

WORKING PAPER

Volume **2011** Number **363**

# States of Citizenship: Contexts and Cultures of Public Engagement and Citizen Action

Andrea Cornwall, Steven Robins and Bettina Von Lieres  
March 2011



DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH CENTRE  
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IDS Working Paper 363  
First published by the Institute of Development Studies in March 2011  
© Institute of Development Studies 2011  
ISSN: 2040-0209 ISBN: 978 1 85864 980 3

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## **States of Citizenship: Contexts and Cultures of Public Engagement and Citizen Action**

**Andrea Cornwall, Steven Robins and Bettina Von Lieres**

### **Summary**

Drawing on case studies from the Citizenship Development Research Centre, this paper contends that mechanisms aimed at enhancing citizen engagement need to be contextualised in the states of citizenship in which they are applied. It calls for more attention to be focused on understanding trajectories of citizenship experience and practice in particular kinds of states. It suggests that whilst efforts have been made by donors to get to grips with history and context – such as DFID’s Drivers of Change analyses or Sida’s Power Studies – less attention has been given to exploring the implications of the dissonance between the normative dimensions of global narratives of participation and accountability, and the lived experience of civic engagement and the empirical realities of ‘civil society’ in diverse kinds of states. By exploring instantiations of citizenship in different kinds of states, the paper reflects on what citizen engagement comes to imply in these contexts. In doing so, it draws attention to the diverse ways in which particular subject-positions and forms of identification are articulated in the pursuit of concrete social and political projects.

**Keywords:** citizenship; democracy; participation; accountability.

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# Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the many members of the Citizenship DRC who have commented on this paper in its various iterations, and are grateful to Evelina Dagnino, Giles Mohan and Peter Houtzager for reviewer comments on an earlier version. Especial thanks are due to John Gaventa.



# 1 Introduction: new democratic spaces, new democratic citizenships?

I am calling for us to embrace a more complete imagination of the citizen; someone with a lifestyle, with a history [...] someone who knows things and has a capacity to make decisions. If we could elevate that discourse of citizenship then we could revive the political from the decline into which it has fallen in recent years.

Sheila Jasanoff<sup>1</sup>

In oil-rich Bayelsa, Nigerian citizens talk of a state they have only ever known in its absence; in the favelas of Rio, Brazilian citizens talk of state hospitals where they feel as if they are treated 'like cattle,' rather than as people with dignity; in rural Bangladesh, citizens summon up images of a state that takes care of them, at the same time as it is manifestly failing them; in the townships of South African cities, citizens take to the streets in violent protest to demand the state fulfil its obligations; in Mumbai, citizens living in slums, perceiving themselves to be invisible to state officials, conduct self-enumerations of their communities in order to make themselves more legible to the Indian state and its welfare and development programmes (Abah and Okwori 2003; Wheeler 2003; Mahmud 2004; Robins 2009). In each of these contexts, people's imaginaries of the state – how people 'see' the state (Corbridge, Williams, Srivastava and Véron 2005) – as well as how the state 'sees' them (Scott 1998), shapes what it means to be a citizen. How citizenship is perceived, understood and enacted depends, then, on the kinds of states citizens are in.

The mutually constitutive nature of the state-citizen relationship, and the extent to which different kinds of states make different kinds of citizenships possible, is something that is curiously muted in prevailing governance discourses in development. This paper contends that mechanisms aimed at enhancing citizen engagement need to be contextualised in the states of citizenship in which they are applied. It calls for more attention to be focused on understanding trajectories of citizenship experience and practice in particular kinds of states. It suggests that whilst efforts have been made by donors to get to grips with history and context – such as DFID's Drivers of Change analyses or Sida's Power Studies – less attention has been given to exploring the implications of the dissonance between the normative dimensions of global narratives of participation and accountability, and the lived experience of civic engagement and the empirical realities of 'civil society' in diverse kinds of states.

This paper draws on case study research conducted by members of the DFID-funded Citizenship Development Research Centre to explore instantiations of

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<sup>1</sup> Cited in Leach, Scoones and Wynne (2005: 217).

citizenship in different kinds of states, and to reflect what citizen engagement comes to imply in these contexts. Rather than seeking a unified definition of citizenship that covers all dimensions of human action, entitlement and belonging, we are interested in the everyday, and often highly contingent and improvisational, negotiations and performances through which people define and pursue their desires and aspirations. We suggest that an approach that explores diverse meanings and expressions of citizenship in different kinds of states can enrich our understanding of citizenship precisely because it proceeds less from normative claims or abstract ideals than from everyday encounters in particular contexts. Such an approach draws attention to the diverse ways in which particular subject-positions and forms of identification are articulated in the pursuit of concrete social and political projects. We begin by reviewing thinking on democratic citizenship in relation to the global South, and go on from there to dimensions and experiences of citizen engagement in different contexts.

## 2 Democratic citizenship in the global South

Over course of the 2000s, democratic reform and renewal came to gain increasing priority on the development agenda (Blair 2000; Fung and Wright 2003; Gaventa 2006). In many countries, development agencies have promoted the institutionalisation of citizen participation in the governance of services (Manor 2004; Fung and Wright 2003; Gaventa 2006; Cornwall and Coelho 2004, 2007). A wealth of spaces for participation now exist: from community and user groups and participatory consultation exercises of various kinds that became so ubiquitous over the last decade or so, to innovations that arose in Brazil and India and are now being applied in other countries, such as participatory sectoral councils, participatory budgeting and participatory planning (Heller 2001; Avritzer 2006). Elements of other traditions of democracy are evident in these ‘designs for democracy’ – from direct democratic participation in priority setting and planning, to deliberative democratic processes through which ‘mini-publics’ debate and explore alternatives (Goodin and Dryzek 2006). These ‘new democratic spaces’ are envisaged as sites in which citizens are invited to ‘empower’ themselves through participation, and in which new meanings and practices of citizenship emerge through engagement: ‘schools for citizenship’ as a Brazilian bureaucrat cited in Cornwall (2007) put it. Their democratic promise is opening up the possibilities for greater mutual understanding between citizens and those who take part on behalf of the state, completing a ‘virtuous circle’ of citizenship and participation (Labra and Figueiredo 2002).

The new architectures of governance that have emerged as a result of these efforts to promote democratisation has given rise to a complex new landscape for citizen participation. New forms of public engagement are redefining citizenship and creating new political identities through which people come to

participate (Cornwall and Coelho 2007; Houtzager and Lavallo 2009). New forms of connectedness traverse national boundaries and create complex linkages between the global and the local, recasting citizen engagement beyond the nation-state, as well as in multiple new locales within its boundaries. These new meanings and practices of citizenship suggest a radical reconfiguration of relationships and responsibilities, one that extends beyond citizen-state interactions to encompass an expanded vision of democratic engagement. This has implications for basic conceptualisations of democratic citizenship.

Development narratives often view citizen engagement through the binary analytic lens of state-civil society relations. 'Civil society' appears in some narratives as a residual category framed by 'the state': a space in which all that is non-state, non-coercive, non-constraining, can take place. In others, it is 'the state' that is constructed as residual to an idealised 'civil society', reducing its chaotic, heterogeneous and normatively diverse elements to a monolith against which citizens struggle against all odds to exert righteous claims. As Howell and Pearce (2003) point out, these narratives and the imaginaries that they evoke have been extraordinarily fruitful. But they are inadequate for describing the complex practice of contemporary citizenship. Evelina Dagnino and colleagues identify 'a Manichean conception that sees civil society as the demiurge for deepening democracy and democratising political society, and conceives of the state as the 'embodiment of evil' (Dagnino 2005: 4). Although this conceptualisation concedes that it is 'bad' civil society as well as a 'bad' state that leads to 'bad' outcomes, there is a strongly-held presumption that 'thicker' civil society produces more democratic state-society interactions.

Much depends, however, on the kind of states in which actually-existing civil societies are in. Investment in 'building' and 'strengthening' civil society has been a donor pre-occupation for well over a decade, accompanied in more recent times with efforts to strengthen 'state capacity'. Implicit in these forms of intervention is the assumption that civil societies and states in countries in which development donors work currently lack the capacities to perform the virtuous circle of good governance – better citizens plus better institutional mechanisms to engage them in governance equals better government. And yet many of the initiatives promoted as a means of enhancing citizen engagement governance presume states that are amenable to being held in check, reformed and redesigned, and civil societies whose energy is directed at engaging with the state or assuming the state's functions in civic life. The state is cast within this narrative as amenable to sharing power and opening itself up and becoming more accountable. Civil society is portrayed as something that is good-in-itself, a site not only for virtuous conduct, but a font of democratising influences. Yet in the world as we know it – including those states that consider themselves paragons of democratic virtue – these assumptions simply do not hold.

Development discourses also frequently essentialise, romanticise and sanitise the agency of 'poor communities'. A number of the cases discussed later in the paper draw attention to locally embedded forms of 'uncivil' society and undemocratic social capital, and the implications of this for normative

conceptions of citizenship and participation. During a visit to favelas of Rio in 2009, the authors heard accounts of how public goods such as creches and dancehalls have been acquired through relationships with the local gang-controlled drug economy. Because of their links to criminality, such contributors to local forms of community capital are seldom recognised as ‘good citizens’ or practising ‘good solidarity.’ Yet, they are often more embedded in local social networks and relations of affect in the community than many NGOs and development agents.

Governance orthodoxies divide the world into ‘effective’ and ‘failed’ or ‘fragile’ states. Not only does this approach misrecognise ‘effectiveness’ in states where there may be large or even predominant pockets of the kind of ‘bad governance’ with which the development industry concern themselves, whether in the form of corruption, mismanagement or simply the absence of any statutory service provision to large swathes of the population. It also mislabels as ‘fragile’ states that have proven themselves remarkably resilient: states that are perfectly effective in their delivery of repressive force, and indeed surprisingly effective in their delivery of services despite evidence of deep lack of democracy, accountability and transparency. According to Jean-Francois Bayart (1993), what is often labelled as ‘bad governance’ and as a symptom of corruption and the decadence of the state, is in actual fact a manifestation of a historically embedded ‘politics of the belly’. As he somewhat controversially notes:

In Cameroon they talk of *la politique du ventre* – the politics of the belly. They know that ‘the goat eats where it is tethered’ and that those in power intend to eat. When a presidential decree relieves a manager of his post, his close friends and family explain it to the villagers by saying ‘They have taken his meal ticket. (1993: xvii)

Bayart’s observations suggest that historically produced political cultures in Africa and elsewhere are seldom analysed in their own terms. Instead, statecraft and political behaviour is simply reduced to normatively defined and standardised and de-contextualised conceptions of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ governance.

In an attempt to rethink these conceptions of governance and citizenship, we draw attention to Partha Chatterjee’s ground-breaking reconceptualisation of the relationship between ‘civil society’ and ‘the state’. This conceptual move is an important step in terms of questioning some of the taken-for-granted assumptions of much of the literature on civil society and citizenship. Chatterjee makes the important observation that the poor in ‘most of the world’ (2004: 3) are often obliged to engage with the state as members of social groups ‘that transgress the strict limits of legality in struggling to live and work’ (Chatterjee 2004: 40; cited in Corbridge *et al.* 2005: 1). According to Chatterjee, the urban poor in India and elsewhere in the global South generally inhabit the rough and chaotic worlds of ‘political society,’ where governmental agencies and programmes are often met by wit and stealth, and sometimes by violence. Democratic participation is seldom part of their world and ‘civility and pluralism are not the defining features of their lives’ (Corbridge *et al.* 2005: 2). Chatterjee also notes that subaltern groups such as urban slum dwellers are

often considered by the state to survive by illegal means – for instance by squatting illegally on state or private land – and they are therefore seldom treated by the state as rights-bearing citizens. By occupying land illegally, they come to be seen as challenging the sanctity of private property and hence they are not perceived to be ‘virtuous citizens’. However, the state does acknowledge its governmental obligation to these populations of the urban and rural poor, and this obligation is expressed through practices of welfare provision and social control. Ultimately, it is in the field of ‘political society’ that the urban poor seek support of political parties and patrons in their daily struggles over access to state resources.

For Chatterjee, ‘civil society’ in the post-colonial world is confined to elite and bourgeois groups and modes of politics – in the South, a relatively small, educated section of the population. The majority of the world’s population, Chatterjee argues, belong to the popular classes, and the state has to draw this class in through its development and welfare programmes. By suggesting that the opportunity for the majority of people in the global South to ‘act as citizens’ is generally confined to the occasional act of voting – much as it is for the global North – Chatterjee’s work helps to direct our attention to practices of ‘engagement’ that are rarely as neat and orderly as those envisaged in discourses on ‘citizen engagement’.

## **2.1 Contextual influences on the practice of citizenship**

Trajectories of citizenship in the global South are diverse and contrasting. They include encounters with state brutality, with state bureaucracy and its exclusions and denials, and with the care as well as the indifference of agents of the state. Citizenship may be as marked by the lack of rights and respect people experience on a daily basis, as it is by their access to entitlements. It may be as much bound up with exclusion as with belonging, with a lack of identification as with an identity. ‘Differentiated citizenships’ (Holsten 2008) mark out radically different terrains, forms, styles and meanings of engagement with the state for citizens depending on class, race, gender, ethnicity, age and other dimensions of difference. What being a citizen means, then, is not only contested, it is contingent on aspects of context that have remained largely out of view in the debates about citizenship.

History is amongst the most important of these invisibilised contextual aspects of citizenship. The imaginaries of the state produced by donor discourse are revealing of an industry that has a history deeply entwined with imperial projects of rule. Britain’s designation of ‘countries that have not yet attained responsible government’ as recipients of British aid in its first Development Act in 1929, one that arguably marked the beginning of ‘development’ as we now know it, is an ironic echo of contemporary efforts to institute ‘good governance’. As a number of authors have suggested, there is a remarkable continuity not only in discourse but in the kind of institutional forms that have become its material manifestation (Hewitt 2006). What we see in many countries in the global South who share a colonial heritage – if quite different colonial histories – is an institutional landscape in which residues from the colonial period are

overlaid by layers of institutional modification. Tracing the trajectories of citizenship in these landscapes calls for attention to be paid to historical encounters with the state that are inflected with other aspects of that colonial heritage; traces that run unevenly through decades of post-colonial 'development' and which retain a semblance of commonality that belies their origins in projects of rule that span a century or more. These histories are important because they shape, constrain, but also give possibility to ways of seeing the state and being seen by the state that are an important part of contemporary political life in particular countries.

In his acclaimed book *Citizen and Subject*, Mahmood Mamdani (1996) draws attention to the implications of colonial legacies for post-Independence democratisation in Africa. He suggests that whereas African cities became sites for the production of citizens, the countryside remained the domain of traditional leaders and their ethnic subjects, and he argues that the problem for democratisation in post-colonial Africa is that it has been unable to rid itself of this legacy. In its quest for symmetry and conceptual clarity, however, his account sacrifices the more ambiguous and 'messy' forms of everyday life in the post-colony, and the possibility that Africans may live as both citizens and subjects, depending on the specific contexts. Mamdani's work serves as a reminder to donors, policymakers and academics of the problems of promoting liberal individualist notions of citizenship without paying adequate attention to deeply embedded historical legacies, in Africa and beyond. Numerous ethnographic studies reveal that the conception of the citizen as an atomised and autonomous rights-bearing subject is at odds with reality in many post-colonial contexts, where a communal sense of belonging, intersubjectivity and interconnectedness are highly valued (Werbner 2002; Nyamnjoh 2002). These studies demonstrate that it is precisely the extreme vulnerability and uncertainty of everyday life which demand that post-colonial subjects negotiate their subjection through relationships with others. Clientalism, communitarian forms of citizenship, conviviality and sociality are valued precisely for their capacity to hold powerful state actors, traditional leaders and patrons accountable in terms of the delivery of material and social goods.

Yet, this does not mean that people in post-colonial contexts are not open to citizenship and rights-based approaches when these offer possibilities of access to resources and resolving other social, political, and cultural conflicts. What appears to be an autonomous rights-bearing citizen in one setting may, in another context, morph into an 'ethnic' subject invoking indigenous values, traditional beliefs, and forms of sociality and clientalism based on family, clan, neighbourhood and community. Development actors – whether NGOs or social movements, governments or donors – need to recognise that their 'clients' and 'target populations' often live their lives both as citizens and as subjects (Nyamnjoh 2003: 112). Marginalised groups deploy a repertoire of tactics that make use of multiple political discourses, rather than constituting an ordered, linear process involving negotiation, deliberation and engaged participation. In their search for livelihoods and security, people tend to adopt plural strategies; they occupy multiple spaces, and draw on multiple political identities, discourses and social relationships, often simultaneously. People of different classes have different engagements with the state, and recourse to different

avenues of action in the pursuit of claims; those who are living in poverty typically experience a variety of barriers, which may not even be visible to those from wealthier classes who either have no need for the services that the state extends or have the means to seek short-cuts in accessing them.

Citizenship outcomes are shaped by contexts of state formation, indigenous values of culture and protest, and by versions of citizenship promoted in political and development processes. What happens, then, where states either have very little capacity, or where they have relinquished responsibilities towards the poor? How is citizenship experienced in such settings? How are claims to rights framed in contexts where the state may be corrupt, and highly authoritarian, and yet still deliver services in terms of a sense of its paternalistic responsibility for the poor? In other words, how does the political context of state formation shape the limits and possibilities for framing particular rights: should they be framed in terms of a politics of recognition, of distributive justice or simply of service delivery?

The research carried out by the Citizenship DRC on these issues in paternalistic and authoritarian states highlights a number of questions that need to be asked about some of the taken-for-granted assumptions in much of the citizenship literature. Different countries have different political histories and cultures of protest. Given different histories of state formation and political cultures of protest, strategies for acquiring visibility and making claims are bound to vary. In post-revolutionary societies such as South Africa, non-violent street protest remains an integral part of the national public culture; in more authoritarian countries this is not necessarily the case. In many post-colonial countries, public protest is seen to be a threat to state legitimacy and law and order. The work of Steve Abah and Jenks Okwori in the oil-rich and services-poor Niger Delta region of Nigeria (2005) provides further insights into the significance of contextual influences on the form and possibilities for citizen engagement.

Abah and Okwori describe a fractured relationship of Nigerian citizens with the very notion of belonging to a nation-state, epitomised by their persistent disillusion with institutions in which rent-seeking bureaucrats fail to deliver adequate services. Abah and Okwori's analysis frames citizenship in a context where the creation of Nigeria took place in a room many thousands of miles away, over a century before, as British and French colonial rulers drew lines on a map to mark out their dominions. They highlight an impasse that continues to characterise the politics of nationhood: the disconnect between autochthonous notions of belonging and boundary-setting in geographical space. This disconnect emerges at all levels, and in the Niger Delta, many wonder if there is any meaning at all in being so-called Nigerians. Abah and Okwori cite a paramount chief:

My friend, I cannot tell you that I will beat my chest and say I am a Nigerian. Look around. Does this village look like a place in Nigeria? What do we get from Nigeria? (2005: 73)

While those interviewed by Abah and Okwori repeatedly expressed their primary affiliation – their sense of belonging – as residing with their ethnic

group, dramas in which dilemmas of citizenship and entitlement were played out drew commentaries on issues of governance as the main obstacles both to the just realisation of entitlements, and to their identification with Nigeria as a nation. Citizenship, thus comes to reside in a notion of deficit. But far from simply confirming communitarian or indeed neoliberal solutions, people's expectations of what making good that deficit might involve in this context emerges as consisting precisely of the very possibilities of the rights associated with being citizens of a liberal democratic state. Abah and Okwori conclude by asking

are there forms of governance or architectures of citizenship that would [...] allow those who live in the geographical space called Nigeria to attain a common and inclusive identity that transcends their ethnic and other exclusive affiliations? (2005: 83)

In doing so, they invoke a powerfully normative imaginary of a state that permits identification with 'a common and inclusive identity'; and they look towards the possibility for articulation between identifications that can produce a sense of political community to address the very active sense of disenfranchisement that so many Nigerians face. As Begona Aretxaga writes in a passage that could equally apply to the conditions, experiences, desires and aspirations of citizens in many contexts in the global South:

The imagined national state, which is supposed to provide for its citizens, seems remote and careless, not fulfilling its obligations and generating a discourse of state deficit, an insufficient state which has abandoned its citizens. In fact, there is not a deficit of state but an excess of statehood practices: too many actors competing to perform as state. Longings for the good paternalistic state coexist with a nationalist discourse of citizenship. At the margins of polities and global economies, the desire for the good state can take the form of struggles for full citizenship (Aretxaga 1997; Hardt and Negri 2000; Ramirez 2001; Warren 1993). The nationalist discourse of citizenship remains attached in the social imaginary to the state but clashes with the actual experiences of marginalization, disempowerment, and violence (2003: 396).

What this suggests is that we need to pay closer attention to everyday political practices, which include forms of solidarity that do not conform to liberal modernist conceptions of belonging and solidarity, for instance the proliferation of occult and religious movements (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2000), and the less virtuous forms of belonging such as criminal syndicates, gangs, youth militias, warlords, shack-lords, and so on, social actors who are for various reasons excluded from the modernist dream of liberal democracy and virtuous citizenship and participation.

## **2.2 Indigenising democratic values and aspirations**

While scholars still struggle to grasp the hybrid and 'messy' postcolonial realities discussed above, activists face them close-up in their everyday encounters with governments and citizens, and are often able to come up with



creative responses to these challenges they present. These include the development of sophisticated strategies of political engagement appropriate to local contexts and political cultures of authority, status and power. Another DRC case study, from Chiapas in Mexico, also highlights local strategies for indigenising democratic values and aspirations. Carlos Cortez Ruiz (2005) notes how indigenous peoples used mural painting as a catalyst for articulating their own conceptions of rights, which were framed in terms of a politics of difference which stressed the values of self-determination and 'multiculturalism', rather than simply accepting what the government had to offer. Here the state and its programmes were constructed as 'the outside', as an alien presence, rather than as something that one had to assimilate into.

Through the painting of the mural we expressed our right to decide. We want to decide by ourselves and have nobody decide for us [...] All of us have rights; indigenous women have rights. I am a woman and I have the right to speak, to democracy and justice, to participate, and to work. We don't want governmental impositions; we want to organize ourselves. We want justice, we want democracy. We want an education truly related to our history; to recover our culture. We want a new type of education: our own indigenous education. We don't want the education that the government gives (2005).

This articulation of a politics of difference in Mexico is in stark contrast to a case study from the UK, which illustrates how claims were made in very unthreatening ways, without significantly contesting the order of things (Barnes *et al.* 2004). The following extract from an interview transcript shows how a British woman articulates her desire to be able to understand and speak confidently about issues at a local authority public meeting, by insisting that officials speak in 'plain English' so that she and others can understand what is being said. It draws attention to the aspirations of a citizen who simply wants to be able to engage confidently in official, bureaucratic spaces:

One [woman] described how she had developed confidence during previous meetings involving local authority councillors: 'I started saying, if one of the councillors was talking, 'I don't know what's going on, I can't follow it. If you want to talk to the community, you've got to talk as if you're at the garden gate or your front door'.

(Barnes *et al.* 2004)

Barnes *et al.*'s research in the UK suggests that learning about how to perform citizenship in a particular British political culture is often class-based, and requires acquiring acceptable ways of engaging – learning 'how to behave' and how to acquire some of the cultural capital of the middle classes. This is strikingly different from the Mexican case, which is characterised by citizens articulating a strident and insurgent politics of difference and self-determination.

It is also in direct contrast to Mahmud's (2007) study of participation in health systems in rural Bangladesh, which revealed how members of stakeholder community groups sought to challenge the hegemony of the educated classes

by pointing out that, rather than trying to 'speak well' like the educated elite, the landless poor ought to use protest tactics. In the words of a landless farmer, 'the educated members speak well, which we cannot do; but we can fight to protest, which they cannot'. This in turn resonates with the language of insurgent citizenship in South Africa, where mass mobilisation and public protest, sometimes violent, are often deemed to be more effective than 'rights talk,' deliberation and other forms of civil action (Robins 2009).

Distinctions in class and social status produce forms of differentiated citizenship (Holsten 2008). These dimensions of inequality, which are present across all the case study contexts, take different forms depending on particular political cultures. Kabeer and Ariful Haq Kabir's (2009) research in Bangladesh draws attention to the more brutal realities of class, status and power differentials, providing a particularly telling example of how these inequalities are enacted in the public domain:

Rickshaws have been banned from the VIP roads in Dhaka City. I don't know what VIP is but no rickshaw can move on the VIP road, only cars can. I believe that was done for the rich people because it is rich who ride the cars.

The police only listen to those who have money [...] When I pulled a rickshaw, the police would ask me for bribes. If I could not pay, he would ask to see my licence, sometimes he would slap me. The police are supposed to provide protection against oppression but they do not hear the words of the poor.

In Bangladesh, NGOs have had an extraordinarily influential role in providing services to poor people. In doing so Kabeer and Haq Kabir argue that they have produced a powerful narrative which frames their subjects as 'responsibilised citizens'. This describes how people have become socialised by NGOs in ways that reinforce dominant conceptions of 'responsibilised citizenship'. This is captured by the assertion, 'we can pay our loans to NGOs on time.'

The government will build plots in these slums and sell them off to rich people. Why should all the plots go to the rich, are we not also citizens of this country? Let them give us some of the plots too. We will slowly and gradually pay the money to the government in instalments. If we can pay our loans to NGOs on time, then why can't we do this as well?

This discourse of responsibilised citizenship in Bangladesh contrasts quite markedly with some contexts in urban and rural South Africa, where a culture of entitlement embodies a widespread belief that the state owes its citizens services and resources – such as free housing, water and electricity – because of the historical legacies of collective suffering under apartheid. John Williams (2005) provides an account of a community member in a Cape Town township who, while wary of dependence on the state, insists that it must provide people with proper services, or face people asserting their right to refuse to pay for services.

An elderly man made it clear that what the community needed was support, not dependence: 'We want to work together. We want suitable houses to be built for us like it is happening elsewhere. Then after building the houses, they will have to say: "Here is the metre box, [...] here is electricity and taps, and it all works like this and this". Then the people who don't want to pay can be directly approached by us [...] I am a member of the community structure that attends meetings. I was at a meeting where we were asked to call a residents meeting regarding water payment. We pointed out our dissatisfaction [...] for example, what are we paying for? Where are the taps, the garbage collection? This place is filthy. Look at the toilets. People don't have any privacy.' (2005)

Other South African contexts, however, reveal a different version of both responsabilised citizenship and entitlement. In their work on how individuals and communities have engaged with state responses to AIDS in South Africa, Colvin and Robins (2009) investigated the various ways that different stakeholders – government officials, policymakers, NGOs, CBOs, activists and people with AIDS (PWAs) – understood and responded to state interventions and problems of poverty, disease, citizenship, and entitlement. They focused in particular on the behaviour patterns that are demanded of users of anti-retroviral (ARV) drugs to treat HIV, which have to be close to perfect in order to avoid the spread of dangerous drug-resistant strains of HIV. The ARV user must adhere to a life-long drug regime that requires taking the drugs at the same time of the day for the rest of their lives, and is advised to neither drink nor smoke, and to maintain a healthy diet and lifestyle. Thus the kind of ARV user required for effective treatment is remarkably similar to what the political theorists Nikolas Rose and Carlos Novas (2005) have referred to as the 'responsibilised citizen', and PWAs are called upon by both public health professionals and AIDS activists to become 'responsibilised'.

Many scholars have criticised responsabilisation talk as simply an expression of a hyper-individualist and depoliticised brand of neoliberal governmentality. However, Colvin and Robins found something quite different in their interactions with Phumzile Nywagi and his fellow members of Khululeka, a Cape Town-based support group for men living with HIV. Phumzile told them about how quite soon after being diagnosed with HIV, he had become so ill that he had prepared himself for imminent death. A neighbour managed to carry him to a nearby ARV clinic and he was immediately put onto ARVs, so he is greatly recovered and is now on a life-long ARV treatment regime that calls for him to be 'responsible' in his diet and lifestyle. However, Phumzile has also interpreted this to include social responsibility as a male breadwinner and active member of his family and community. For him and many others being a 'responsibilised citizen' implies both caring for the self and social activism. This is clearly not simply a matter of acting out a seamless neoliberal script of the sort suggested by some critics of neoliberal modes of governmentality.

The influence of NGO political culture in Bangladesh referred to above appears to have contributed towards establishing a relationship between citizenship as a project of social movements, and citizenship as a project of the developmental state and its associated NGOs. Kabeer (2005) provides a study of

Bangladeshi women who, through exposure to NGOs, began to question and protest against gender discrimination and oppression in rural villagers. The women that Kabeer spoke to claimed that prior to their engagement with NGOs, they did not even realise that they had a right to protest about these matters.

Before we did not protest even when there was a lot of injustice and oppression within the village. We were afraid of the chairmen, the village leaders, the members of the councils. We could not even see any reason to protest. After all, they were our leaders, we used to honour them. We used to think to argue with the chairman was to commit an offence.

As another woman they interviewed put it:

In the past, women in this area were confined to the home. Now they have learnt to fight the *jotedars* [landlords]. It is not possible to fight hunger sitting at home. My first right from society and from the state is a place to live. If I have a safe and secure place to live, I would be able to manage, to look after myself. But society does not give me this simple right. In addition, I have rights as a woman. I believe that men and women are equal, that having to stay within the home is against women's rights. If the prime minister of the country can be a woman and she is able to run the country, then why do we have to stay at home?

These women's voices draw attention to the fundamental differences between 'active citizenship' in Bangladesh and the liberal democratic idea of claiming rights from a state that is seen to endorse the project of citizenship as one that seeks to counter the entrenchment of patriarchal values. Women interviewed by Kabeer indicated that they continue to encounter enormous constraints in claiming these rights to gender equality. Although these women seem to articulate a discourse of empowerment, it would be important to discover whether they are experiencing backlashes and setbacks as a result of their challenges to dominant gender ideologies. To what degree are these gender-based rights-based claims able to shift deeply embedded cultures of patriarchal power, or are they simply aspirational?

Ranjita Mohanty's (2007) DRC case study from India reinforces these observations about the limits of rights-based claims to gender equality. Mohanty notes that even when women are included in official bodies, they tend to be put on these committees merely for procedural reasons, to make the state appear to be performing compliance with notions of citizen involvement. Her case study suggests that these gestures do not produce significant change in the ways in which things are done, and seldom dislodge the constraints that women experience when engaging in these so-called participatory spaces.

It is too obvious that women are recruited to the watershed committee to meet procedural requirements. It seems ironic to talk about 'choice', since most women members are not even aware that they have membership in the committee. [Women] reveal, during that first meeting, a far deeper fracture in their relationship with the spaces that exist at the local level for their participation: [...] 'When our family and our community restrict us, how

can we break that? Does anyone listen to what we say? When we are poor and not capable of engaging our society, government must act’.

Mohanty shows that even when women get to participate in community committees, they participate within the gendered norms and modes of normalisation, as mothers rather than as women. She provides poignant accounts of the limits of conceptions of gender equality and notions of ‘active citizenship’ and political agency for women in India.

The [Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS)] has had effects on the agency of women recruited as *anganwadi* workers. We find Nirmala, for instance, very vocal, often raising issues during my meeting with her: ‘We have started from scratch – there was nothing available to women in this village to prove that they could excel in education and prove their capabilities. Projects like this have given us this space.’ One can appreciate their sense of self-worth being acknowledged by the project. But the ‘professional identity’ that ICDS constructs for women like her and the sense of professional satisfaction that the work gives to them does not translate into any radical possibilities for the large number of women receiving health care in ICDS, who participate as only as ‘mothers’, eulogising the domesticated conflict-free identity which is so valued by the larger society and their own families.

A vivid picture of Uttaranchal comes to my mind, different people, different narratives: women visible in public spaces, eager to do things, have belief in their own agency. I come back to my hotel room and start arranging my thoughts. A few things become clear: looked at through women’s eyes, the institutional spaces created by the state are largely empty, women trying but are not gaining inclusion; the state, except for creating these spaces, has done nothing to actualise the spaces; women’s identities are getting manipulated in a manner that restricts their participation in these spaces.

Mohanty’s accounts are a reminder of how potent cultural constructions of sexual difference are in limiting participation, as well as of the very real barriers to agency that women can face for all the invitations they may receive to participate in such institutions. Simeen Mahmud’s (2004) study for the DRC of participation in local health committees, set up as part of health sector reforms in Bangladesh, contrasts the hesitance of women representatives in community health groups with their active and vocal engagement in popular protest. These studies underscore the point that spaces for participation do not exist in isolation from other societal institutions, norms and processes. The deeply embedded gendered hierarchies and inequalities illustrated in the Bangladesh and Indian cases challenge assumptions about active citizenship and ‘the right to rights’ in much of the citizenship literature. Transforming these inequalities do not seem to be especially high on the agenda of these or many other states. Yet without such transformation, the citizenship narratives of state policies and programmes which are concerned with matters of development and service delivery meet the patriarchal discourses and behaviours of mainstream culture in ways that leave many women little space to frame their own claims to recognition and gender equality.

## 3 Reconfiguring citizenships

Everyday experiences of citizenship may come to revolve around a sense of what is lacking, where citizenship becomes an absence of entitlement, care, respect or dignity. Citizenship comes to turn, in such accounts, on a much more diffuse, much more subjective sense of being and belonging: a sense of longing for that which would make people feel as if they are recognised, respected and included. Far from being expressed in explicitly political terms, or even in terms of particular rights and entitlements, being allowed by others to live with dignity speaks to a more generic, universal sense of what it would take to be treated as fully human (Nyamu-Musembi 2005). Some perspectives on human rights argue that this quest for dignity and for recognition as fully human is universal. But for Celestine Nyamu-Musembi, as for a number of other Citizenship DRC researchers, universalist perspectives on human rights offer too limited a frame through which to understand the particularities of peoples' struggles for rights and recognition. These limits demand a reconfiguration of citizenship. Nyamu-Musembi puts forward an actor-oriented perspective on human rights, in which she argues that 'rights are shaped through actual struggles informed by peoples own understandings of what they are justly entitled to' (2005: 1). This, in turn, implies an approach to needs, rights and priorities that is informed by the concrete experiences of the particular actors who are involved in, and who stand to gain directly from, the struggles in question (2005: 31). She cites Anne Phillips (1991): 'citizenship must be an active condition of struggling to make rights real'.

In this section, we examine examples of these struggles to make rights real. First, we examine some of a range of apparently new spaces that have emerged as sites for expressions of citizenship. We move on to discuss contestations of citizenship that take place outside the new spaces offered by the state, and examine some examples of struggles for citizenship. Finally, we reflect on what these examples might imply for expanded notions of democratic citizenship.

### 3.1 New democratic spaces for citizenship?

Theorists of deliberative democracy have been widely criticised for their lack of attention to the dynamics of difference within deliberative arenas, as for a failure to take seriously the power effects of discursive domination (Fraser 1997; Köhn 2000). In a number of the institutionalised participatory spaces that Citizenship DRC researchers examined, multiple dimensions and effects of exclusion resound: from discrimination against participants, discursive framing that rendered certain topics literally undeliberable as they came to be muffled in technical jargon, to outright exclusionary tactics such as not informing members that a meeting was taking place or ostracising those who spoke out of place (Mahmud 2004; Mohanty 2004; Williams 2004, 2005). Far from providing spaces for the realization of citizenship, many of these were spaces of demoralisation and, potentially, depoliticisation.

Setting these institutions in their particular cultural, historical and social contexts reveals further dimensions to their prospects for realising inclusive citizenship. Such contextual considerations ask how discourses, cultures and models of deliberation, decision-making, negotiation, entitlement, citizenship in different contexts shape the ways in which people regard opportunities to participate. Mahmud's (2004) Bangladesh study shows how in some cases new participatory experiments have been transplanted onto institutional landscapes in which entrenched relations of dependency, fear and disprivilege undermine the possibility for the kind of deliberative decision-making they are to foster. Focusing on co-management institutions, community groups created by donor driven health sector reform in Bangladesh, Mahmud shows how in principle these institutions are to provide the basis for new partnerships between service providers, users and local government. In practice, however, deliberative processes fail as poor people experience their own agency as limited by the local relations of dependency within which they remain locked. Yet, it would be important to know whether the poor themselves always experience relations of dependency as debilitating and disempowering, and whether or not it is possible that dependency might allow the client to make demands on the patron.

Mohanty's comparison of different sites for citizen participation in India, drawn on earlier in this paper, demonstrates how women's opportunities to engage as citizens in the participatory sphere are circumscribed by exclusionary cultural practices. She argues that if new imaginaries of citizenship and democracy are to become possible in such settings, they need to be actively created. Feminist organisations that can promote new conceptions and constructions of women's political agency are, she argues, only one part of the answer: the state has a vital part to play in creating the conditions for equivalence, and strengthening the participation of marginalised groups.

Just as historical contexts of state formation shape possibilities for the practice of citizenship, historically constituted expectations of the state also present a range of barriers to shaping new democratic spaces. Past experiences of interaction pattern dispositions and practices in new institutions, so that they come to be etched with traces of older governmentalities. One outcome of this is common culture of non-bindingness in local decision-making spaces. In another DRC study, John Williams (2004) shows how the city of Cape Town's Area Coordinating Teams, set up to encourage greater citizen participations in local governance, have little decision-making power and are marked by the non-bindingness of the issues discussed in them. The unwillingness to be held accountable in consensus-seeking spaces has its roots in historical experiences of decision-making as deeply conflictual and risky processes, disconnected from legitimate outcomes and involving a continual unsettling of established norms and procedures. This and other case studies bring to the fore the limits of consensus-based approaches to citizenship in contexts where fragmented polities make it difficult to establish stable social agreements.

Yet where citizens have been able to mobilise to occupy, and demand, spaces for participation a different set of dynamics emerges, reconfiguring the practice of citizenship and understandings of democracy. These processes of

reconfiguration emerge powerfully in Brazil, where sophisticated experiments in democratic innovation and highly organised and mobilised citizen groups produce a heady cocktail of new democratic and citizenship practices and identifications, as DRC studies by Cornwall (2007) and Houtzager and Lavalle (2007) show. The strategic reversability (Foucault 1991) of neoliberal discourse, as it comes to be contested by mobilised social actors, lends shape to new citizenship practices that can take a more radical democratic form – carrying with them the prospects for a new politics of engagement. Another DRC case study by von Lieres (2007) describes processes of engagement with local state institutions in South Africa through which Treatment Action Campaign activists work to remodel not only their democratic possibilities, but bring into them new meanings and articulations of citizenship. What these examples suggest is that rather than simply presupposing citizens who come to be identified and involved in participatory sphere institutions, these institutions themselves create citizens and, in the process, can serve to embed new meanings and practices of citizenship.

### 3.2 Contesting citizenship

Much of the Citizenship DRC's empirical work points to the absence of the realisation of the forms of citizenship and participation that appear in much development rhetoric: the non-participation or active exclusion of sectors of society for whom policies might be intended; the discursive closure that places certain issues beyond deliberation in the participatory sphere; the absence of any sense of being recognised as having rights. Sites for transformation appear on the landscapes described by Citizenship DRC researchers as being situated outside and beyond encounters with the state. Many examples emerge in Citizenship DRC research of poor people acting in spaces in which they can experience themselves as effective, in which they could realise their political agency without having to attempt to speak the language of administrative and technocratic power. Described variously as 'autonomous spaces' (Brock, Cornwall and Gaventa 2001), 'our spaces' (Mott 2004), 'claimed/created spaces' (Gaventa 2004), 'popular spaces' (Cornwall and Coelho 2004) and 'invented spaces' (Miraftab 2006), these are sites in which a very different culture of politics may prevail, one that is at once more familiar and more empowering for those who engage. In some settings, domains of agency and indeed of development are defined entirely outside the state. In others, citizenship practices are intrinsically defined in relation to the state; even as they are shaped by negative experiences of interactions with the state, they emerge out of a desire to engage with bringing about change via influencing state policies and the everyday conduct of state actors.

Even in situations where there is considerable state intervention, non-state spaces (Scott 1998) permeate and intersect with, as well as lie beyond the provenance of, the state. The Citizenship DRC research offers interesting reflections on the way in which such spaces come to constitute part of the architecture of citizenship. In some settings, people's sense of identification with the state and its institutions is so attenuated that identifications developed



within these non-state spaces play a greater part in defining access to rights, benefits and entitlements. And, as critics of the ethnocentrism of liberal democracy have made clear, not only may the state play a negligible part in shaping entitlements in everyday life, the notion of individual rights sits very uneasily with peoples' sense of identification with others, whether their communities or their families. Kabeer argues for the importance of recognition of the multiplicity of social relations within which individuals are embedded – and the situated entitlements that arise out of these embedded subjectivities. Ros Petchesky (1988), drawing on research in a range of Southern countries including Brazil, Nigeria, India and Mexico, argues that our notions of entitlement need to be qualified to accommodate the shifting, positional identities that people take up in different domains of association. Like identities, such entitlements need to be understood as situational and negotiated, rather than fixed. Similarly, as was discussed earlier, it is quite feasible that people can act as citizens in one context and subjects in another.

Iris Marion Young draws attention to the extent to which the very notions of collective interest and equal citizenship can work to compound the exclusion of marginalised groups – precisely because these subjectivities and relationships are squeezed out of the frame. She argues that 'what emerges is a false homogeneity that suppresses group differences [...] and [...] forces formerly excluded groups to be measured according to norms derived from and defined by privileged groups' (1989: 255). One of the most potent forms of difference is that of different ways of knowing and the means used to verbalise them. Jordan describes how some groups have adapted to being excluded by withdrawing from participation in the public sphere, seeking their own satisfactions strategically, using those parts of formal institutional structures that are advantageous and finding ways around the rules and regulations that limit them (1996: 107, cited in Ellison 1997: 714). Similarly, Colvin and Robins (2009) write about how members of a Khululeka, a support group for men living with HIV, at times maintained a conscious distance from becoming too involved in state and NGO sector HIV and poverty alleviation programmes in an apparent effort to avoid what du Toit and Hickey (2007) refer to as 'adverse incorporation.'

Writing about rural Bangladesh, a context in which a state that is at once paternalistic and ineffective, and the Chiapas region of Mexico, in which armed insurrection has characterised one mode of 'citizen engagement', Simeen Mahmud (2004) and Carlos Cortez (2004) suggest that non-participation may not only be an appropriate political strategy in some circumstances, it may also come to represent the response of a citizenry accustomed to a more paternalistic state than these new participatory initiatives seem to offer. The desire to participate may arise less from a feeling of belonging than one of being excluded, less from a sense of being part of a political community than the distance of the conduct of politics from the everyday realities of peoples lives, and less from a sense of the possibility of working together to create more just and equitable development than a sense that not engaging would disentitle people from what is on offer from the state and other powerful institutions. Where responsibilities overshadow rights and where participation is itself the means through which to gain entitlements, dilemmas of equity come to the fore (Mansbridge 1999).

A consideration of the contextual dimensions of governance histories leads the Citizenship DRC studies to confront deeper problems of how people who are excluded come to develop a sense of their own participation as worthwhile and as binding in contexts where the state retreats and where the public sphere is highly fragmented. The case studies question the idea that the opening up of democratic spaces automatically guarantees democratic self-representation. It is often only after crossing the threshold of self-representation and identification that marginalised people in many Citizenship DRC contexts make effective claims for greater inclusion. However, the condition of marginalisation itself hinders easy access to the institutions and practices of representation (von Lieres 2007; Mahmud 2004; Mohanty 2004; Melissa Williams 2005).

A number of case studies show that it is in the broader nexus of democracy and marginalisation that new forms of citizen participation are emerging amongst poor people. While some of these new initiatives focus on strengthening existing liberal democratic institutions, others involve forms of participation aimed at creating new interfaces between marginalised people and the institutions that affect their lives, particularly those of the state. While some of these new forms of participation are created through the intervention of external actors such as donors or the state, others are spaces which poor people create themselves. In some cases these new popular forms of participation are challenging existing institutions at the level of the local state. In other cases new initiatives are laying the foundations for new institutions aimed at mediating the relationship between marginalised people and the state. Often, new social movements are taking a leading role in laying the foundations for new, middle-level institutions capable of representing the demands of marginalised people to the state, as von Lieres' (2007) DRC study of the South African land and AIDS treatment movements suggests.

### **3.3 Renewing the democratic imagination**

Seeing citizenship as encompassing a set of political performances in different arenas calls attention to the processes through which people come to recognise themselves as political actors, and develop what Jasanoff calls 'a democratic imagination'. Reflecting on her work in Bangladesh, Mahmud poses the question:

To what extent do citizen participation institutions function as spaces within which the journey from being an occasional citizen with only formal voting rights, to claiming, realizing and eventually enjoying other economic and social rights needed to achieve full citizenship status, takes place?  
(Workshop notes, 2004)

Miller argues that citizenship is as much about self-perception as making an active contribution to determining society's future. Expanded democracy, as Warren (1999) terms it, comes to constitute both the expansion of sites in which people can act as citizens and the reshaping of imaginaries of citizenship and the identifications people come to bring to inhabiting these imaginaries as political agents. Cornwall, Cordeiro and Delgado (2006) provide

an example of the kind of journey that Mahmud talks about. Their account of the process of institutionalising participation in a municipal health council in Brazil speaks to the process of political cultural change that such institutions can stimulate. They cite the leader of a rural residents association:

*When you begin to get the rights you have, and the way to seek those rights without the need for an intermediary, without favours or party-political bargains, then you change the character of the life of a society into one in which citizens have awareness, in which you know what you are entitled to.*

Yet the disjunction between idealised representations of people's participation and the realities of continuing disenfranchisement and lack of voice strike a dissonant note with some of the presumptions which motivate the promotion of new democratic spaces, which come more to resemble old forms of disenfranchisement and exclusion. It also raises questions about whose voices are raised and heard, through whose frames arguments are articulated, and about the very deliberability of issues brought into these fora. Brian Wynne argues

the idea that even qualitative processes of public listening, dialogue or engagement are authentic listening, with an open mind, is exposed to be deeply problematic [...] genuinely to hear what the other is trying to express, in interpersonal or institutional processes, requires first meeting the demanding condition that one's own self be also in question [...] No such openness or readiness for self-reflexivity is evident of the dominant institutional culture of science (2005: 79).

Shiv Visvanathan takes this a step further, arguing that ideas of community involvement and participation become 'mere epicycles that the scientific panopticon throws out to humanize itself' (2005: 91). What is needed, he contends, is cognitive justice: the recognition of a plurality of knowledge systems and their substantive inclusion in deliberative policy fora. Cognitive justice, he argues, goes beyond voice or resistance to recognising constitutionally the body of knowledge within which an individual is embedded (2005: 93). Citizenship rights are extended in Visvanathan's analysis to encompass rights to dissenting and alternative knowledges, and to bring these knowledges to the fore in democratising the interface between science and its publics. Visvanathan's work speaks to the challenge of what Drucilla Cornell (1992) has called equivalence. Equivalence represents as much questions of recognition of identities and rights as of forms of discourse and modes of expression that normalizing bureaucratic procedures may place outside the bounds of acceptability. It is also about the dilemmas of representation, about the equivalence of positions and the need for articulations that affirm rather than submerge issues of difference.

## 4 Conclusion: articulating citizenships

Radical democratic theory focuses our attention on the ways in which political subjectivities and the identifications that give rise to them come to be articulated in the pursuit of social justice. It offers a different conception of citizenship, one that bypasses the perverse confluence (Dagnino 2005) between neoliberalism and communitarian-inspired notions of citizen engagement in self-provisioning and localised action that is so evident in today's debates on active citizenship, and instead focuses on the types of political practices and power relations that constitute a democratic culture. In this perspective, citizenship is viewed as a deeply political process which can only be guaranteed by multiplying the spaces, institutions, discourses and forms of life that foster identification with democratic values.

Mouffe (1993) argues that citizenship involves a consideration of the power relations by which its values and practices are constituted and reconfigured. According to Mouffe, theorists of citizenship should be concerned with the ways in which the identities of citizens are affected by power relations, political practices of inclusion and exclusion, and not simply with the representation of pre-constituted interests. Democracy is not primarily about the realisation of consensus. Any attempt to construct political agreement within a political community is a tension-filled project that involves exclusions and power struggles. Power relations make up the social, and the main question for a democratic politics is not how to eliminate power, but how to constitute forms of power compatible with democratic values. Elements from liberal democratic traditions may indeed have a part to play in addressing some of the potential democratic deficits of participatory processes. Most critical, as Mouffe (1993) contends, are liberty and equality, which have played such a very important part in the struggles of people oppressed on the basis of their race, class, gender and sexualities for rights and recognition.

Such a conception of democracy changes the ways in which we view civil society and the public sphere. Instead of understanding both as manifestations of a pre-given political liberal order and form of governance, we are asked to locate them as manifestations of an agonistic politics. Mouffe argues that the main task for democracy and citizenship is to convert antagonism into agonism, enemies into adversaries, fighting into critical engagement. For Mouffe, politics is made up of a tension between the functions of governance, and political and power dynamics. Citizenship, by extension, is a political project filled with these tensions, conducted in different sites in the public sphere. Mouffe asks us to re-think the idea of the public sphere as an arena of general values and overarching spaces for citizenship, and instead to view it as a space for multiple contestations of democratic identities.

In a similar way Connolly (1995) asks us to conceive of democracy and democratic citizenship within a framework of a politics of disturbance. Rejecting the idea of the public sphere as understood by theorists of deliberative democracy, Connolly advocates an understanding of political society as a

continually shifting intersection of interests and identities which govern the form of democracy. Such a conception of democracy offers something that the conventional (and deliberative democratic) version does not: a politically constructed societal consensus which is rooted in a continual re-negotiation of the political forms of the body politic as a whole. Democracy and democratic citizenship does not require so many shared understandings in the strongest sense of the phrase, but it needs multiple public places and points of reference through which these can be organised.

The kind of bricolage that radical democratic theorists turn to offers the potential for marrying liberal concerns about liberty, equality and rights with a vision of a diverse, engaged, politically literate citizenry who do more than passively accept state-endowed entitlements. For this, strategies are needed that tackle the need to broaden engagement at the same time as providing new ways to address old concerns of representation and legitimacy. Making the most of citizen participation may, then, come to rely on a more pluralist, neo-pragmatist, approach (*cf.* Fraser 1996): one that might draw on or resonate with elements of different traditions of thinking about citizenship and democracy, but is not in itself wholly determined by them.

Perhaps the most important lesson the cases documented by the Citizenship DRC have to offer is that greater analytical attention needs to be paid to these acts of negotiating citizenship in a multiplicity of spaces, across different experiences of democracy. From this can emerge an understanding of citizenship that is sensitive to questions of power as well as of context. Going beyond the static binaries of state/civil society, universal/particular, individual/society, such an analysis would permit a fuller and more nuanced understanding of citizenship precisely because it is able to attend to the contingencies of everyday life. It is in the everyday processes through which people tactically deploy elements of existing citizenship discourses in their own individual or collective projects, and in the interplay between contingency and context, that we can come to understand what citizenship means in practice.

The quest for an all-encompassing definition of citizenship, one that can suitably embrace all these dimensions of human action, entitlement and belonging, is ultimately an empty one. Shifting the focus away from constructing an adequate concept that can convey the quotidian negotiations and performances through which people define and pursue what they feel to be justly theirs reveals processes of creative improvisation rather than static definitions. And focusing on the ways in which particular subject-positions and forms of identification come to be articulated in the pursuit of concrete political projects – whether they consist of contesting scientific framings or in mobilising for collective rights – highlights the diversity of ways in which people come to frame as well as claim citizenship. It is with the politics of these articulations, and with the institutions that are able to accommodate these shifting forms of everyday citizenship, that future challenges for theory and activism lie.

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