powered by members of global 'epistemic communities' (Haas 1992), is one on which debates in the participation field have increasingly focused (Blackburn with Holland 1998; IDS 1999). An especially significant aspect of institutional reform, for the social sector and beyond, has been the prescription of new forms of governance through sector reform programmes. Mishra argues that the policy prescriptions of international institutions 'amount to the supranational steering of social policy in a neoliberal direction... weaken[ing] further the autonomy of nation states to chart their own course' (1998: 491). Yet, as Hirst and Thompson (1996) note, global governance reform may serve to reinforce a role for the nation-state. This implies a more dynamic relationship between states and supranational institutions, as well as opportunities for linkages with global civil society and for influence from below (Gaventa and Robinson 1998). Effective participation in social policy, then, may require looking beyond national institutions to enhancing the capacities of citizens to influence supranational, as well as national, policy.

These changing circumstances raise important opportunities and challenges for participation. They require that we re-evaluate the concepts of citizenship and of participation itself in shaping social policy, and look more closely at the processes through which policies are formulated and enacted. It is to this that we now turn.

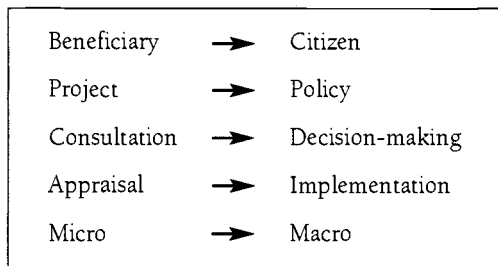# 3 Participation, Citizenship and Social Policy
3.1 Participation
The concept of participation, of course, is not a new one in development. Over the last 30 years it has acquired a spectrum of meanings and given rise to a diversity of practices. For much of this time, 'community participation', usually in projects, has remained distinct from political participation, conventionally through voting, political parties and lobbying. In recent years, there has been a convergence of concern with citizen engagement in policy formation and implementation and with 'good governance', broadening political participation to include a search for new, more direct, ways through which citizens may influence governments and hold them accountable (Gaventa and Valderrama 1999). Both of these shifts contribute to new discussions of participation as citizenship and as a social, as well as a political, right.

Debates about participation in social policy, not least in the North, have followed a similar trajectory. Although social policies have long been influenced and shaped by social movements (see, for example, Skocpol 1992, 1995), user or beneficiary participation did not feature in northern social policy debates until the 1960s or 1970s. As Richardson notes:

> ... consumers were assumed not only to have little interest in policy deliberations but also little capacity for contributing effectively to the process. It was up to the experts – the professionals, politicians and managers – to ensure that consumers' needs were well served. (Richardson 1983: 2–3)

Figure 1: A shift in participation

Beneficiary	➡	Citizen
Project	➡	Policy
Consultation	➡	Decision-making
Appraisal	➡	Implementation
Micro	➡	Macro

Source: Gaventa and Valderrama (1999)

During the late 1960s and the 1970s, there was a growing demand in many parts of the world for citizens to be involved in decision-making processes which affected their lives, including in the social policy arena. The form of participation that emerged focused largely on establishing consultative mechanisms, often in the form of user committees. The spread of this new approach was rapid and far-reaching. Citizens became involved in thousands of community health councils, parent committees in schools, tenant councils, and countless other beneficiary committees. Through strengthened participation of the clients of social services, it was hoped, providers would be better able to understand their needs and perspectives. Richardson comments: 'Not only was it seen as a key means of ensuring fair processes, and creating better decisions, but the act of participating would also bring fulfilment and understanding to those involved. Participation like motherhood, was clearly A Good Thing.' (1983: 4–5). The parallels with 'participation in projects' paradigm in development are striking, as with the emphasis on user committees that has become so pervasive an approach to participation in the South.

Institutionalised participation provided opportunities for improved assessment of needs and service responsiveness. It also provided a political space in which users could develop their own identities and voice (Barnes 1999). Yet, increasingly, even the advocates of beneficiary participation began to raise questions about its limits. The lack of a common understanding or definition of the term 'participation' meant that a whole variety of practices could be carried out and legitimated under its label (Richardson 1983). There were concerns about issues of power – what about those who lacked the power to express their views and preferences? Could participation in itself serve to reinforce exclusion? There was a danger that the beneficiary involvement model would simply become an interest group approach, in which user groups simply became seen as 'one amongst a number of self-interested stakeholders lobbying a pluralistic system' (Barnes 1999: 79–80). Moreover, there were questions of consultation fatigue, and of the ways in which social service managers used consultation simply to legitimate their own ends (Croft and Beresford 1996).

At the same time, the spaces created through user groups also became a ground for learning and for articulating broader demands. As Barnes observes

> If there was top-down encouragement to listen to what service users were saying, there was also a growing movement amongst those who were dissatisfied not only with the nature of the services they were receiving, but also with their lack of control over them. (Barnes 1999: 75)

With growing frustration over the limitations of the 'user involvement' concept of participation, writers and practitioners began to distinguish between viewing users as consumers and a focus on empowerment as the redistribution of power, to enable people to gain more control over their lives (Croft and Beresford 1996). Distinctions were also made between participation in initiatives set up by the state, and those set up by user groups themselves, over which they had more power and control (Croft and Beresford 1996; Barnes 1999).

A more radical version of people's participation increasingly came to be seen as a 'third option for social policy' – one that would go beyond the more paternalistic versions of the welfare state and the narrow consumerist approaches to user involvement (Croft and Beresford 1996). Growing from the struggles of the disability rights movement and others, this approach began to talk about participation not only in terms of having a say and being involved in the delivery of existing programmes, but also in terms of more active participation in provisioning and in policy formulation. Moreover, no longer was the opportunity to express voice seen as being at the discretion of the social service provider – rather it

52

grew from a more fundamental claim to basic civil rights, which the state had the responsibility to support and enable.

Increasingly, then, the concept of participation began to move from one of users and choosers of services provided by others, to one in which people became actors and agents in broader processes of governance. As Barnes points out

> Once user groups engage in dialogue with producers of public services they enter the territory of public service decision-making. It is at that point that the issues of identity and governance come together in the tension around the disputed identities of 'consumer' or 'citizen'. (Barnes 1999: 82)

3.2 Citizenship

The shift from a focus on users as consumers to a more direct concern with the rights of citizens raises a series of broader issues about exactly what 'citizenship' implies.[2] In her work on 'Users as Citizens', Barnes distinguishes a form of 'collective action based in common experiences of oppression, disadvantage or social exclusion' from 'an assertive consumerism which seeks to maximise individual self-interest' (Barnes 1999: 82). She argues that collective action provides a means through which citizenship can be addressed in the social policy arena in three broad ways: as a social right; as a form of agency and practice; and as a relationship of accountability between public service providers and their users. We shall briefly build upon these in turn.

Citizenship as a social right

The first, and perhaps most commonly understood way in which citizenship is used in social policy is in relationship to a bundle of social rights or entitlements. In his famous essay on *Citizenship and Social Class*, Marshall (1950) argued that the rights of citizenship could be extended beyond the more traditional civil and political rights to include social rights to welfare and resources. As Plant notes, 'citizenship confers a right to a central set of resources which can provide economic security, health and education – and this right exists irrespective of a person's standing in the market' (1992: 16). This

liberal conception of rights was used to undergird the concept of the welfare state, establishing a universal set of benefits to which citizens were to be entitled.

This notion of citizenship has been challenged on a number of grounds, including failures to consider the realities of power and difference which make some more equal citizens than others (see, for example, Caragata 1999; Taylor 1996). Some of the most compelling challenges to universalist definitions of citizenship and social justice have come from feminist writers such as Young (1989) and Benhabib (1996). Creating what is charged to be a 'false uniformity' (Ellison 1999: 59), the universalist notion of citizenship is criticised for effectively occluding diversity in experiences, identities and welfare needs (Williams 1992). Indeed, as Ellison reports, a growing body of critique charges that '"universalism", far from treating those with the same needs in like fashion, in fact further marginalises the already marginal' (1999: 58).

These critiques point to a paradox: universalism, by imposing a particular set of values under the guise of a concern for all, can in itself exacerbate social exclusion.[3] Ellison draws attention to a further paradox: 'a clear aspect of the new, fractured world of social policy is precisely that vulnerable or marginal groups want 'social inclusion' while simultaneously demanding social and political changes which challenge the nature of what it means to be included' (1999: 70). He goes on to note

> In this way, the desire for inclusion (in the sense of gaining access to the social rights, resource and opportunities available to others) frequently exists contiguously with demands for the alteration of, inter alia, the basis of 'social membership', the principles informing resource allocation and the means of access to resources themselves. (Ellison 1997: 70–71)

Addressing these paradoxes, critics of the liberal notion of citizenship take up this concern with 'social membership' and with gaining access to social rights. They put forward a more actor-oriented view that draws on a tradition of citizenship as civic engagement, in which citizens are actively engaged in governance and politics for a broader social good. In this view, citizenship becomes an

identity that extends beyond the bundle of rights defined by the liberal view. Yet questions arise about the extent to which a vision of the social good is shared; and, where it is not, how marginalised groups can assert their particular concerns.

Citizenship as agency

Repositioning participation to encompass a notion of citizenship that is both responsive to the possibilities of democratic pluralism and retains the principle of equivalence offers a way out of this impasse.[4] Conceptualising participation itself as a right, Lister argues that the

> right of participation in decision-making in social, economic, cultural and political life should be included in the nexus of basic human rights… Citizenship as participation can be seen as representing an expression of human agency in the political arena, broadly defined; *citizenship as rights enables people to act as agents.* (Lister 1998: 228, our emphasis)

Through an emphasis on enabling people to act as agents, Lister's definition offers the scope for addressing – and redressing – the involvement of citizens in decisions that affect their lives. Linking this work to the engagement of user groups in the disability rights field, Barnes argues that direct involvement of users in processes of decision-making over public service provision 'demonstrates their capability to be active agents "making and creating" the services they receive, rather than simply "consuming" them' (1999: 84). Through creating their own models and approaches of self-organisation and provisioning, users also develop their own identities as actors on their own affairs, rather than as more passive beneficiaries of abstract rights granted by the broader society. In this sense, particular groups are able to make strategic use of identities that they themselves play a part in defining, in order to gain or improve access to the services they need.

Citizenship as accountability through democratic governance

By seeing themselves as actors rather than simply passive beneficiaries, user groups may be more able to assert their citizenship in a third sense through seeking greater accountability from service providers. One form of greater accountability is through increased dialogue and consultation, as in earlier forms of user involvement. This raises questions about the extent to which marginalised groups are able to articulate their concerns and about the form that dialogue takes.[5] Accountability may also, however, involve broader mechanisms for citizens to identify indicators of success, to monitor and assess performance, and to demand greater transparency.

Particularly significant about the movement towards greater accountability are new ways in which recipients of social services exercise citizenship, seen as active and direct participation in governance. In this sense, governance has been described by some authors as 'both a broad reform strategy, and a particular set of initiatives to strengthen the institutions of civil society with the objective of making government more accountable, more open and transparent, and more democratic' (Minogue, 1997: 4). Participation, legitimacy, transparency, accountability, competence and respect for law and human rights are its key elements (Edralin 1997; Schneider, 1999). As we go on to discuss, strategies for enhancing the inclusion of otherwise marginalised actors are central to placing the principle of equivalence at the heart of these initiatives.

While the concept of citizenship in social policy has thus been extended from one of social rights to one of participation through the exercise of agency, as well as through action to hold others accountable, it also continues to be a troublesome concept in ways that cannot be ignored. One important danger is that the language of citizenship can become associated with the language of nationalism, leading to exclusion of non-nationals. Reconceptualising citizenship as a responsibility attained through collective action and democratic governance, with rights accruing from this engagement, changes the terrain. Placing this debate in global context, in which global or internationalist forms of citizen action are articulated as a response to increasing globalisation pressures on the state, also might limit the more nationalistic and potentially reactionary appeals to citizenship (Taylor 1996).

3.3 Participation and the policy process

Repositioning participation and citizenship as rights that are bound up with enhancing the ability of people to act as social agents raises important challenges for citizens in making and shaping the policies that affect their lives. Attempts to broaden inclusion in social policy-making have characteristically involved the use of consultative mechanisms to seek greater citizen involvement in generating information to feed into policy formulation. Recent work on the politics of the policy process has challenged some of the assumptions on which these attempts to influence policy have been based.

First, it has become evident that the linear model of policy making is deeply flawed. Less a set of rational choices than a complex, unpredictable and above all political process, the making and shaping of policy involves more than acting on information that is provided to policy makers. As Goetz (1994) points out, what policy makers want to know tends to determine how information is used. And this is shaped, in turn, not only by their political interests and the policy networks they are part of, but by the frames of reference within which a particular policy issue is interpreted (Shore and Wright 1997; Keeley and Scoones 1999). Secondly, even if enabling policy exists, much depends on those who are charged with its implementation. As Ascher (1984) suggests, initial commitment is itself no guarantee that policies will be effectively implemented: the discretion that individual bureaucrats exercise and their commitment is a crucial factor in determining whether policy change will be successful (Lipsky 1980; Tendler and Freedheim 1994).

These insights have a number of significant implications for citizen engagement in the policy process. Citizen learning through participatory research can work to assert the legitimacy of knowledge claims of ordinary people, redefining 'expertise' in terms that provide greater space for the experiences of those whose lives social policies affect (Gaventa 1993). Participatory processes can provide a means by which 'policy space' (Grindle and Thomas 1991) can be levered open for the emergence of alternative interpretations of 'needs', and with this, alternative policy solutions.

Perhaps more significantly, however, a focus on actors and agency in the policy process points to the importance of other dimensions of participatory knowledge generation processes, beyond the production of information. Through a more direct engagement with and by those who formulate and implement policy, citizens as agents can enter and make use of new policy spaces opened up by participatory processes. The involvement of citizens in monitoring and in other mechanisms to enhance accountability becomes in itself a means through which citizens can engage in shaping the implementation of policy. As such, participation can provide a bridge to build accountability at all levels.

Looking to experience in the south, we go on to identify some of the diverse forms participation has taken in social policy. We identify contexts in which the framing of citizens as users, choosers and as active agents in the setting of priorities and pursuit of policy has led to distinctively different approaches. In doing so, we point to some directions that future work in this area might take.

4 Participation and Social Policy: a Survey of Strategies and Approaches

What relevance do these conceptual debates about participation and the three types of citizenship outlined here have for the South? In this section, we review briefly the range of strategies that have been used to strengthen participation in social policy and social provisioning in the South.

4.1 Users, choosers and consumers in social policy in the South

Probably the dominant approach to participation in social policy provisioning in the South has paralleled the focus on user group involvement in the North. As residual welfare provision has shifted into the non-statutory arena, with the *de facto* privatisation of the social sector and the increasing engagement of NGOs and civil service organisations (CSOs) in provisioning, a different role is implied for the state. With this has come increasing emphasis on mechanisms for ensuring efficiency and equity.

'User groups' – often in the form of sectoral village committees – have come to be a pervasive feature of the development landscape in many countries,

often taking on some of the functions of provisioning, regulation and management that previously resided with the state. In some contexts, these have served as mechanisms for consultation with users about implementation of predetermined projects or government programmes. In others, they are the focus for attempts to empower users as 'consumers' of social policies. Set within a neo-liberal perspective that challenges the paradigm of state provision in which, it is argued, 'users have no real choice: all they can do is accept the service offered or not' (Franco 1996: 16), these forms of 'community participation' aim to give users more of an active stake. Yet the remit of user committees generally remains confined to ensuring the efficiency of service delivery rather than to give citizens more of a voice in determining the kinds of services they want or need. In this sense, this approach offers a profoundly instrumentalist view of participation.

Built on similar neo-liberal principles, Social Investment Funds (SIFs) appear to extend the definition of participation beyond consultation and cost-sharing, to enable communities to exercise more control over the shape service provision takes, as choosers.[6] Opening up provision beyond the state, SIFs provide a vehicle for channelling resources to a range of providers – of which government becomes simply one among others – to meet 'community needs'. In principle, SIFs open space for citizen engagement. Clearly, however, much depends on how citizens take up the opportunities that SIFs make available – and the conditions under which the poorer and more marginalised are able to participate.

It is here that some of the problems that have beset the 'users as choosers' approach emerge most clearly. Despite profuse participatory rhetoric, in practice it appears that SIFs rarely overcome the significant barriers to the participation of less vocal and powerful members of communities. Siri notes that 'projects tend to be formulated by those who have experience in this area, and these often turn out to be the not-so-poor' (1996: 76). In making demands on a demand-driven structure, strategies are needed to support those who might be least well equipped to generate proposals. Yet these are often lacking. Abbott and Covey cite a study of the Guatemalan SIF, which found that 'SIF procedures provide no mechanisms for communities to

decide jointly on which project is most important to them. Rather than encourage local organising and priority setting, the social fund is perceived to penalise such tendencies' (Parrish in Abbott and Covey 1996: 12).

There are, however, some signs that stakeholder participation in SIF design is being extended at the macro level, providing some spaces for greater civic and NGO involvement (Ruthrauff 1996; Malena 1996). In Bolivia, for example, Graham points to the 'political as well as economic ramifications' of demonstrating 'the benefits of independent local participation in state activities, narrowing an age-old division between society and the state' (1994: 76).

User committees and SIFs present us with an apparent paradox: on the one hand, participation is often regarded as purely functional; on the other hand, they open up space for citizens to play a more active role in increasing downstream accountability. This paradox indicates the complexity of issues at stake. These forms of 'community participation' – and SIFs, in particular – can be seen as an arena in which different interpretations of 'participation', citizenship, social policy and a host of related concepts come to be contested.

4.2 'Self-provisioning' by civil society – outside the state

While the 'users and choosers' approach outlined above focuses on spaces for user involvement made available by the state, often through the influence of supranational institutions, provisioning by institutions outside the remit of the state has come to play a vital role in social sectors in many southern countries. With structural adjustment and the roll back of the state, non-statutory and private providers of social sector services have burgeoned over the last two decades, with important implications for social policy. Growing recognition of the institutional importance of civil society organisations, and their value in processes of governance, has led to a view that 'elements of civil society – commonly understood as the realm between state and individual – can and should function as key elements in social provision within a wider context of "welfare pluralism" which also involves state and market provision' (Robinson and White 1997: 1).

Guided by assumptions about their comparative advantage in service delivery over government, there have been high expectations of the role that civil society organisations can play. So much emphasis has been put on this role, in fact, that some observers such as Alan Fowler (1994) contend that NGOs are being transformed into "'ladles for the global soup kitchen", either substituting for, or complementing Third World governments in providing welfare services to the ever-increasing number of poor and disenfranchised people' (cited in Rutherford 1997: 8). Robinson and White, for example, suggest that an enhanced role for NGOs in service provisioning has often been justified on the grounds that they are perceived to be 'more participatory, less bureaucratic, more flexible, more cost-effective, with an ability to reach poor and disadvantaged people' (1997: 4). Yet these assumptions are increasingly coming under question (see, for example, Rutherford 1997). As a diverse set of actors, the impact of NGOs depends as much on the socio-political context and relations with other actors, as on their organisational characteristics. This has implications not only for accountability, but also for viability and equity in service delivery.

Ironically, much of the discussion of the role of NGOs in social policy may have overshadowed the importance of other more informal and indigenous forms of civil society that may be especially important to marginalised groups. In many parts of the world, informal popular and community associations, self-help groups and networks are actively involved in bridging the service provision gap. These include religious bodies, traditional healers, midwives, parents' groups, squatters' groups, and welfare associations. The failure to consider them in discussions of social policy contributes to and reinforces their marginalisation (Rutherford 1997). Indeed, some suggest that the growth of NGOs in the policy and delivery process may in fact have had a negative impact on the strength of local associations (Arellano-Lopez and Perez 1994, cited in Rutherford 1997).

Alternative approaches to the delivery of social services by civil society have, in some quarters, gained attention and begun to be adopted by state agencies. As such, they have contributed indirectly to policy change. Moreover, collective action through self-provisioning may contribute to the creation of

identities of previously excluded groups as political actors, which then leads to their broader engagement in the public sphere. Efforts to provide services, then, can become transformed into organised struggles of the otherwise excluded and provide a platform not only for articulating rights, but also for recasting responsibilities and obligations.

4.3 Social movements and social policies – citizens demanding from the state

As we move to an understanding of participation that is broader than user groups and goes beyond participation in the provisioning of social sector services, the important role that citizen participation has played in social policy formation becomes evident. Historically, social movements have played an important part in making and shaping social policy, making demands on the state based on social rights. The platforms of many national liberation movements in the South included concerns about equality of access to education and health care. Post-independence social movements have led national struggles around rights, responsibilities and recognition. These include the movement around disability rights (Coleridge 1993); for social housing in urban slums (Mitlin and Patel 1998; Dey and Westerndorff 1996); of sex workers around health and employment rights issues (Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee 1997); for enforcement of the Employment Guarantee Scheme in India (Moore and Joshi 1999), or for social services in shanty towns in Peru (Houtzager and Pattenden 1999). In some cases, local social movements have grown into larger movements, which have come to influence national policy (see, for example, Houtzager and Pattenden 1999); others have come to have influence beyond national boundaries (see Mitlin and Patel 1998).

Setting the role of social movements within the broader frame of meeting the rights of social citizenship, questions arise about the extent and conditions under which social movements can effectively make claims on the state. Much previous work on social movements focused on the resources available to these movements as the key to their effectiveness. Recent work suggests, however, that differences in the capacities of poor people for resource mobilisation are less significant than differences in the nature of the state, which in turn

affects the nature and extent of social movements themselves (Houtzager and Pattenden 1999; Tarrow 1998; McAdam *et al.* 1996). Here, the implications of the roll back of the state become especially salient, as capacity to support social sector provision and indeed to meet demands for social rights in the social policy arena has been severely attenuated in many southern contexts.

In recent years, more attention has begun to be paid to mechanisms that can enhance the accountability and responsiveness of the state (see, for example, World Bank 1997). The rights-based approach to development opens up the space for new alliances between social movements to demand accountability. This renewed interest in the interface between citizen and the state gives rise, in parallel, to an interest in participatory mechanisms and processes that can provide a means for more direct citizen engagement in enhancing the quality and scope of social provisioning, and can influence social policy.

4.4 Citizenship through accountability and democratic governance

The increased recognition of the capacity of civil society organisations and networks has led also to greater attention to the third model of citizenship, in which citizens work to demand greater accountability of the state through newer forms of direct democratic interaction and consultation in the policy process. With greater recognition of civil society and increasing discussion of good governance, the concept of participation shifts from beneficiary participation in state-delivered programmes to an understanding of participation as a means of holding the state accountable through new forms of governance that involve more direct state–civil society relations.

Traditionally, in democratic governance, accountability is thought to be maintained in a number of ways, e.g. local elections, strong and active opposition parties, media, public meetings and formal redress procedures (Blair 1998). Increasingly discussions of governance and accountability focus on forms of broader interaction of public and private social actors, especially at the local level. Citizen participation in this sense involves direct ways in which citizens influence and exercise control in governance, not only through the more traditional

forms of indirect representation (Gaventa and Valderrama 1999). Such participation, it is argued, will improve the efficiency of public services through making government more accountable and democratic.

Participatory approaches have increasingly been used to enable citizens to express their concerns more directly to those with the power to influence the policy process. Participatory policy research processes such as Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPAs) have helped create spaces for change at local government and national level, as well as in international discourses (Holland with Blackburn 1998; HelpAge International 1999; Narayan *et al.* 1999). By bringing together those who are directly affected by policy and those who are charged with ensuring responsive service provision, opportunities are opened up for enhancing accountability and responsiveness. Participatory budgeting in Brazil offers an important example of the use of participatory approaches to enhance transparency. This has enabled citizens to engage directly in municipal fiscal planning, through an elaborate consultation and negotiation process (De Sousa Santos 1998).

While a number of participatory methods focus on enhancing direct participation of citizens in the governance process, others are focusing on maintaining accountability of elected officials and government agencies to the citizenry, through new forms of citizen monitoring and evaluation. In Rajasthan, for instance, the right-to-information movement has demanded a minimal level of transparency by local governments, especially in the use of local funds (Goetz and Jenkins 1999). Other more professional advocacy organisations, such as the Public Affairs Centre in Bangalore, have developed 'report cards' to monitor service delivery by local governments. In both Bolivia and India, legislation allows for local 'vigilance committees' to serve a monitoring and watchdog role. So far there is little evidence that these have developed the capacity and independence to do their job, but there may be great potential.

Rather than relying on self-provisioning through civil society, this approach acknowledges the importance of the state in service delivery, but equally insists on the role of citizens in demanding and negotiating directly with government for

greater performance and accountability. Through such participation, users of services can potentially shape social policy not only as beneficiaries or consumers in predetermined programmes, but as citizens exercising rights of agency, voice and participation.

5 New Challenges and New Directions

In this article we have attempted to go beyond the 'users and choosers' model to consider a more actor-oriented approach, in which those affected by social policies act as citizens on their own behalf. In particular we have argued that the concept of social citizenship should be expanded to include not only concepts of social rights, but also of social responsibilities exercised through self-action, and of social accountability achieved through direct forms of democratic governance. Repositioning participation to encompass the multiple dimensions of citizenship – including a focus on agency based on self-action and self-identity, as well as demands for accountability amongst actors – may provide a way to move out of the impasse.

The growing recognition of the role and capacity of civil society, as well as increasing pressures for democratisation across the world, are also giving rise to new forms of citizen–state interaction. While these may offer new spaces for citizen action, they may also carry the risks of co-optation, misuse, and legitimation of social exclusion. How can these new, more structured mechanisms for democratic governance and accountability blend the strengths of both state and local action, of universal and particular needs, and citizenship rights and citizenship responsibilities? In this era of globalisation, changing contexts raise further challenges for participation. To what extent are new spaces and entry points for citizen action, and for articulating newer understandings of social citizenship, emerging? How can these spaces be made available to poor and marginalised people who might lack rights, recognition or agency in other spheres?

The challenge for citizen participation in this new era will be to articulate and organise around new identities of global citizenship, in each of the dimensions articulated in this article, while also recognising the continued and critical importance of citizenship in social policy in the personal and local spheres.

Notes

1. We would like to acknowledge the research assistance of Jo Doezema and Kate Hamilton, who made invaluable contributions to the longer paper on which this article is based (Cornwall and Gaventa 1999).

2. The literature on the contested concept of 'citizenship' is vast and we make no attempt to review it all here; instead we focus specifically on implications of a more active and engaged form of participation in terms of its links with notions of citizenship.

3. We will not go into the extensive debate in the social policy literature on universalism and particularism (see Taylor-Gooby 1994; Spicker 1996; Jones 1990; Thompson and Hoggett 1996; Ellison 1999). It is, however, important to note that, as Thompson and Hoggett point out, 'the choice of either universalism or particularism is misconceived. Any justifiable universalism, or egalitarianism must take particularity and difference into account; any legitimate particularism or politics of difference must employ some universal or egalitarian standard' (1996: 23). And, as Mouffe (1992) notes, pluralism need not mean the abandonment of what she terms 'core principles' of liberty and equality.

4. We use 'equivalence' rather than 'equality' here to signal that while equality implies 'being like' – the platform on which liberal feminists, for example, sought the right to be treated as if they were men – 'equivalence' implies being given equal value, through respecting diversity (Cornell 1992).

5. This is an issue over which there has been considerable debate, from Habermas' (1984) work on 'ideal speech situations' in which everybody would have a voice, to the work of those like Laclau and Mouffe (1985) who would deny the possibility that consensus can ever be reached without exclusion.

6. Initiated in response to the effects of structural adjustment on the poorest, SIFs emerged in the mid-1980s. Their stated aims include the rapid provision of basic social services and the strengthening of decentralised delivery systems through the support of governmental organisations and NGOs that are responsive to community needs (Carvalho 1994).

References

Abbott, T. and Covey, J., 1996, 'Social investment funds: an expanded critique', *IDR Reports*, Vol. 12, No. 4, Boston, Mass: Institute for Development Research

Arellano-Lopez, S. and Petras, J., 1994, 'Non-Governmental Organizations and poverty alleviation in Bolivia', *Development and Change*, Vol. 25, No. 3: 555–68

Ascher, W., 1984, *Scheming for the Poor: the Politics of Redistribution in Latin America*, Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press

Barnes, M., 1999, 'Users as citizens: collective action and the local governance of welfare', *Social Policy & Administration*, Vol. 33, No. 1: 73–90

Benhabib, S. (ed.), 1996, *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the Boundaries of the Political*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press

Blackburn, J. with Holland, J. (eds), 1998, *Who Changes? Institutionalizing Participation in Development*, London: Intermediate Technology

Blair, H., 1998, 'Spreading power to the periphery: an assessment of democratic local governance', *USAID Program and Operations Assessment Report*, 21

Caragata, Lea, 1999, 'The privileged public: who is permitted citizenship?', *Community Development Journal*, Vol. 34, No. 4: 270–86

Carvalho, S., 1994, 'Social funds: guidelines for design and implementation', *HRO Working Paper*, 34, Washington: World Bank

Coleridge, P., 1993, *Disability, Liberation, and Development*, Oxford: Oxfam

Cornell, D., 1992, 'Gender, sex, and equivalent rights', in J. Butler and J. Scott (eds), *Feminists Theorize the Political*, New York: Routledge

Cornwall, A. and Gaventa, J. 1999, 'Repositioning participation in social policy', paper presented at the conference on 'Social Policy for the Twenty-first Century' held at IDS from 28–29 October

Croft, S. and Beresford, P., 1996, 'The politics of participation', in D. Taylor (ed.), *Critical Social Policy: a Reader*, London: Sage

Deacon, B., Hulse, M. and Stubbs, P., 1997, *Global Social Policy: International Organizations and the Future of Welfare*, London: Sage

De Sousa Santos, B., 1998, 'Participative budgeting in Porto Alegre: towards a redistributive democracy', *Politics and Society*, Vol. 26, No. 4: 461–510

Dey, K. and Westerndorff, D., 1996, 'Their choice or yours: global forces or local voices?', *UNRISD Discussion Paper*, 79

Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee, 1997, *The 'Fallen' Learn to Rise: the Social Impact of STD-HIV Intervention Programme*, Calcutta: Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee

Edralin, J. S., 1997, 'The new local governance and capacity building: a strategic approach. Examples from Africa, Asia, and Latin America', *Regional Development Studies*, Vol. 3: 109–49

Ellison, N., 1999, 'Beyond universalism and particularism: rethinking contemporary welfare theory', *Critical Social Policy*, Vol. 19, No. 1: 57–83

Esping-Andersen, G., 1996, 'After the Golden Age? Welfare state dilemmas in a global economy', in G. Esping-Andersen (ed.), *Welfare States in Transition: National Adaptations in Global Economies*, London: Sage

Fowler, A., 1994, 'Capacity-building and NGOs: a case of strengthening ladles for the global soup kitchen?', *Institutional Development (Innovations in Civil Society)*, Vol. 1, No. 1: 18–24

Franco, R., 1996, 'Social policy paradigms in Latin America', *CEPAL Review*, No. 58: 9–23

Gaventa, J., 1993, 'The powerful, the powerless, and the experts: knowledge struggles in an information age', in P. Park, M. Brydon-Miller, B. Hall and T. Jackson (eds), *Voices of Change: Participatory Research in the United States and Canada*, Westport, Connecticut: Bergin & Garvey

Gaventa, J. and Robinson, M., 1998, 'Influence from below and space from above: non-elite action and pro-poor policy', paper prepared for Poverty Conference, Institute of Development Studies, June

Gaventa, J. and Valderrama, C., 1999, 'Participation, citizenship and local governance', background note for workshop: 'Strengthening Participation in Local Governance', Institute of Development Studies, Sussex, 21–24 June

Goetz, A. M. 1994, 'From feminist knowledge to data for development: the bureaucratic management of information on women and development', *IDS Bulletin*, Vol. 25, No. 2: 27–36

Goetz, A. M. and Jenkins, R., 1999, 'Accounts and accountability: theoretical implications of the right-to-information movement in India', mimeo, Brighton: IDS

Graham, C., 1994, *Safety Nets, Politics, and the Poor: Transitions to Market Economies*, Washington: Brookings Institute

Grindle, M. and Thomas, J., 1991, *Public Choices and Policy Change*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press

Guijt, I., Kisadha, T. and Mukasa, G., 1998, 'Agreeing to disagree: dealing with age and gender in Redd Barna, Uganda', in I. Guijt and M.K. Shah (eds), *The Myth of Community: Gender Issues in Participatory Development*, London: Intermediate Technology

Haas, P., 1992, 'Introduction: epistemic communities and international policy coordination', *International Organisation*, Vol. 46: 1–36

Habermas, J., 1984, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. I: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, Boston: Beacon Press

HelpAge International, 1999, 'The contribution of older people to development', *Research Update*, 3, London: HelpAge International

Hirst, P. and Thompson, G., 1996, *Globalisation in Question: the International Economy and the Possibilities of Governance*, Cambridge: Polity

Holland, J. with Blackburn, J., (eds) 1998, *Whose Voice? Participatory Research and Policy Change*, London: Intermediate Technology

Houtzager, P. and Pattenden, J., 1999, 'Finding the shape of the mountain: when "the poor" set the agenda', paper prepared for the workshop: 'Political Systems and Poverty Alleviation', DFID (Governance Division), 16–17 August

IDS, 1999, 'Learning to take time and go slow: mainstreaming participation in development and the comprehensive development framework', draft report prepared for Operations Evaluation Department, World Bank, Washington DC: World Bank

Jones, P., 1990, 'Universal principles and particular claims: from welfare rights to welfare states', in A. Ware and R. R. Goodin (eds), *Needs and Welfare*, London: Sage

Keeley, J. and Scoones, I., 1999, 'Understanding environmental policy processes: a review', *IDS Working Paper*, 89, Brighton: IDS

Laclau, E. and Mouffe, C., 1985, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, London: Verso

Lipsky, M., 1980, *Street Level Bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Services*, New York: Russell Sage Foundation

Lister, R., 1998, 'Citizen in action: citizenship and community development in a Southern Ireland context', *Community Development Journal*, Vol. 33, No. 3: 226–35

Malena, C., 1996, *NGO Involvement in World Bank-Financed Social Funds: Lessons Learned*, Washington: World Bank

Marshall, T.H., 1950, *Citizenship and Social Class*, London: Cambridge University Press

McAdam, D., McCarthy, J. and Zald, M., 1996, *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings*, Studies in Comparative Politics, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Minogue, M., 1997 'The principles and practice of good governance', *Law & Governance*, 4, British Council Briefing

Mishra, R., 1998, 'Beyond the nation state: social policy in an age of globalization', *Social Policy & Administration*, Vol. 32, No. 5: 481–500

Mitlin, D. and Patel, S., 1998 'Case study on SPARC, the National Slum Dwellers Federation and Mahila Milan', mimeo

Moore, M. and Joshi, A., 1999, 'Between cant and corporatism: creating and enabling political environment for the poor', *IDS Bulletin*, Vol. 29, No. 4: 50–59

Mouffe, C., 1992, 'Feminism, citizenship and radical democratic politics', in J. Butler and J. Scott (eds), *Feminists Theorize the Political*, New York: Routledge

Narayan, D., Chambers, R., Shah, M. and Petesch, P., 1999, *Global Synthesis: Consultations with the Poor*, World Bank (Poverty Group), Washington DC: World Bank

Pierson, C., 1998, 'Contemporary challenges to welfare state development', *Political Studies*, Vol. XLVI: 777–94

Plant, R., 1992, 'Citizenship, rights and welfare', in A. Coote (ed.), *The Welfare of Citizens: Developing New Social Rights*, London: IPPR/Rivers Oram Press

Richardson, A., 1983, *Participation*, Concepts in Social Policy I, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul

Robinson, M. and White, G., 1997, 'The role of civic organisations in the provision of social services', *Research for Action*, 37, Helsinki: WIDER

Rutherford, B., 1997, 'Civil (dis)obedience and social development in the new policy agenda: research priorities for analysing the role of civil

society organizations in social policy reform, with particular attention to sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America', *ASPR Working Paper* No. 3, Ottawa: IDRC

Ruthrauff, J., 1996, *Influencing the Jamaican Social Investment Fund*, Washington: Center for Democratic Education

Schneider, H., 1999, 'Participatory governance: the missing link for poverty reduction' *OECD Policy Brief,* 17

Shore, C. and Wright, S. (eds), 1997, *Anthropology of Policy: Critical Perspectices on Governance and Power*, London and New York: Routledge

Siri, G., 1996, 'Social Investment Funds in Latin America', *CEPAL Review,* No. 59: 73–82

Skocpol, T., 1992, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: the Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States*, Cambridge Mass: Belknap Press

____, 1995, *Social Policy in the United States: Future Possibilities in Historical Perspective*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press

Spicker, P., 1996, 'Understanding particularism', in D. Taylor (ed.), *Critical Social Policy: a Reader*, London: Sage

Tandon, R. and Cordeiro, A., 1998, 'Participation of primary stakeholders in World Bank's project and policy work: emerging lessons', contribution to the conference 'Mainstreaming and Up-Scaling of Primary Stakeholder Participation – Lessons Learned and Ways Forward', Washington, 19–20 November

Tarrow, S., 1998, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics* (second edition), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Taylor, D., 1996, 'Citizenship and social power', in D. Taylor (ed.), *Critical Social Policy: a Reader*, London: Sage

Taylor-Gooby, P., 1994, 'Postmodernism and social policy: a great leap backwards?' *Journal of Social Policy*, Vol. 23: 385–404

Tendler, J. and Freedheim, S., 1994, 'Trust in a rent-seeking world: health and government transformed in Northeast Brazil', *World Development*, Vol. 22, No. 12: 1771–91

Thompson, S., and Hoggett, P., 1996, 'Universalism, selectivism and particularism: towards a postmodern social policy', *Critical Social Policy*, Vol. 46: 21–43

Williams, F., 1992, 'Somewhere over the rainbow: universality and diversity in social policy', in N. Manning and R. Page (eds), *Social Policy Review,* 4, Canterbury: Social Policy Association

World Bank, 1997, *World Development Report*, Washington DC: World Bank

Young, I., 1989, 'Polity and group difference: a critique of the ideal of universal Citizenship', *Ethics*, Vol. 99: 250–74