



Participation for What: Social Change or Social Control?

*Georgina M. Gómez, Ariane A. Corradi,
Pedro Goulart, Rose Namara
(Editors)*

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Georgina M. Gómez, Ariane A. Corradi, Pedro Goulart and Rose Namara (editors)
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About Oxfam Novib

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The contributors met at Development Dialogue (DD) 2008, a vibrant meeting point where PhD Candidates in development studies network and present their work. The DD, marked by multidisciplinary and a diversity of topics, is a yearly academic event organised by PhD candidates at the Institute of Social Studies of Erasmus University. Starting in 2002 as an internal event with no more than five or six presenters, the conference has grown steadily. The meeting in 2008 was a milestone, attracting 130 applicants of whom 45 PhD candidates from European institutions and beyond were chosen to attend. This scaling up of the conference was made possible by the mobilisation of PhD candidates at ISS, the interest of our peers and the institutional support of ISS and Oxfam-Novib, for which we are thankful.

At ISS, the event has received the physical, intellectual and emotional support of many staff and students and it is impossible to mention all. We will try not to forget many of the most engaged. The joint efforts of Ariane, Bilisuma, Caizhen, Francisco, Georgina, Henry, Husnul, Leandro, Mallika, Manohara, Rekopantswe, Roselle, Rose, Shyamika and Pedro's coordination resulted in a wonderful and dynamic organising and scientific committee. Louk de la Rive Box (former Rector), Wil Hout (Deputy Rector for Academic Affairs) and Renée de Louw (now Deputy Rector for Executive Affairs) were always available and supportive and often lifesavers. The Research Degree Committee (Mohamed Salih, Peter Knorringa and Dubravka Zarkov, in the meantime replaced by Irene van Staveren) was instrumental to the event, as were many others including Ank van den Berg, Nynke Jo Smit, Lenneke Warnars, John Sinjorgo, Faroel Ibrahim, Michel Wesseling, Peter van Helden, Martin Blok, Maureen Koster, Harold Gabriel van der Linden, Sandy Kammerling and Sylvia Cattermole. Most academic staff have contributed decisively throughout the years and particularly in 2008, but we would like to highlight the discussants of the earlier versions of these papers: Anirban Dasgupta, Erhard Berner, João Guimarães, Kristin Komives, Murat Arsel and Rosalba Icaza. At Oxfam-Novib, Bruno Molijn was always most supportive and maintained the association of Oxfam-Novib to the event.

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Mikael joined us to gradually build the project. A special thanks to David Kong Hug who accompanied part of our journey. We also thank Louk de La Rive Box and Wil Hout, once again, as well as Thomas Lawo, EADI, and Michel Wesseling, at ISS, for their publication advice and suggestions.

Once the project was ready it found a safe haven at the Knowledge Programme, a collaborative initiative by the Humanist Institute for Co-Operation with Developing Countries (Hivos) and ISS. Marlieke Kieboom and Kees Biekart showed immediate interest in this project and trusted that we could carry it through. “A book of papers by PhD students edited by PhD students is bound to attract interest and sympathy, but one should not be complacent on quality matters”. Erhard Berner’s academic mentoring was invaluable throughout the project and this collection would not have been possible without his expertise, particularly in the final review of the articles. We would like to further express our gratitude to Karen Shaw for the design of what we immediately found a beautiful book cover and to Joy Misa for her assistance in the process of obtaining an ISBN number. Proof Reading Service, Linda McPhee and Diego Garcia were most effective in editing and formatting.

Francine Toulemonde (artist) and Galerie Noordeinde were most kind of allowing the use of the photo of the sculpture on the cover. In a social gathering event of PhDs at ISS, we had the privilege of attending this artist’s exposition at Galerie Noordeinde. When we first saw the sculpture in 2008, its representation of the ‘difficulty of communication’ caught our attention. In spite of the importance of the matter, communication is always a tense and non-univocal process. The way it portrayed the complexity of dialogue and the multiplicity of actions was breathtaking. Later on, when thinking about a cover for this collection of papers portraying a complex landscape ranging from democratic achievement to abusive disempowerment, a picture of the sculpture seemed perfect. The articles provide insights into this complexity and contribute to explaining why participation is still a necessary but certainly not a sufficient and full-proof mechanism to improve the lives of millions of people.

The Editors
The Hague, August 2010

Foreword

This book is quite exceptional. It is 100 per cent the result of junior professionals' dedication to the global field of development studies. The idea for the conference in which most of the following papers were presented, the organisation of the conference and the editing of the book – all came from a dedicated group of young professionals. Most of them were pursuing graduate work in Europe, using their field research from their home countries in the Global South.

Doing a doctorate degree abroad is a risky business. The authors reduced this risk by forming a European network of junior scholars who exchange field experiences and theoretical insights through an annual Development Dialogue, held at the Institute of Social Studies of Erasmus University (ISS) in The Hague. The 2008 Dialogue brought together a unique group of junior and senior scholars who questioned, among other things, the very concept of participation in development processes. They query the notions of ownership and participation espoused by most development agencies, and examine the real processes underneath. Is participation a gentle way of imposing donor-views, or does it generate authentic social change in the best interest of the various actors?

The authors question donor-stimulated forms of participation as self-evidently positive, both theoretically and empirically. Theoretically, they address the need of the academic community to recalibrate its concepts given the emergence of post-colonial forms of analysis and the radical review of neo-liberal globalisation policies. Empirically, the authors have found that actor-rationalities are often simplified and not predictable. Their mix of theoretical and empirical innovation makes the book exciting reading. The reader is likely to have the same sense of discovery as the participants at the ISS 2008 Development Dialogue. Many thanks to the next generation of development scholars – and thanks to the senior staff who helped in getting the focus clear for this book, and Oxfam-Novib, which kindly supports the annual ISS Development Dialogue.

Louk Box

Emeritus Professor of International Cooperation, ISS

Preface

I participate
You participate
He/She participates
We participate
But..
They decide

These phrases were written not long ago on a chalkboard in Bolivia by an informant who wanted to explain the adverse effect of the Law of Popular Participation. It suggests that participation as a concept is meaningful, whilst in practice it can become hollow because decision making processes are often dominated by elites.

Participation of local communities and civil society groups in intervention strategies are considered key in development practice. It has even reached a certain inviolable status since the development sector was criticized for carrying out top-down policies. Consequently, a certain discomfort exists about the questioning of content and use of participatory methods and approaches. However, participation for whom, by whom, for what, and how? These remain vital questions for moving forward in building new narratives and generating appropriate development strategies.

In order to contribute to debates on Civil Society Building (CSB), Humanist Institute for Co-operation with Developing Countries –Hivos, and the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS) in 2005 created the Civil Society Building Knowledge Programme. The aim was to better understand and improve the contribution of Civil Society Building efforts to bring about changes in the unequal balance of power in favour of vulnerable and marginalized groups. At the core of this collaboration is the interaction between practitioners, researchers, and social activists to facilitate the generation, dissemination, and application of knowledge. By integrating these various forms of knowledge, new insights can be created and strategies formulated that contribute to the development of new policies and practices.

As participatory approaches play an important role in our programme, we are also keen to rethink these. One way to do so is to stimulate knowledge generation by supporting innovative research publications. The present publication contains contributions by a variety of young scholars from the Global South who critically examine current participation discourses and their application in practice. We believe this provides new challenging perspectives and ideas for the debate. But we would agree with the Bolivian practitioner: the reader decides.

Marlieke Kieboom
Kees Biekart
(Hivos-ISS Civil Society Building Knowledge Programme)

About the Contributors

Eloisa Berman Arévalo completed a Research Masters in Human Geography, Planning and International Development at the University of Amsterdam in August 2008. She has worked as an independent researcher and practitioner in conservation and development initiatives in the Colombian Amazon since 2003, focusing on the role of State and international development actors in the consolidation of territorial arrangements that are conducive to social justice, alternative development and conservation. She now works at the Universidad Tecnológica de Bolívar in Cartagena, Colombia as researcher and coordinator of the Master's in Development and Culture.

Erhard Berner is Associate Professor of Development Sociology at the Institute of Social Studies, The Hague. He holds a PhD from the University of Bielefeld on squatters' struggles in the Philippines. He has conducted extensive research in the Philippines, Malaysia, Vietnam, India, Bangladesh and Russia. His main areas of interest include informal markets for labour and land, urban governance and poverty alleviation, and the role of non-governmental and community-based organizations. His main publications include (with Benedict Phillips) "Left to Their Own Devices: Community Self-help between Alternative Development and Neoliberalism", *Community Development Journal* (2005, 40: 17-49), and "Learning From Informal Markets: Innovative Approaches to Land and Housing Provision", *Development in Practice* (2001, 11: 292-307).

Mariana Cifuentes, a PhD Fellow from the Institute of Social Studies/ Erasmus University of Rotterdam, is interested in the interface between citizens and the street-level bureaucrats. She has conducted research on the involvement of marginalised groups in participatory reforms in Sao Paulo, Brazil and Nairobi, Kenya. Her current research examines the politics of two recent social sector reforms implemented by the Government of Kenya: free primary education and the fight against HIV/AIDS. Her publications include *'Deliberative fora and the democratisation of social politics in Brazil'* (co-authored with Schattan P. Coelho and Araújo), and *'Participation and Public Policies in Brazil'* (together with Coelho and Pozzoni).

Ariane Corradi is a doctoral student at the International Institute of Social Studies of the Erasmus University Rotterdam, The Hague. Her research tackles the dynamics of networking and learning for the evolution of businesses startups in Brazil. Ariane has academic and consultancy experience in business management and in organisational and social psychology. She worked in the fields of science and technology (Brazilian government), evaluation of social programmes for NGOs, and youth rights at the municipal level in Brazil. She has one journal article published, 3 papers and 24 abstracts or posters in conferences, and 2 participations in roundtables.

Larissa Barbosa da Costa has 12 years experience and engagement with development, social and environmental issues in Brazil. She has worked for several Brazilian and international organizations in special in the field of popular education, sustainable development and participatory governance. She has extensive experience in participatory

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Pedro Goulart is pursuing a PhD at the Institute of Social Studies, Erasmus University Rotterdam. Before, he had lectured at the undergraduate and master levels and had also been a senior officer within the Portuguese Labour Ministry. He studied Economics for his undergraduate degree at ISEG-UTL (Portugal) and Development Economics for his MSc at a joint course (ISS, VU and WUR) in The Netherlands. Research interests focus on Development, Economics, History, Education and Labour studies. He has published in journals like the *Economics of Education Review*, *European Urban and Regional Studies* and *Sociedade e Trabalho*. Other publications include 2 books and several book chapters.
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Manohara Khadka is currently working for a Swiss-funded agriculture project in Nepal. Following an MSc in natural resources, she completed her PhD at the Institute of Social Studies, The Hague in 2009. Her PhD thesis focuses on the policy processes in order to better understand why the exclusion of socio-economically disadvantaged groups continues in community forestry, despite greater attention to people and poverty. She has worked with government, NGO and bi-lateral donor funded community forestry projects in Nepal for more than 15 years. She is interested in social equity, rural livelihoods, community adaptation, participation and power dynamics in natural resource management. Her publications include book (2), research brief (2) conference papers (3) book chapter (2) and national journals and newspaper articles (4).

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and civil society building, project planning and management, public administration and management, organizational behavior and research methods. Before joining the UMI faculty, Rose worked as a training consultant with national and international NGOs.

Mikael Wigell is a Ph.D. candidate in the Development Studies Institute at the London School of Economics and Political Science. He has previously earned academic degrees from the Åbo Akademi University in Finland as well as the Johns Hopkins University's Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS). Mr. Wigell is currently completing a dissertation on social welfare reform in Argentina and Chile. He has ongoing research interests in democratization and social welfare restructuring in developing countries. His publications include: "Mapping 'Hybrid Regimes': Regime Types and Concepts in Comparative Politics", *Democratization* (2008, 15: 230-250), and "Multi-Stakeholder Cooperation in Global Governance", in Helsinki Process Publication Series (No. 7/2008, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland). He has recently been a Visiting Researcher at the Finnish Institute of International Affairs.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction: Participation between Tyranny and Emancipation

Erhard Berner

PARTICIPATION DISENCHANTED

The struggle for participation is over, its opponents – never numerous or vocal anyway – have unconditionally surrendered. Together with the related concepts of decentralization, good governance, empowerment and self-help, participation has become a buzzword in development debates and practice. Participatory approaches that were once considered radical and controversial have been incorporated into mainstream management theory (Taylor 2001) and are being routinely applied, at least in theory, by each and every development agency. Mobilizing local knowledge and capacity and harnessing self-help potential is the central element of sustainable livelihoods and rights-based approaches, among others. Properly ‘empowered’, or at least ‘enabled’, the poor are assumed to be able to overcome unequal distribution of resources and government neglect. The case for participation is a strong one: As documented by their very survival, poor people are experts in making the most of scarce resources under adverse circumstances. To acknowledge and strengthen their capacities and institutions is both an obvious and a sensible approach to community development. Building interventions on the skills and knowledge of low-income communities makes it possible to reduce dependency and outside control, fine-tune policies according to people’s needs, reduce costs and improve cost recovery. In the perspective of this new orthodoxy, no ‘top-down’ policy or project can possibly be any good.

Indeed top-down solutions have often been inappropriate – incompetent, mis-targeted, insouciant and even brutal. That the reverse assumption – *all* participatory interventions are efficient and beneficial for the recipients – is far from reality has been almost ignored for a long time. There has been regular criticism against incompetent and inappropriate use of the participatory toolbox, not the instruments themselves. Following Arnstein’s (1969) famous ‘ladder of citizen participation’, various typologies were proposed to distinguish mere information and consultation from ‘real’ participation in decision making and, eventually, the transformation of society (Mayo and Craig 1995, Cleaver 1999, Botes and van Rensburg 2000).

The promise of emancipation and empowerment was radically negated by Bill Cooke and Uma Kothari’s collection *Participation: the new tyranny?*, a question the editors firmly answered in the affirmative: ‘... tyranny is the illegitimate and/or unjust exercise of power; this book is about how participatory development facilitates this’ (Cooke and Kothari 2001:

4). In this perspective, mainstreaming has depoliticized participation and made it a technical instrument. Three years later, Samuel Hickey and Giles Mohan (2004) responded with an effort to reaffirm the transformative and emancipatory potential of participation. It is within this field of tension between radical pessimism and cautious optimism that the contributions to this book position themselves.

Before summarizing the main points of critique it is useful to take a close look at the main propositions that underlie participatory approaches. Compared with professionals, beneficiaries are assumed to have important and complementary *information* on their needs and capacities, to be *competent*, and *reliable*. These three factors may become causes of improved effectiveness of development projects, the more so if participation goes beyond 'listening to beneficiaries' towards their active role in decision making. That legitimacy and acceptance of interventions is enhanced by the process is a welcome side effect.

Participation is argued for on three further grounds:

- As an end in itself. According to Sen's work (especially Sen 1999) the *freedom* to make meaningful choices between various options is the essence of development and a precondition for personal well-being.
- As a means to ensure quality, appropriateness and durability of improvements. The key word here is *ownership*: By being involved in the design and production of facilities poor people would feel (more) responsible for their maintenance.
- As a means to increase *efficiency* and cut costs by mobilizing communities' own contributions in terms of time, effort, and sometimes money.

All three rationales, most obviously the last, make tough additional assumptions about both the unutilized resources and capacities of the poor, and the skills and capacities of intervening agencies. Little attention is paid to the requirements and costs of community participation. Only practitioners can appreciate the time required to reach a consensus on vital issues, and time in turn is the most scarce and precious asset for poor people and notably women. If all that development agencies have to offer in return are cosmetic changes with designs their engineers have drawn up in advance, they are guilty of short-changing the poor.

The points of departure for a critique of participatory theory and practice can be summarized in four main categories, namely *ritualistic*, *exploitative*, *exclusive* and *substitute* participation.

Ritualistic participation

There is often little willingness on the part of development agencies and experts to share effective decision-making power, and consultative meetings become mere rituals to legitimize preconceived plans and to manipulate rather than facilitate the process: 'They (the developers) arrived already knowing everything. They come here and look around, but they see only what is not here.' (Indian villager quoted by Botes and van Rensburg 2000: 42). Indeed the donors' and policymakers' frame of reference (fixed timeframe, tangible and measurable results, output indicators known in advance) is not compatible with any real influence of beneficiaries on relevant decisions. Grassroots organizations, then,

become ‘the human software through which investments can be made with least local opposition’ (Hildyard et al. 2001).

Why, then, do the poor patiently play their role in the participatory rituals? The answer probably lies in the hidden transfers that even ‘cost-neutral’ interventions entail. Transaction costs, for instance in credit programmes, are almost never recovered, and then there are ‘remunerations’, ‘kick-off finance’, free training in hopefully useful skills, and travel to (sometimes international) events.

Exploitative participation

Under the heading of ‘creating ownership’ and with the thinly disguised goal of cutting costs and improving efficiency, development agencies often require beneficiaries to contribute work and money. In Nepal, for instance, local systems of *corvée* labour have been incorporated in flood control projects (Masaki 2004). In Indonesia *partisipasi*, much abused under the New Order regime, is still generally known to signify a burden in terms of extracted labour. A less grave variant is the collection of information through participatory appraisals which is then used according to the priorities of the policy makers.

Exclusive participation

In practice, development projects critically depend on ‘key informants’, ‘multipliers’ and community leaders who supposedly articulate everybody’s needs: ‘Much of what is considered ‘participatory’ is more a process whereby large numbers of people are *represented* by a relatively small number of participants. ... this is primarily about the organized interaction of leaders than members *per se* (Hickey and Mohan 2004: 19, original emphasis).

The concept of ‘the’ community is fashionable to the point of ubiquity, but remains deeply problematic. It merges the administrative, the spatial and the social, it oversimplifies reality, and it can act as an obstacle to the proper examination of local power systems (Guijt and Shah 1998). When NGO activists and social scientists talk of how ‘a community’ lobbied local government, built a well, borrowed money, or decided on a development strategy, who are they talking about? Do they mean *everyone* in the community, or just the majority, the older ones, the richer ones, or the men?

All too often it is self-styled leaders who monopolize the meagre benefits of development projects, leaving at best crumbs for the weak and marginalized. They seek vertical links with NGO personnel just like with politicians, administrators and other power brokers (Mosse 2001, de Wit and Berner 2009). An autocratic style of leadership based on patronage reinforces the prevailing inequality of the existing social structure. In addition to issues of outright corruption, most projects have also produced significant inequalities along gender and other lines (Cornwall 2003). Bottom-up approaches to development need to start from the recognition that exploitation and marginalization also take place inside the slums and poor villages. The inclusion of structurally disadvantaged groups – be they women, ethnic or religious minorities, disabled people, tenants, landless workers or the poorest of the poor – would require NGOs and governments to reach out for them actively rather than listening to just a few community leaders and prominent figures.

Substitute participation

The intervention chain is hierarchical and far more complex than the bipartite picture of ‘development agencies’ and ‘beneficiaries’ suggests, from donors and governments via NGOs, community organizers, local leaders and community-based organizations down to ‘the people’. For the latter’s voice to be heard at the top, it has to be transmitted across all the interfaces without selection, manipulation or distortion. Such *deep participation* is rare in practice, and representative mechanisms lack transparency and legitimacy. Enthusiasm for participation within international organisations and donors has forced governments worldwide to involve stakeholders from ‘civil society’ in the preparations of major plans and programmes. As the grassroots organizations of the poor do not possess the required knowledge and skills, their place at the negotiation tables is taken by NGO professionals who, in theory, have explored beneficiaries’ needs and preferences and speak on their behalf. However, NGOs develop organizational self-interest; they aim at their own survival and expansion and therefore prioritize good standing with donors and governments. As a result, not even community leaders may have much of a say in relevant decisions.

THE CONTRIBUTIONS

A showcase of ritualistic, substitute and ultimately tyrannical participation is presented by *Rose Namara* in her analysis of Uganda’s Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) process. Government and donors, in particular the World Bank, were keen to prevent the conflictive process and disastrous outcomes of top-down structural adjustment. NGOs were tasked to consult people across the country through workshops, conferences, radio programmes and advocacy activities in order to facilitate their participation in research and policy negotiation dialogues. However, time pressure and a mismatch between grassroots inputs and the perceived needs of policy makers led to a rushed and unresponsive consultation process. Driven by the need to produce high-quality position papers in order to be taken seriously at the negotiation table, the NGOs resorted to desk studies rather than trying to transmit the voices of the poor. This pre-emptive obedience did not do them much good, however, and they remained subordinate to external donor-driven policy prescriptions. The strong focus on economic growth and market-led strategies, de-emphasizing redistributive measures, was considered non-negotiable anyway. But even on ‘soft’ issues like pastoralism, children’s poverty and gender, the NGOs achieved little more than cosmetic changes to a technocratic agenda set from above.

Still at the macro level of national anti-poverty policymaking, *Mikael Wigell’s* contribution on Chile after democratization in 1990 paints a much more positive picture despite an absence of participation in decision making. The transition to democracy had ushered in a new emphasis on pluralism and state–NGO cooperation in social policymaking: ‘Clearly, the new anti-poverty approach has contributed to social modernization through increased state-civil society collaboration’. However, social policies have remained highly centralized and technocratic, restricting NGOs and popular organizations to an implementing role and leaving little space for collective political action of the lower classes. On the positive side, strong mechanisms of accountability have effectively curtailed the diversion of targeted funds by populist politicians for the purpose of building clientelist networks. The social programmes were largely successful in redistributing resources for productive development

to the poorest strata, but arguably served as an instrument of social control rather than empowerment.

Georgina Gomez's account of neighbouring Argentina demonstrates that the unintended consequences of a non-participatory approach at macro level are the rule rather than the exception. Reacting to the resounding failure of protectionist economic policies before 1990 and encouraged by a convincing election victory, the government imposed neoliberal structural reforms in a top-down manner. Economic agents were expected to adapt rapidly to the new institutions and rules, innovate production, invest in state-of-the-art technology and become internationally competitive. What happened in reality was the emergence of an 'institutional gap': Having not been properly informed or even involved in the reform process, entrepreneurs adopted a wait-and-see attitude, leading to a sharp countrywide recession. The argument is not that more participation would have led to more appropriate reforms, but that it would have instigated a reflective learning process and thereby supported the reorganization of economic life.

Another case of non-participation, now at the meso and micro levels, is presented by *Jamie Furniss*. In an effort to 'privatize' solid waste management in Egypt (which has never been public), the government contracted foreign companies and excluded the *Zabbaleen*, the traditional informal garbage collectors. Ironically, the herald of neoliberalism, the World Bank, pushed for the involvement of and support for this indigenous system of service provision – after all, it was part of the private sector. The government, however, displayed a rare degree of steadfastness vis-à-vis the donor and insisted that ragged paupers with donkey carts should disappear from the modern urban landscape. What disappeared, however, were not the *Zabbaleen* but several of the foreign companies who failed to make the expected profits. The former managed to reclaim their role in the system by the use of Scott's 'weapons of the weak', acts of everyday resistance, certainly benefitting from the Egyptian state's weak implementation power. They were disinclined to participate, but nevertheless they did.

Manohara Khadka takes the reader to the assumed realm of genuine grassroots participation, the micro level of local communities. According to her, the forest user groups established by Nepal's community forestry (CF) programme have assumed a strong role in forest management, allocation and distribution of resources, control of forest encroachment and illegal felling, and prevention of forest fires. Significant funds for forest and community development were provided, leading to considerable benefits for the communities involved. However, the programme ignored local inequalities and power relations and was thus prone to elite capture. User groups were firmly controlled by high-caste, well-educated and relatively wealthy men and restricted women, *dalits* and the poor to a marginal position. The groups found willing allies in the forest bureaucracy, which was dominated by the same elites and adhering to a technocratic perspective on forest management. Exclusive and partly ritualistic participation and inequitable distribution of benefits were exacerbated by donors' environmental rather than social priorities.

A very important observation is added by *Mariana Cifuentes*: It is not so much the design of an intervention that determines the quality of participation, but the way the stakeholders position themselves and interact during implementation. The programme she analyses, participatory service delivery in Nairobi's informal settlements, suffered initially from the

familiar flaws of African public service reforms; non-transparent procedures, bureaucratic inertia, collusion and rent-seeking by politicians and officials. With the support of the action researchers around Cifuentes, the residents of one ward mobilized collective agency and demand-making power. Policy makers were forced, first, to inform them properly about their rights and entitlements, and second, to respond by fulfilling at least some of their priority needs. The case provides evidence that demand-driven ('claimed') participation has a much higher emancipatory potential than supply-driven ('invited') participation.

The last two papers bring the reader back to Latin America and support a cautiously optimistic outlook. *Larissa Barbosa da Costa* observes widespread enthusiasm about participation in a water management project in Rio de Janeiro state, and reports that it 'has generated empowerment and change to a great extent'. Some groups stayed out of the process, but exclusion appears to have been largely voluntary; the supremacy of techno-scientific knowledge and a preference for doing over learning are also critically noted. Da Costa's main disappointment, however, is with the bread-and-butter demands of participants who are blind to the need for social transformation towards equality and justice.

Eventually, *Eloisa Berman Arevalo* introduces the case of a district in the Colombian Amazon where territorial protection, natural resource management and consolidation of indigenous self-government were integrated in a dynamic partnership process. The actors in the intervention chain, from government and aid agencies via a strong indigenous umbrella organization down to the local communities, have established reliable communication links and fairly democratic mechanisms of decision making. Certain ambivalences and contradictions remained, such as the donors' priority on environmental protection that was considered alien at the grassroots level. However, partnership requires compromises, and the Matavén process can hardly be considered substitute participation. Not only were several concrete objectives accomplished, but the creation and legal recognition of an indigenous governing body has to be recognized as a major achievement of effective empowerment.

The message of this book is that meaningful participation is an eminently political process, struggled for from below much rather than granted from above. It has to be much more than a ritual to legitimize top-down policies or a technical instrument in the development professionals' toolbox. It has to deal with local power structures instead of reinforcing them, and constantly make a strong effort to reach out to the marginalized. It has to be based on mobilization and collective action at the grassroots level, sensibly supported by committed NGOs, academics, the media and other elements of civil society. It cannot compete with or even replace democratic and accountable government institutions but has to make demands of them, engage with them and complement them. Participation is costly in terms of time and effort, particularly for the poor; participants thus rightfully expect considerable and, at least initially, tangible benefits. The experiences in these small and simple struggles must be positive if they can possibly be mobilized for a transformation towards a more equitable and just society.

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CHAPTER TWO

Mouthpieces of the Poor or Dancing to the Tunes of Government and Donors? NGOs in Uganda's Poverty Reduction Programmes

Rose B. Namara

INTRODUCTION

Participation is regarded as a central condition in the current poverty reduction policy processes and the new aid architecture. A major benefit associated with participation is its alleged ability to challenge the top-down model of development. The objective of participation is to transform existing development practices radically, including social relations, institutional practices and capacity gaps which cause social exclusion (Hickey and Mohan 2004: 13). Hence many actors have claimed or have been invited to be part of the poverty reduction policy-making process.

The participation of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in poverty reduction programmes is regarded as particularly important because it could lead to the three related results of broad-based ownership, pro-poor effectiveness and accountability (Molenaers and Renard 2006). It is expected that the participation of NGOs would make policies more effective by raising poor people's concerns on the policy agenda. The NGOs are assumed not to meet any resistance because they are regarded as representatives of the poor. The participation of NGOs is also expected to increase the accountability of governments towards the population. The insistence on accountability is a result of the loss of confidence in the role of governments, which are often accused of being inefficient and protecting the interests of the non-poor. Therefore NGOs are expected to put pressure on governments to deliver on their promises through monitoring Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) and budgeting processes. The other reason is that NGOs are expected to enhance the participation of poor and marginalised people and civil society organisations in decision-making processes and ensure their voices are incorporated in poverty reduction policies (Gaventa 2005, Eberlei, 2007). The participation of the poor and their organisations increases the possibility of enabling the poor to control the poverty reduction agenda. NGOs are supposed to achieve this by engaging in mobilising people to participate in decision making and engaging in research to document poor people concerns so as to be able to push for pro-poor policies through advocacy and negotiation.

This paper focuses on this last idea and analyses how NGOs have enabled people to participate in policy-making processes. How do NGOs engage the people in PRS

processes? What explains the way in which NGOs engage the people? This paper attempts to answer these questions using data from Uganda. Empirical evidence is drawn from interviews with staff members of NGOs, donors and government officials. The paper focuses on analysing the roles of NGOs in mobilising the people and enabling them to participate in research and policy negotiation dialogues. The paper argues that NGOs are used in the political coordination system whereby even those NGOs that claim to work for the interests of the poor inevitably remain loyal to the techno-managerial control system. The technical criteria of the PRS become handy to converge actors and reduce risks of resistance but do not necessarily lead to the goal of enhancing people's participation. NGO participation has been mainly a low-path of participation. The principal concern of policy makers (donors and governments) is to retain social control. Therefore participation is pursued not because it benefits the people but because it provides potential for control.

THE REALITIES OF NGO ENGAGEMENT WITH PEOPLE

This section examines NGOs' roles in enabling people and their leaders to participate in the Ugandan PRS processes since 1997. It shows that NGOs tried to consult the public through workshops, conferences, radio programmes and advocacy activities, but people remained largely ill mobilised and in the background of the change process.

Organising local populations to engage in policy processes

Although NGOs are assumed to be in the business of mobilising communities, the processes of formulation of the 1997 Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) reflect limited evidence on how NGOs mobilised their constituents to participate. The government arranged the community consultations. The President invited NGOs and donors to tour and listen to communities in the poverty-stricken areas of Luwero (1). The exercise was the first consultative process in Uganda bringing together several stakeholders to deliberate on poverty issues. As such the government consolidated its authority in mobilising people, soliciting further support in the Luwero area and financial support from NGOs and donors. Ssewakiryanga (2005: 34) referred to it as a unique experience within the domestic political project around poverty reduction because poverty received a significant political push. However, significantly the first PEAP addressed people's concerns because it addressed primary health care and education, rural feeder roads, safe water and modernisation of agriculture; and brought together key stakeholders at one table.

Although NGOs were practically not prepared to deliberate on policy issues, the PEAP 1997 opened up spaces for a number of them who had been struggling to gain acceptance at the policymaking table. Some NGOs were included in the PEAP drafting committee and different working groups to collect inputs from their constituents, but there were no systematic consultations with the public. The PEAP formulation also gave more recognition to the advocacy role of NGOs as key in influencing policy. However, at the same time the process gave an opportunity to multiple interests to gain entry into public policy making. The donors, especially the World Bank, used the opportunity to convince the government of the supremacy of market-led economies in poverty reduction and the need to have multi-party democracy. The government was ordered to open up more space for NGOs in policy formulation. Eventually during the formulation of the Poverty

Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) in 2000, the World Bank took control of the PEAP by adopting it as a global debt relief instrument. In this case it can be said that the PEAP was used to organise and allocate influence between different actors; henceforth, the government lost the opportunity to control the local development planning function.

In terms of consultations, the 1999/2000 revision exercise lasted less than two months with minimal consultation of the communities. There was limited time because the PEAP was to be used as a PRSP intended for debt relief. The Uganda Debt Network (UDN), one of the advocacy NGOs that had successfully collaborated with the government in the International Jubilee 2000 campaigns for debt reduction, led the Civil Society Task Force comprised of ten organisations (3). The media information and dissemination conferences, talk shows, information materials and public debates on PEAP/PRSP were organised and 644 people were consulted. NGOs launched eight regional consultative meetings to discuss the draft of the revised PEAP with communities between March and April 2000 (CSO Task Force 2000: VI). The consultation workshops were hasty, with a risk of excluding some categories of people. Gariyo (2002: 8) noted that the process was at best consultative. With limited time and rushed consultations, the chances that the poor would have significant influence on policy development were minimal. However, the revision exercise was important for NGOs to use it as opportunity to show donors that they were reliable partners.

In addition, the basis for the consultation was the already conceived draft and it was more of a sensitisation exercise rather than a deliberate effort to get commitments from the people on local poverty issues. There was no clear arrangement to deepen local consultation. It seems the aim of the regional workshops to inform the population of what PRSPs are and creating consensus about the PRSP approach. Indeed the participation of the people was aimed at reducing resistance against the unpopular macro-economic market-based policies of liberalisation and privatisation. It is not surprising that during the 2000 PRSP formulation process, the macro-economic policies were a no-go area for NGOs because they were regarded as not negotiable (Nanna et al. 2002). A number of scholars (Cornwall and Brock 2005; Grant and Marcus, 2008: 102; Hickey and Mohan 2008: 246) have criticised PRSPs for depoliticising poverty, participation and empowerment and for being insulated in technocratic bubbles. Although NGOs would not mobilise people to challenge the dominant international poverty agenda, their presence at policy dialogue tables served the purpose of demonstrating participation to donors and the media.

The approval of the PEAP in May 2000 led Uganda to access debt relief under the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) II scheme where it obtained US\$ 46 million in debt relief for the financial year 2001-2. The use of the PEAP as an instrument of debt relief diverted it from its original purpose because it became a fundraising tool adhering to the rules of the donors rather than a political decision-making tool. The debt relief brought increased funding for social sectors such as education and health in Uganda. However, it also brought about new conditionalities and controls. The donors seized the opportunity to put more influence on both the content and process of poverty reduction policy formulation. In terms of content, the PEAP 2000 emphasised the creation of an enabling environment for sustainable economic growth and transformation, promotion of good governance and

security, increasing the ability of the poor to raise their incomes and improving their quality of life. The focus of the poverty reduction agenda shifted towards legitimising development funding rather than redistribution of growth which was the original aim of the poverty action plan in 1997.

The NGO Forum (2004) maintained that there was a more comprehensive consultation process in the later round of PEAP in 2003 and 2004. However, it appears that the production of quality inputs, rather than systematically deepening connections with the grassroots, became a preoccupation of actors including NGOs. The PRS review used a five-strand approach including processes led by the central government, the local government, the private sector, civil society consultations, and a team focusing on cross-cutting issues such as gender. The 2003 revision exercise also saw donors being represented at every level of policy design including the final decision-making body. The government concentrated on coordinating donor activities through the special poverty reduction secretariats in the Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic Development. The donors financed thousands of policy and governance consultants to produce policy blueprints, poverty reduction strategies and manuals on good governance (Shivij 2007), thereby eroding popular civic development processes (Boyte 2008: 123). The people's political representatives were not involved in the earlier processes of soliciting contributions to the policy. Members of Parliament were only involved at the stage of approving the policy document. On the other hand, NGOs that were supposed to support the people's participation merely increased the numbers of those participating in consultation committees. Led by the NGO Forum, NGOs were organised in eleven subcommittees to contribute to different government sector (ministry) discussions. There were also some efforts to maintain contact with the public, with the numbers of those participating almost quadrupling, from 644 in 2000 to 2449 in 2003 (NGO Forum 2004: ii). Given that the time for the revision was a bit longer and the number (2) of NGOs was higher than in the previous revision exercises, it is likely that many more people participated. However, NGOs leaned towards utilising previous studies to identify the people's voices and priorities. The PEAP/PRSP revision increasingly became more of a technical project compared to the previous consultation exercises where NGOs mainly engaged in awareness seminars and workshops.

NGOs changed their strategy to concentrate on exploratory desk research to produce a high quality input into the PRSP rather than deepening the participation of the poor, their organisations and their leaders. The change of strategy to concentrate on literature-analysis was because the input expected from them by other policy makers was technical. As explained by one NGO official:

We organised few consultative meetings but concentrated on analysing available studies. We know that seminars would only lead to a list of wishes without analysis. We studied the Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment reports (UPPAP) and the SAPRI studies. We commissioned a few studies on children, pastoralists, disabilities and held different focus group discussions with the media, in northern Uganda (Dan, Executive Director - NGO4).

The change in strategy was not accidental, but was made in response to donor insistence on quality policy proposals with measurable indicators, and also to recurrent criticism of NGOs' failure to make research-based alternative proposals (Court et al. 2006). The NGOs

produced a 131-page document reflecting proposals on different kinds of poverty reduction, including issues of redistribution, social protection and empowerment strategies of the poor. The NGOs proposed the delivery of quality and equitable social services to be the overriding goal of the PRSP. They also proposed that the PRSP should adopt a rights-based approach to create social transformation and improved quality of life for all Ugandans (NGO Forum 2004). Despite the pro-poor proposals, the mobilisation of the people was deficient and was only reduced to NGO technical input. Thus the technical participation that would guarantee NGO legitimacy and further their recognition as efficient players continuously overrode the expected political participation.

As highlighted earlier, since 1997 the PRS process has sidelined the representatives of local political institutions, such as parliaments and local government leadership. Including the local leaders in policy discussion seminars would have provided an opportunity to capture some of the poor people's concerns. In Uganda the democratically elected leaders were not mobilised by NGOs to participate. For instance, Gariyo (2002: 24) notes that 'to make the workshops truly civil society... invitations excluded local governments and local political leaders'. (Piron and Norton 2004: 27) concluded that the Ugandan PEAP had limited impact on parliamentary developments, as Members of Parliament rarely debated the PEAP/PRSPs although they play an important role in discussing the budget processes. Excluding local politicians in discussion on local poverty reduction is a missed opportunity to gain commitment to policies. Establishing linkages with parliament and local leadership increases the possibilities of owning and defending policy suggestions that address the needs of the poorest or pay adequate attention to local priorities. NGOs cannot assume responsibility for making politically binding decisions but the presence of NGOs at the policy-making table seemed to be a palatable compromise to other policy makers which unfortunately left 'people' out of the equation.

NGOs, policy research and advocacy

While some scholars (Vincent 2004, Dijkzeul 2006) have criticised NGOs as not truly representative of the people, donors insist that NGOs can contribute towards making pro-poor policies. The PRSPs give prominence to the research and advocacy roles of NGOs. NGOs were able to walk freely in the corridors of government. However, the major assumption was that NGO participation is not problematic because governments will unconditionally accept their role as representatives of the poor, donors will abandon control and align with country priorities and NGOs will automatically push for pro-poor issues. This section does not engage in discussions on whether NGOs truly represented people at the negotiating tables, but it explains how they engaged in policy researches and advocacy activities.

In terms of research, NGOs tried to strike a balance between upholding local poverty knowledge and making technical suggestions that would be acceptable by donors and government actors. Although NGOs spearheaded the Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessments (UPPAP) in which they captured the voices of the poor, the areas of emphasis for PEAP 2000 reflected the dominance of the international poverty strategies rather than the local poverty agenda. Even the assessments were top-down crafted research projects to justify participation. They were largely an information-gathering exercise rather

than a decision-making or negotiation process on poverty. The focus of NGOs was on gathering as much information as could be appreciated by fellow policy makers. Similarly, in 2003-2004 NGOs produced a 131-page document through research, which Larok (2006) insisted was very similar to the 2004 PEAP document. Generally the Ugandan 2004 PRS document is said to be a highly technical, comprehensive, general and somewhat complex plan to reflect the local contextual knowledge of poverty (Canagarajah and Diesen 2006).

Through their research, NGOs attempted to appreciate the multifaceted nature of poverty as reflected in the consolidated input to the PEAP revision exercise in 2003, where they proposed redistribution, social protection, economic growth, security and other pro-poor strategies. NGOs specialising in areas like gender, children, literacy and conflict resolution management were often invited by other policymakers to make inputs and thus often met limited resistance. However, NGO specialisations are still weak and the involvement of people in deep analysis and understanding of the poverty situation still minimal. As one of the government officials noted:

In one case on the security and conflict resolutions pillar, NGOs interviewed about 500 people, which is a very huge sample. The report was saying the situation is bad, things are so hard, but no solution. So I gave the document to Civil Society Organisations representatives to synthesise and come up with major messages but they also failed... I said, you are going to blame me that I never put anything in the PEAP from your research but what can I put? In such cases if we [government] think it is a useful issue, we take it further and analyse it. For instance, we picked the issues of pastoralism, children's poverty and gender. We produced papers and discussed them for incorporation in the PEAP. (Joy, Ministry Staff NC13).

The PRS processes seemed to be engulfed in the practice of gathering information that may not necessarily change the poverty situation because powerlessness remained downplayed as a major cause of poverty (Eberlei 2007). Therefore even with input from NGOs, the 2004 PEAP/PRSP maintained a strong focus on economic growth and market-led strategies. No matter whether people participate in poverty research and highlighting poverty issues through NGOs, the government could only pick up some aspects from such studies.

At the policy discussion tables, umbrella networks of urban-based NGOs were more present in policy dialogues than other organisations. This is because such organisations had experience and connections with policy circles (McGee et al. 2002). Also donor organisations preferred networks because they were considered stronger and better able to withstand government pressure. In Uganda there are all kinds of NGO networks, the major ones being thematic/sectoral networks for women, children and education; specialised associations, coalitions or platforms for anticorruption, governance, monitoring and capacity-building; and national networks or umbrella bodies such as DENIVA and NGO Forum. There are also mirror images of national networks at district level such as the Soroti Development Association Network and Kumi Network of Development Organisations. DENIVA (2006: 24) suggests that about 72 per cent of NGOs belong to umbrella organisations at district or national levels. During the 2003 PRSP formulation a number of NGO networks tried to consult the people. Some NGOs such as the Uganda Joint Christian Council organised consultations in the districts of Lira, Gulu, Luwero,

Nakasongola, Masaka, Rakai, Tororo, Busia Mbale and Kapchorwa, and group discussions were held in conflict-affected districts of Gulu, Pader, Lira and Soroti by district NGO fora (NGO Forum 2004). In 2003, one of the district-based NGO networks in northern Uganda is said to have influenced the 2004 PEAP outlook on conflict resolution because it brought in research-based information. However, the majority of the national NGO networks worked independently of their members. As an NGO official explained:

The assumption is that our member organisations participate. I cannot say that such numbers participated in a certain district... I can only speak for the secretariat because we did not have the resources and a clear mechanism to involve them. (Kristin, Executive Director-NGO3.2).

The limited involvement of members of the networks at the policy discussion tables was attributed to the absence of streamlined communication mechanisms and resources. However, in Uganda there is a mismatch between umbrella organisations and the principles of networking such as fostering synergies and collectivism (NGO Forum 2007). The Ugandan umbrella NGOs have been criticised for 'sleeping in the same bed' with government and failing to represent alternative development strategies (Piron and Evas 2004). Therefore closing the gap between NGOs and popular organisations would increase opportunities for mobilising local communities but NGOs appeared to engage in advocacy and negotiations before mobilising the people.

Discussions with NGOs show that they have had some incremental results through policy dialogue, especially on issues of interest both to the government and to donors such as governance and security. NGO networks claim that the government appreciates their contribution. For instance, it was raised that in one seminar, the Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic Development likened NGOs to a policeman who traverses a high crime area regularly without arresting anyone, but crime is nevertheless reduced. The continuous participation of NGOs provides independent feedback on neglected issues such as slum dwellers and pastoralism (Larok 2006: 1). NGOs also managed to sustain certain policy issues on the political agenda, although many NGO expectations still remained unmet. An NGO official explained:

Without NGO participation, you would not imagine pro-poor issues like pastoralism, concrete ideas for conflict resolution and more recently, the chronic poverty/social protection agenda getting the attention that they do now. (Dan, Executive Director-NGO4).

Another NGO official echoed:

To be fair to that process, there have been some changes that took place but when you look at it, they are so small; I think our expectations were much higher. But if you look at these things mentally and if you are to compare them with before, you would find a positive difference (Jane, Executive Director NGO5).

However, NGOs believed that their contribution to refocus the poverty policies on social dimensions was still small. Besides, the PRSPs revision exercise occurred within a harmony consensus-based model (Fowler, 2005) where implicitly NGOs had to accept the agreements made at the dialogue table. This is not to say that umbrella organisations can

not present divergent people's voices, but NGOs would prefer to stay in 'good books' with policy makers instead of undertaking antagonistic discussions.

There has been a general criticism that poverty is discussed in workshops from which the poor are absent (Shivij 2007). Even then some NGOs appeared to engage in policy dialogues when they are not well prepared. As expressed by a donor official:

I think in many cases that they [NGOs] do not bring in as much as they should. I think they need to have more skills for analysing the issues. They need to be more forceful, based on facts rather than emotions and other things. (Lawrence, Donor official - DO3).

Related to the above, some policymakers tended to listen more to some personalities in the NGO world than to others. Reportedly, some NGO officials were tongue-tied during sessions, waiting for the 'darlings' to talk. The most highlighted examples were discussions on hard economics, natural science and technology, where NGOs opted to be silent in meetings. Although the issue of selective listening to certain NGO leaders may not be underestimated, poverty reduction policy discussions needed competencies including presentation and strategic negotiation supported by research. Being prepared to negotiate with policymakers needed technical research on the side of NGOs and moving with the poor on those negotiation tables.

The policy discussion tables have been an avenue on which the powerful show control and co-opt other actors instead of negotiating to incorporate people and their concerns. Although NGOs attempted to raise pro-poor issues, they remained subordinate to external donor-driven policy prescriptions. Donors determined NGO contributions and what is eventually approved as the PRSPs content. This came out in several interviews with NGO officials as exemplified by the quote below.

I participated in the last review and I observed it as a told story hard to believe... the politics were very interesting. The NGOs of course are always on their message – we want results this time, poor people are suffering. The government is also there at the table and then the donors claim they must seek the political role of ensuring that the things that the people actually want in terms of services are more liberalised and services like agricultural extension do not get a clear path... So, I remember we had a meeting – the agricultural group with the government and donors. Of course, the donors are much more intellectual, they use big words and the rest of us are using quite simple words. We sat down and said communities are telling us that we need to review the extension services provided... But one of the donors rose up and said we cannot go back to the old days of government-supported subsidies. You are taking us back to the ancient days that will not bring development to this country. I think we are being quite combative. And when they heard combative, the government backed down and the NGOs kept saying that is wrong, this is a PRSP process, it's about Uganda, it's about the poverty eradication action plan... You could say it is a process of participation of course because NGOs said what we wanted to say, but donors would not listen. The government was saying these are our donors, we can't criticise them. The NGOs said, we don't care, we will criticise them, but you can see that was the dynamic. (Jane, Executive Director - NGO5).

NGOs had an opportunity to present their proposals, there were frank discussions between NGOs and stakeholders, but counteracting it was what Igoe (2005) called running against the 'rock of western donors'. Those NGOs that tried to raise poor people's issues sometimes encountered resistance from donors that pretended to know better than other institutions how to help the poor. Larok (2004: 8) indicated that even with advocacy, the government and development partners could deliberately refuse to accept useful submissions from NGOs for unclear reasons. Technocracy was widespread, and policy makers ignored local knowledge and people's capacities (Boyte 2008): NGOs had to back down from fundamental pro-poor issues and settle for less. 'This is what happens when powerful financial institutions hijack the existing new ideas' (Brown 2004: 249). Donors holding onto decision-making and approval of decisions made by other stakeholders contradicted the true essence of their insistence on participation in poverty policies.

Negotiating policy changes in countries like Uganda seems to be a tricky exercise requiring NGO advocates to take risks on behalf of the people. NGOs in Uganda have not been denied a seat at the policy table outright. However, advocacy NGOs are sometimes afraid to confront the government with people's views. For instance, some NGO networks chose to exclude themselves from negotiations on National Research Policy Formulation because they did not want the government to perceive them as questioning it. This is consistent with Robinson and Friedman (2005: 19) who argued that NGOs in Uganda attach secondary priority to true policy advocacy activities because of the fear of being controversial. Also NGOs express interest in advocacy not because they are deeply committed but because aid donors favour this approach as a response to criticism on aid failure (Bazaara 2003: 18; Robinson and Friedman 2005: 20).

Discussions with NGOs showed that donors and governments held onto the PRSPs so dearly that they found it hard to accept divergent views which in most cases were the real concerns of the poor. As an NGO official observed;

You see the problem with PRS is that somebody has built a house, and then for us, we come and say this window should not be here, it should be there, this room should face that way. The owner would be grateful of course, you will influence its looks, but it's not the same as coming up with a new structure... Demolishing PRS now will be attacking the real spinal cord of the NRM government... You can't fight PRS because you will be fighting a big battle. PRS is also the lifeblood of donors. Here, you can only amend a house but if its foundation is wrong what can you change? (Else, Executive Director-NGO3.1)

The PRSP was mainly an externally driven policy directed by government. NGOs and other actors were participating in a game with pre-determined outcomes.

CONCLUSION

Although there were some attempts by NGOs to consult with the poor in the Ugandan PRS process, these consultations were either hurriedly done, ad hoc or on already formulated policies, and excluded local leaders and the majority of district-based organisations. As much as the NGO policy proposals prepared through research reflect the desire for social change, there is a weak link between NGOs and the people. NGOs joined

policy-making discussions, engaged in technical policy making activities and lost out in favour of the technical consultations. The paper demonstrates that the participation of NGOs in these PRS processes has not led to better linkages with the people. In reality, the anticipated and desired deep connections with the poor and the painstaking participation through PRS hardly existed. The PRS process reduced the participation of people in policy dialogues practically to the participation of NGOs. The outcome of this participatory process was no public participation, or mere participation of NGOs.

The practice of consultative participation in reality rendered the PEAP process and its content vulnerable to external control and compromised the expected upstream planning and decision-making. Donors decided the content of PRSPs, in some instances the processes of its formulation and directed by the Government. Thus social control occurred through externally predefined rules with which NGOs complied. NGOs gained an opportunity to sit at the policy dialogue tables but they did not move with the people. NGOs sacrificed people's participation in favour of their own, but remained structurally disadvantaged vis-à-vis donors and government.

Endnotes

1. The Luwero triangle provided ground and support to the NRA guerrillas to fight the war with the former Obote government.
2. The task force included international NGOs, local NGOs, research institutions and church-based organisations (Gariyo 2002: 19).
3. Leading NGOs included the NGO Forum (overall coordination), the UDN, Water Aid, Uganda Water and Sanitation Network, Development Network of Indigenous Voluntary Organisations, Uganda Child Rights NGO Network, Civil Society for Peace in Northern Uganda, Uganda National Health Consumer Organisation, Council for Economic Empowerment of Women in Africa, VECO-Uganda, Coalition for Sustainable Development and Panos Eastern Africa. The CSO analysis team was composed of Warren Nyamugasira (NGO Forum), Frank Muhereza (Centre for Basic Research), Margaret Akello (SNV) and Sarah Ossiya (Panos Eastern Africa). This review team included Monica Naggaga (Oxfam), Jane Ocaya (Action Aid), Judy Kamanyi (Associates for Change), Fred Muhumuza (EPRC) and Jane Alowo (Makerere University) (NGO Forum 2004: ii).

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CHAPTER THREE

Curtailing Clientelism or Restricting Participation? Anti-Poverty Policymaking in Chile

Mikael Wigell

INTRODUCTION¹

Following democratization in 1990, Chile adopted a new anti-poverty policy approach that actively sought to reshape state-society relations. The background to this new approach was the neoliberal transformation implemented by the Pinochet dictatorship that effectively dismantled old forms of corporatist and clientelist links between the state and the popular sectors. At the time of re-democratization, the labour movement had been disempowered and was unable to articulate strong bottom-up pressure for redistributive and universalistic social reform. Instead, the incoming democratic government envisaged a new anti-poverty strategy that put emphasis on social integration through participation and the promotion of local self-help efforts.

This chapter looks at the formulation and implementation of this new anti-poverty strategy in Chile. It shows how, despite the participatory discourse and the new mechanisms for incorporating civil society actors in the administration of anti-poverty projects, the political outcome of the new anti-poverty approach has been a mode of social governance with a strong technocratic bent through which the state is able to control social-demand making and set the terms for popular participation in anti-poverty policymaking. Societal participation mainly revolves around project implementation. NGOs and community organizations are invited to submit project proposals and compete for anti-poverty funds on the highly technical terms set by the welfare bureaucracy. The aim with these project competitions is to develop innovative and cost-effective programmes of social development. At the same time, by introducing competitive tendering as a major mechanism for allocating anti-poverty funds, civil society organizations are provided with strong incentives to adjust their agendas so as to be able to compete for these funds. In the process, they often come to downplay some of their earlier political functions as advocacy groups for the subaltern sectors and reduce their demands on the government. As such, these new “participatory” structures serve to depoliticize the linkages between state and society, and help deflect popular mobilization away from encompassing political activity towards grassroots social efforts. By inviting NGOs and community groups to take over responsibility for welfare provision and incorporate them into funding relationships in which they mainly acquire the role of

implementers of social programmes, the state is thus able to impose greater political discipline upon civil society.

The chapter is organized in two sections. The first section discusses the new anti-poverty strategy in Chile. It shows how the transition to democracy ushered in a new emphasis on pluralism and state-NGO collaboration in social policymaking. This new emphasis represented a shift among the political parties of the centre-left governing coalition from their former reliance on centralized administration and corporatism. Two sets of factors explain this shift towards a pluralist policy approach among the parties of the Concertación (i.e., the governing coalition). First, the process of ideological redefinition that the parties of the Concertación underwent during military rule had an important effect on the formulation of the anti-poverty strategy. Second, the authoritarian legacies, including the institutional constraints and social dislocations left behind by the military regime, shaped the anti-poverty strategy of the Concertación in important ways. The implications of these factors were the preclusion of radical redistributive reform and, instead, a strong emphasis on poverty alleviation and social integration through participation. Hence, while the new anti-poverty policy approach did not constitute a fundamental reversal of the military regime's principles of privatization, decentralization and targeting, it did incorporate a strong emphasis on social participation and state-NGO cooperation.

The second section looks at the implementation of the new anti-poverty approach. It shows how the new Ministry of Planning and Coordination (MIDEPLAN), which was inaugurated to assume a leading role in implementing and coordinating the anti-poverty strategy, failed to assume the role of a powerful social authority capable of implementing an integrated and coordinated approach to poverty alleviation. MIDEPLAN was not given sufficient backing by President Aylwin to assume a coordinating role, largely because of the fear among Aylwin's advisors and the finance minister, Alejandro Foxley, that it would become a new target for demand-making and rent-seeking that could come to jeopardize macroeconomic stability. Instead, the president opted to protect the authority of the Ministry of Finance, while MIDEPLAN was left to fight poverty chiefly by overseeing a set of targeted social investment funds.

Nevertheless, these social programmes were important means in the attempt to channel resources for productive development projects to the poorest strata. The chapter looks particularly at the FOSIS programme. FOSIS is an illustrative example of the targeting approach introduced by the Aylwin administration that sought to replace the paternalistic welfare measures of the military regime in order to make way for a more participatory and demand-driven approach. The analysis shows how the operation of FOSIS has remained in the hands of the techno-bureaucracy within MIDEPLAN. While these social technocrats have managed to shield FOSIS from political interference and clientelism, the implication has been strong technocratic control that gives little room for articulating bottom-up pressure on the decision-making process. Thus, rather than providing a vehicle for popular empowerment, FOSIS chiefly functions as a cost-effective mechanism for implementing targeted funds and as a means for social control.

The explanation for this outcome is to be found in Chile's political institutions, as they were instituted with the transition to democracy. First of all, the strong control exercised by the Office of the Comptroller has prevented politicians from capturing anti-poverty funds. Secondly, the centralist structure of the Chilean political regime gives technocrats within the central state welfare bureaucracy strong control over the policymaking process. As such, the chapter shows how the particular institutional configuration in Chile paves the way for technocratic control of the process of anti-poverty policymaking.

The research for this chapter was conducted in Chile during 2006. The bulk of the data comes from 20 in-depth interviews with government officials, policy consultants and NGOs in Chile. The interviews served several purposes. First of all, they provided an understanding of the goals and motives of key policymakers. Secondly, they helped situate the strategic interactions of policymakers and participatory organizations in the context of structural, ideological and institutional constraints. Finally, by providing tentative evidence for an assessment of the political outcome of the new anti-poverty approach, the interviews helped detect the causal mechanisms that connected initial reform impulses with the particular mode of social governance that resulted from the process of implementation.

A NEW ANTI-POVERTY APPROACH: REFORM IMPULSES

Transition to democracy

With the return to democracy in 1990, anti-poverty policy took on a new look in Chile. Shortly after taking office, the government of Patricio Aylwin created the Ministry of Planning and Cooperation (MIDEPLAN), entrusted with designing policies aimed at overcoming poverty and coordinating social programmes geared towards vulnerable groups in society (Law 18.989). Central to the new anti-poverty policy strategy was the emphasis on social integration.² The new government stance put emphasis on mitigating the exclusion of the poor and vulnerable through social participation and the promotion of local self-help efforts.

This represented a significant shift from the military government's approach of giving individual aid for basic needs. Progressive experts argued that providing social welfare to individual applicants, as the military government did, had contributed to stigmatizing the poor. Instead, the focus should be on promoting social investment – social and human capital – that would strengthen opportunities for social integration. The new anti-poverty approach sought to provide the poor with a voice and means to participate in solving their own problems. It was argued that the poor do not represent a homogeneous group but face a variety of distinct situations and that the state needs to “respond with more flexible, decentralized, and participatory programs” (Raczynski 2000: 132). The state would only set priorities and define programmes that would then be implemented through decentralized bodies, municipalities, private entities and, particularly, NGOs and community organizations. Transferring programme implementation to intermediary institutions such as NGOs was seen as essential for incorporating the participation of the poor and helping build new pluralist links to the popular sectors.

The foundation for the new anti-poverty strategy had been laid during the deliberations over the Concertación's programme for the 1989 elections.³ Following the successful plebiscite in 1988 that set the stage for the transition to democracy, the Concertación had gathered into a number of "policy commissions" that started elaborating on an electoral platform. Progressive elites, who after the military coup had taken refuge in international agencies such as the Inter-American Development Bank and various UN organizations as well as a variety of NGOs and research institutes, served as the base for these working groups. During the process a broad consensus emerged on the new anti-poverty strategy.⁴ Technical training and professional experience within the auspices of these NGOs and international agencies had helped produce an ideological conversion to the new anti-poverty approach. Indeed, many of these experts were recruited by MIDEPLAN, which immediately in the aftermath of the transition to democracy started to implement the new anti-poverty policy.

Authoritarian legacies, ideological conversion

The emphasis on pluralism and state-NGO collaboration represented a significant shift among the parties of the Concertación from their former reliance on centralized administration and corporatism. Various factors account for this conversion. On a general level, an important factor was the ideological redefinition among progressive forces. The collapse of the Allende experiment (1970–1973) and the trauma of military repression had fostered a process of self-critical reassessment and political learning that led to the abandoning of utopian projects and statist conceptions of socioeconomic development.⁵ "Parties from across the political spectrum expressed a commitment to addressing the needs of the poor, while affirming the importance of pluralism, political pragmatism, and autonomous social organizations" (Oxhorn 1995: 199). At the end of military rule there was a general recognition among the parties of the Concertación of the need to continue with the decentralizing and targeting approach while reinforcing social participation and pluralism.

Reinforcing this conversion to a pluralist anti-poverty policy approach was the professional experience of intellectuals and activists during the military era (1973–1989). As political party activity was banned and the activities of unions and community organizations were controlled or repressed by the military government, many progressives took refuge in research institutes and NGOs. For socialists and Christian-Democrats, as well as academics and other professionals, the NGO universe provided a space for independent activity and a way to ameliorate the effects of neoliberal policies. "Provided the NGOs did not overtly engage in politics, the neoliberal model that underlay government policies sanctified their activities as part of the principle of subsidiarity and the movement toward privatization" (Loveman 1995: 133). By the mid 1980s a rich fabric of private research centres and NGOs had emerged to support grassroots efforts to cope with daily subsistence and for initiating civic programmes in education, health care, housing and microproduction. These experiences provided progressives, who had previously looked to the state as the most appropriate agent for social action, with a learning process through which diversity, private action, and local initiative in social development came to be appreciated.⁶

Additional impetus for the new anti-poverty approach was provided by aid donors, development specialists, and international financial institutions who recommended harnessing the creative potential of local and private initiative in anti-poverty projects. During the 1980s international agencies such as the Inter-American Development Bank, the World Bank, and other UN or regional agencies had harboured Chilean professionals and political refugees. These organizations fostered a technocratic creed and helped to train experienced researchers and staff familiar with the pluralist policy paradigm (Loveman 1995). By the end of military rule, a consensus had emerged among economists, social policy experts and the political class on the need to incorporate civil society organizations, particularly NGOs, in anti-poverty programmes. In fact, fostering a consensus around the new anti-poverty approach proved surprisingly easy during the process of elaborating the Concertación's programme. Across the policy commissions there was broad agreement that NGOs should be incorporated into policy implementation. This is clearly reflected in the Concertación's programme, which harbours an enhanced role for private and local initiative in anti-poverty policy as well as collaboration between public-sector entities, private development corporations and NGOs (Concertación de Partidos por la Democracia 1989).

However, the new approach adopted by the Concertación was not merely a voluntaristic reflection of political learning and ideological re-identification, but also "a rational adaptation to political opportunities and constraints as they were structured by an evolving external environment" (Roberts 1998: 44). The institutional constraints and social dislocations left behind by the military regime shaped the Concertación's strategy in important ways. Political repression and the major structural changes associated with the neoliberal model implemented by the military government had transformed the social landscape and dismantled old relationships between state and society based on clientelism and corporatism.⁷ The labour movement which historically had formed the backbone of popular organizing strategies especially of the Left had been severely weakened. In order to cultivate support it was no longer feasible to build on corporatist networks as in the period before 1973. At the same time, however, grassroots social organizations engaged in subsistence efforts had proliferated as a reaction against the impoverishment of the popular sectors and the retrenchment of the welfare state. The locus of political activity had shifted to the base level. A myriad of autonomous social organizations emerged in response to the repression of political parties and the labour movement as the urban poor attempted to recreate a public space for articulating their interests and identity (Oxhorn 1995; Roberts 1998).

For the Concertación, this civil society activity presented an opportunity to reconnect with the popular sectors. Parts of the Left, in particular, viewed grassroots social organizations such as neighbourhood organizations, Christian based communities and women's groups as an opportunity to relaunch a popular project and make inroads to a new potential social constituency "at a time when the political weight of organized labor had been diminished as a combination of political repression, economic crisis, and neoliberal reforms" (Roberts 1998: 24). For pragmatists, having accepted the economic model and the irreversibility of the privatizations, the new anti-poverty policy presented an opportunity to strengthen social governance. Anti-poverty programmes and social

investment funds administered through collaborative networks between state and society provided a means to integrate social organizations and cultivate political support. Also economists, who were concerned with fiscal discipline, heralded collective self-help efforts as an alternative to direct state action (Boeninger 1997). They recognized that these grassroots groups had played a vital role in alleviating poverty during military rule. Sustaining these civic networks presented an opportunity to relieve the state from some of the burden of social action.

Moreover, the institutional impediments bequeathed by Chile's negotiated transition to democracy constrained the Concertación's policy options. As several scholars have pointed out, the Chilean military was exceptionally successful in controlling the regime transition and imposing institutional constraints on the incoming civilian government (Linz and Stepan 1996; Munck and Leff 1997). The negotiated accord between the military regime and the democratic opposition left in place a set of constitutional "protections" designed to limit majority rule and protect conservative power. In particular, it provided for the designation of nine senators from conservative institutions. As a direct result, the Concertación government was deprived of a working majority in the Senate after re-democratization, despite winning a solid majority of the popular vote. This gave conservatives strong veto power over legislation. To pass any legislation the government thus needed to gain the support of some segment of the conservative opposition, which remained hostile to redistributive reform. In addition, a binominal electoral system had been designed to favour the Right disproportionately. Its impact for the post-transition process was that it "ingeniously overrepresented the political Right in congress while excluding the Communist Party and other leftist forces outside the Concertación" (Roberts 1998: 143). As such, the electoral system helped to marginalize radical demands and to disarticulate concerted bottom-up pressure for redistributive reform.

The departing military government also passed a series of laws that were meant to tie the hands of the incoming government and prevent it from enacting redistributive social reform. Among other things, the new democratic government was prohibited from replacing most of the bureaucracy that was staffed by Pinochet appointees. In addition, a number of decree-laws were speedily approved to privatize industries and convert the Central Bank and the national copper company into virtually autonomous units free from governmental control. Coupled with other fiscal decisions Pinochet had made, it left the incoming government with few resources for expansionary social policy. This provided additional clout to arguments advocating the outsourcing of programme implementation to social organizations.

Finally, the transition to democracy retained a strong "tutelary" role for the military which was guaranteed formal representation in the Senate, control of the National Police, and a majority in the powerful National Security Council. These tutelary powers guaranteed the military a strong political role as "guardians" of the institutional order. In this context, it became imperative for the democratic government to avoid stimulating social demands and forms of popular mobilization that could endanger the Right's tacit acceptance of democratization.

Crucially, the new pluralist policy approach received backing from leading figures in the Aylwin government, who feared that poverty and inequality would prompt a wave of popular demands for immediate social benefits that would endanger economic and political stability. Especially within the Christian Democratic Party there was preoccupation with the potential radicalization of the popular sectors as a result of their poverty. For prominent Christian Democrats the spectre of social mobilization constituted one of the primary threats to the consolidation of a democratic regime. The divisive practices that had led to the breakdown of democracy in 1973 needed to be avoided.⁸ Bearing in mind the tutelary role the military had reserved for itself during the negotiations over the transition to democracy, it was important to pre-empt populist appeals and social mobilization so as not to provoke the military and other conservative forces. The new anti-poverty policy was part of the strategy to control social demands and pressures. By reinforcing self-help efforts as an alternative to direct state action, the Aylwin government sought to moderate popular expectations. A crucial aim was to pre-empt popular pressures that could come to threaten macro-economic stability. Supporting private and local initiative would serve to relieve the state from such pressures. By building new pluralist links to the popular sectors through associative welfare networks in which popular organizations played an active role in implementing social projects, the government sought to undercut the attractiveness of populist appeals.

In sum, the foundation of the new anti-poverty approach lay in the ideological redefinition among progressive actors that was reinforced by the structural and institutional legacies inherited from the military regime.

FROM RHETORIC TO REALITY: IMPLEMENTING REFORM

A new institutional framework

After taking office in March 1990, the Aylwin government took a series of measures to institute the new anti-poverty approach. One of its first initiatives was to convert the old National Planning Office (ODEPLAN) into a new ministry: the Ministry of Planning and Coordination (Law 18.989). MIDEPLAN was entrusted with designing policies aimed at overcoming poverty and coordinating social programmes geared towards vulnerable groups in society – children, youth, women, the elderly, the disabled and ethnic groups. A number of agencies dependent on MIDEPLAN were created for targeting the poor and vulnerable, such as the National Women's Bureau (SERNAM) and the National Youth Institute (INJ). Later a special fund for financing projects benefitting the disabled (FONADIS) was also set up (Law 19.284), as well as the National Council for Indigenous Development (CONADIS) responsible for coordinating and implementing special projects benefitting indigenous peoples (Law 19.253). From the perspective of anti-poverty policy the most important agency was the Social Investment and Solidarity Fund (FOSIS) inaugurated together with MIDEPLAN.

In line with the new anti-poverty policy strategy, these agencies were set up to operate as intermediaries – financing projects that originate at the local level, assisting in capacitating target groups in finding ways to solve their own problems, and incorporating

social organizations into associative welfare networks for fighting poverty and social exclusion. Each of these agencies designs programmes for its target group. Their design was influenced by international experience with multisectorial investment funds. “Such funds are a response to the decline in state resources, the new emphasis on the role of the market in Latin America, and the need for local input in the design of aid or antipoverty programs” (Graham 1994: 43).

FOSIS and these other agencies do not execute projects themselves but rely on a network of NGOs and community organizations that was set up to act as intermediary. The most important mechanism that has been used for outsourcing project implementation is *competitive bidding*.⁹ MIDEPLAN calls for bids in which NGOs, social organizations, the private sector and sometimes municipalities submit project proposals that compete in terms of technical quality and cost-benefit ratio. At least in theory, the process allows for a participatory and decentralized approach in which anti-poverty projects are tailored to local needs. The central government just defines the terms of competition in which these public and private agents at the local level compete among themselves by presenting proposals that respond to the needs of the population. The process should improve efficiency as proposals undergo rigorous evaluation by specialists contracted or subcontracted by MIDEPLAN and funding is only granted to the most competitive projects.

The bidding mechanism was formulated as part of the strategy to institute a pluralist policy model in contrast to the centralized, paternalistic and corporatist social policy model historically applied in Chile. An important impetus was the need to consolidate the myriad of autonomous social organizations, particularly NGOs, that had emerged during the military era. MIDEPLAN officials recognized that NGOs had played a vital role in alleviating poverty during the dictatorship. The aim was to help in sustaining this pluralism as well as fostering collaboration with civil society.

One of the benefits of public-private collaboration was to relieve MIDEPLAN from some of the burden of social action, especially in a situation when it had to operate with a very limited budget. During its first year in operation, MIDEPLAN took over the austere budget of ODEPLAN that had been fixed by the military government. Since then, however, the Ministry of Finance has been reluctant to raise MIDEPLAN’s budget significantly. Guided by economic orthodoxy the Ministry of Finance has argued that economic growth coupled with low inflation, not social programmes, is the best remedy for poverty. Also, as a new ministry, MIDEPLAN has been weak in the intra-bureaucratic struggle over budget resources in comparison with the established service ministries (Repetto 2001).

From the beginning, MIDEPLAN had a close relationship with NGOs. Professional staff from NGOs and research institutes were appointed to key positions in MIDEPLAN and to its dependent agencies such as FOSIS, as well as being called upon as consultants, part-time employees and informal advisors. Many of them also had years of experience in international agencies and had strong contacts to international support networks (Loveman 1995). Most of them were economists and poverty specialists who

had a common understanding of the anti-poverty policy strategy, not least since many of them had collaborated in formulating the new approach before taking office. They were well aware of the need for fiscal constraint. By increasing collaboration with international development agencies and focusing on facilitating associative networks, through which responsibilities for programme implementation could be transferred to NGOs, MIDEPLAN could “do more with less”. Within MIDEPLAN the Agency for International Cooperation (ACI) was set up to negotiate agreements with international donors and development agencies. These external resources have proved instrumental in sustaining associative networks and for channelling investment into anti-poverty projects.

Hence, despite limited budgetary resources, MIDEPLAN assumed a central role in implementing the government’s targeting approach. It can be stated that the most important changes made by the Concertación to the social institutional framework were concentrated in this new ministry.¹⁰ MIDEPLAN also inherited important functions from its predecessor, ODEPLAN, with regard to evaluating social policies. Crucially, MIDEPLAN is in charge of the National Socio-Economic Characterization Survey (CASEN), a survey of households that provides information on the coverage of social programmes and an in-depth study of the magnitude and characteristics of poverty in Chile. MIDEPLAN is also responsible for the technical supervision of the social stratification measurement system or CAS card used for selecting beneficiaries of targeted subsidies (such as housing benefits and family allowances). In addition, MIDEPLAN plays an important role in evaluating social investment projects from all ministries and public agencies and in monitoring specific social programmes for its pro-poor impact (see Molina 1996).

Nevertheless, despite MIDEPLAN’s leading role in anti-poverty policymaking and, especially, in implementing the targeting approach, it bears emphasizing that MIDEPLAN failed to assume the role of a powerful social authority in charge of planning and coordinating social policies, as envisioned by parts of the Concertación. In the preparatory stages such a plan received important backing from President-elect Patricio Aylwin. Before taking office, he had asked Sergio Molina to prepare an initiative on how to convert ODEPLAN into a powerful social ministry. Molina argued that in order to fight poverty effectively it was essential to plan and coordinate social spending between the different social ministries. His aim was to give MIDEPLAN, in addition to its targeting role, considerable authority to direct social spending and control for its pro-poor impact.

By appointing Molina to take charge of MIDEPLAN, President Aylwin signalled the high priority his government reserved for the issue of instituting the new ministry. Molina was a highly respected Christian Democrat who had served as finance minister in the Frei government during the 1960s and who commanded considerable political clout. During the transition to democracy he had coordinated the campaign for the plebiscite in 1988 and played a leading role in the negotiations over the Concertación’s electoral platform. However, despite initial backing from President Aylwin and the high profile the governing alliance vested in MIDEPLAN – with some socialists, in particular, nurturing a vision of the new ministry acting as a counterweight to the Ministry of

Finance – MIDEPLAN never gained the political weight necessary to assume a leading role in planning and coordinating social policies. The new ministry quickly came up against bureaucratic opposition from the traditional social ministries, which did not want to cede any control over policymaking or budgetary resources to MIDEPLAN – a struggle that continued under the governments of Frei (1994–2000) and Lagos (2000–2006).

Another source of opposition has been the Ministry of Finance. During the government of Aylwin, Finance Minister Alejandro Foxley was instrumental in undermining the authority of MIDEPLAN. Foxley argued that in order to preserve macroeconomic stability it was essential to protect the authority of the Ministry of Finance over all budgetary matters. He and his aides were concerned over the spectre of corporatist influence. Ceding any control over social spending to MIDEPLAN risked opening up a new target for demand-making, political pressure and rent-seeking that could come to jeopardize fiscal responsibility. He received important backing from Aylwin's advisors at the Secretariat of the Presidency who agreed on the importance of building a "wall of contagion" against populism and corporatist influence. Centralizing authority at the MoF was the best insurance against political and social pressures. Crucially, President Aylwin himself also came to side with his finance minister against Molina.

The powerful role of the Ministry of Finance was reinforced in the inter-ministerial committee that was set up to coordinate economic and social policies. The committee included the ministries responsible for social action as well as various public services with responsibilities in the social area. To the disappointment of Molina and MIDEPLAN, however, the chairmanship of the inter-ministerial committee was given to Finance Minister Foxley, to whom MIDEPLAN would function as a technical secretariat. Given Foxley's lack of time and lack of interest in social policies, the committee only came to function on an irregular basis "devoting its time to discussing a few specific problems rather than systematically analyzing and coordinating social policies" (Molina 1996: 160). On the whole, then, the issue of coordinating social programmes remained unsolved under the Aylwin government. President Aylwin's cabinet opted for shielding the power of the Ministry of Finance and was not prepared to vest MIDEPLAN with sufficient power to become a leading social authority for fear of corporatist influence over social policymaking. Hence, having failed to institutionalize an integrated and coordinated approach to poverty alleviation, MIDEPLAN was left to fight poverty chiefly by its own means.

Targeting the poor

The most important social programme to emerge from the new anti-poverty strategy was the Fund for Solidarity and Social Investment (FOSIS). FOSIS was established to channel targeted resources for productive development projects among the poorest strata. It does not directly implement projects, but operates as an intermediary agency providing financial resources and technical support to social investment projects that originate at the local level or incorporate the participation of the most deprived sectors in finding ways to solve their own problems. As such, FOSIS embodies the new targeting

approach introduced by the Aylwin administration that sought to replace the paternalistic welfare measures of the military regime.

“The idea of FOSIS took shape in 1989 among the technical teams responsible for anti-poverty measures in the preparation of the government’s program” (Raczynski 1995: 216). During the process of deliberation, several alternatives for organizing the anti-poverty effort were discussed. One proposition, mainly supported by economists, advocated a more centralized structure with subsidies targeted to the poorest groups. The proposition according to which FOSIS started operating, however, argued that it was not enough to increase targeted subsidies, but that to combat poverty required “a new way of doing things”. Its organization was inspired by international experience with social investment funds in the 1980s. The creators, such as Alvaro García and Nicolas Flaño, were technocrats with years of experience in international organizations or research institutes in Chile. In the words of Flaño, “el origen del FOSIS se vincula con lo que estaba pasando en América Latina a fines de la década de los 80, donde para enfrentar la crisis de esos años se dio inicio a este tipo de fondos como una herramienta de emergencia, como instituciones que tendían a paliar los efectos de esa crisis” (interview with Flaño, quoted on the website of FOSIS).¹¹ In that, FOSIS is representative of the wider anti-poverty approach formulated by the Aylwin administration which was heavily influenced by the new pluralist conception of the state’s welfare role in Latin America at the end of the 1980s.

From the beginning, FOSIS has remained small in personnel and budget. By 1992, the organization had a total personnel of 37 officials. This number remained more or less constant during the 1990s (Repetto 2001: 257). During its first four years in operation (the Aylwin era) its budgetary resources equalled \$100 million, never exceeding one per cent of social public spending per year (Raczynski 1995: 217). The Ministry of Finance has been reluctant to commit more budgetary resources for much the same reasons as it has not wanted to raise the budget of MIDEPLAN.

Initially, the conservative opposition was worried that FOSIS would be used for setting up a clientelist network of loyal NGOs. Clearly, these worries were unfounded as FOSIS has remained under strict technocratic control, a fact that will be discussed in more detail below. Nevertheless, given the strong role of conservative forces in Chile’s restricted democracy, the government initially took great care to accommodate opposition interests as well as to please international financial institutions. This led the government to protect the authority of the Ministry of Finance which did not want FOSIS to become a drain on the treasury’s coffers. In addition, the sectoral ministries were not interested in giving up any turf to FOSIS. Despite limited financial resources, FOSIS quickly established a reputation for innovation and effectiveness in carrying out anti-poverty projects. Administrative costs for the programme did not exceed 7.5 per cent of total costs during the initial stages (Schkolnik 1995: 51). Towards the end of 1993, FOSIS had supported more than 5200 projects – mostly small and short-term – selected from more than 12,000 project proposals of around 3000 organizations (Raczynski 1995: 217). During these four years, these projects had in turn generated an additional \$130 million from

contributions by the beneficent organizations themselves, private foundations and foreign donors (*ibid.*).

FOSIS finances projects in three areas: microproductive enterprises, mainly in the informal urban sector and among small rural producers; social development, through technical training and empowerment of social organizations; and sectoral programmes, through collaboration with sectoral ministries in targeting the poorest households (Raczynski and Romaguera 1995: 326). As mentioned before, FOSIS does not execute projects, but signs agreements with subcontractors and sponsors contests in which social organizations, NGOs, municipalities and private enterprises bid for project resources. Its sectoral programmes (the third area), however, are formulated through negotiations between FOSIS and the specific sectoral ministries. The idea is that FOSIS would complement sectoral social policies, not substitute for them, in order to reach the very poor better. Through its more flexible and demand-driven structure FOSIS could offer innovative solutions to social problems the traditional sectoral ministries could not because of their centralized structure and heavy bureaucracy. Such collaboration between FOSIS and sectoral ministries would create synergies and assure that the socially excluded would actually come to enjoy access to social programmes.

In practice, however, FOSIS had some difficulties in establishing a relationship with the sectoral ministries, and to some extent these problems of intra-sectorial coordination have continued well into the new millennium. This reflects the failure to institute a coordinating unit at inter-ministerial level, as discussed above. Bureaucratic opposition from the traditional ministries effectively undermined FOSIS' efforts to carve a role for itself in complementing sectoral social policies. Given that MIDEPLAN had been denied an authoritative role in coordinating social policies, FOSIS was on the defensive in relation to sectoral social policies. Neither did the Ministry of Finance come to its support, but opted instead to maintain its bilateral relationships with the sectoral ministries in order to preserve its authority and influence over social spending. From the perspective of the Ministry of Finance, as well as the Presidential Office, FOSIS was a small programme not worth picking a fight for that could open up new lines of division within the administration and possibly endanger the more general consensus on the government's programme of "growth with equity". Hence, most of the projects supported by FOSIS during the Aylwin administration were in the first two areas; supporting microenterprises and social development in poor communities.

Technocratic governance

From the beginning, the administration of FOSIS was in the hands of reform-minded experts. These technocrats had been recruited mostly from NGOs and research institutes as well as from international agencies. They shared a commitment to using technical criteria in administering and distributing anti-poverty resources. The structure of FOSIS is typical of demand-driven social investment funds, not only in Chile but in other countries as well. It is an autonomous entity set up within the planning ministry and led by an executive director directly appointed by the president of the republic and accountable to him/her. These social investment funds usually operate outside the

traditional service ministries in order to avoid bureaucracy and corporatism (see Graham 1994). Experience has shown, however, that there is a real danger of targeted social investment funds ending up being captured by politicians for clientelist purposes, thwarting the efficiency and equity goals that these funds are projected to further (Dresser 1991, 1994; Roberts 1995; Piester 1997; Penfold-Becerra 2007). By most accounts, however, the targeting of social programmes in Chile has been efficient and clientelism has not been a problem (Graham 1994; Raczynski 1995; Repetto 2001). According to my own findings with regard to FOSIS, partisan and political criteria have not entered into programme operation. FOSIS has remained under firm technocratic control and its operations criteria have been technical rather than political.

How did the reform-minded experts manage to shield FOSIS from political interference? An important factor was the structure of the political regime at the time of democratization. Chile's regime institutions promote technocratic governance, hampering some of the participatory objectives of anti-poverty policy. Its centralist-unitarian regime in conjunction with strong liberal-constitutional institutions helps prevent politicians from capturing social programmes for populist goals. In fact, unlike in many other Latin American countries where institutions for "horizontal accountability" (O'Donnell 1994, 1998) are weak, politicians in Chile have neither many opportunities nor much incentive to capture anti-poverty programmes. A closer look at the functioning of FOSIS will illustrate how the explanation has to do with Chile's regime institutions as they were instituted with the transition to democracy: (1) a centralized-unitarian regime; and (2) strong institutions of horizontal accountability.

In Chile, local democracy is extremely underdeveloped. Chile's centralized-unitarian regime structure does not provide much room for political manoeuvring at the local level. To a large extent, municipal governments depend on the central government both financially and administratively (Nickson 1995). The role of municipalities is more that of functioning as service agencies for central government policy than as autonomous political entities in their own right. This reflects Chile's centralist political traditions that deconcentration during the military regime did not fundamentally alter (Valenzuela 1977; Graham 1994; Raczynski and Serrano 2001). During the military regime, municipal governments assumed some new functions in social policy. Before, local government had played no active role in the social sector – social programmes were handled directly by the national ministries (Raczynski and Romaguera 1995). Nevertheless, these new legal responsibilities were not intended to strengthen the political autonomy of municipal governments vis-à-vis the central government. Instead, devolving responsibilities for managing education and health establishments, increasing the number of positions for professional and technical staff while reducing the number of service personnel, as well as applying the centrally defined poverty screening test (CAS card) were envisaged to "technify" local government, strengthening the technical capabilities of municipalities for implementing centrally designed social policy (Castañeda 1992). Indeed, decentralization was envisaged as a means to depoliticize state and society.

When the Aylwin administration took office most mayors had been directly appointed by Pinochet and municipal elections were not held until 30 June, 1992. In 1988 hundreds of

mayors in some of the poorest communities had been appointed by the military regime in an attempt to control the transition to democracy at the local level (Graham 1994: 46). According to Graham (1994), this explains why FOSIS initially found it difficult to stimulate collaboration between community organizations and municipalities. In her view, FOSIS needed to bypass municipalities as relationships between mayors appointed by the military regime and community organizations often were antagonistic. However, even after the introduction of direct municipal elections, the role of municipal government in the formulation and implementation of FOSIS' programmes has been limited.¹² This reflects the deep suspicion held at the apex of central government about the technical capabilities of municipalities to administer targeted social programmes. FOSIS officials have been reluctant to cede responsibility for anti-poverty programmes to municipalities, preferring instead to work directly through NGOs or by subcontracting technical personnel to administer collaboration with community organizations. This has prevented local "capture" of FOSIS, but at the same time, "associative networks" at the local level have rarely been formed or performed well (Chalmers et al. 1997). In some cases there was even open antagonism between FOSIS, the municipalities and NGOs, particularly as mayors felt excluded from projects.

The central state also has the possibility of collaborating with the heads of regional government or the district governors, bypassing mayors that do not share its objectives concerning technical efficiency and social equity. In stark contrast to many other cases in Latin America where social programmes have been withheld from municipalities controlled by the opposition, no such partisan criteria were allowed to enter into the operation criteria of FOSIS. In fact, in those cases where FOSIS ended up excluding mayors from taking part in networks for administering FOSIS projects, they were mayors belonging to the governing alliance (Concertación) but who had refused to accept the operations criteria of FOSIS, or who had been found by the Comptroller General or the internal auditing mechanism not to comply with the rigid rules for managing projects.

A crucial factor is that FOSIS has not been subject to pressure from the central government to include political criteria in the way it manages its programmes. The Chilean president has no need to engage in "territorial politics", fighting over local political turf or seeking the loyalty of provincial governors in order to get things done. In Chile, the heads of regional government are appointed by the president. Thus, he/she need not worry about commanding the loyalty of regional governments, and as a result there is no need for using social programmes as bargaining chips in negotiations with heads of regional government or doling them out to mayors in order for these to be able to build a political base independently from and against the regional *caudillo*. Indeed, the lack of real political clout of local government in conjunction with the binomial electoral system, which has the effect of making elections highly uncompetitive, makes for a system that is immune to local political pressure to a much greater extent than in many other countries in Latin America. In Chile, poor people's links to intermediary political institutions such as political parties, that could help articulate and formulate local demands more effectively, are very weak.

The limited political role of local government is reflected in how FOSIS and other social programmes work – technocratic governance characterizes the administration of FOSIS at all levels. Programme design and management of FOSIS funds have remained heavily centralized. A typical example is the *Entre Todos* programme. Raczynski (1995) explains how it was designed in 1991 by a professional team within FOSIS that earlier had worked in the third sector with social development projects. “The team was relatively small, came from the private sector – principally NGOs – and initially was unfamiliar with public sector procedures” (Raczynski 1995: 248). The programme built on the earlier experience of the professional team supported by policy studies and a detailed technical preparation within this subgroup of FOSIS. Raczynski concludes that “the program shows some success in the extension work but did not achieve links with the municipalities” (ibid.). In general, collaboration in programme design between FOSIS and municipalities has been extremely rare.

The various programmes set up by FOSIS have been formulated in a top-down manner by FOSIS officials, without much input from local government or lower administrative units. In this process, information systems and policy studies carried out by poverty specialists contracted by FOSIS or MIDEPLAN play an integral part. An advisory board for FOSIS composed of professionals and academics in the field was also constituted in order to strengthen expert-input in the process of designing programmes. Its role has remained limited, however, functioning more as a deliberative forum for approving decisions already taken by FOSIS officials. In any case, local government has had a very limited role in programme design.¹³ According to Raczynski, “programs are designed by the central government, are top-down, and arrive at the local level in search of predefined beneficiaries. The local level is a mere recipient for programs”, (2000: 139).

The effect of Chile’s regime institutions on anti-poverty policy can further be seen in how the project competition mechanism works. Once a programme has taken shape, FOSIS calls for bids in which social organizations, NGOs, the private sector and municipalities present project proposals that compete on the selection criteria that were formulated during the process of design. Project proposals are subjected to technical evaluations and selected on the basis of their quality. The criteria are highly technical, having been formulated by FOSIS officials and poverty experts. Evaluation of proposals is carried out by FOSIS or subcontracted to private sector consultants.

At first, the opposition feared that political criteria would come to steer the selection process. These worries quickly subsided while even the opposition conceded that the process of selecting projects was done technically rigorously without political interference. After that, the main critique concerned the lack of decentralization that, according to the opposition (and, indeed, many social policy specialists), has rendered it difficult to adjust programmes to local needs. As local governments have no discretion in selecting projects or beneficiaries, the anti-poverty approach has remained inflexible and bureaucratic. That is the other side of the coin – rigid rules formulated by central level technocrats and rigorously monitored for adherence by a strong and fiercely independent Comptroller General as well as carefully designed internal control mechanisms. But while the opposition readily admits that mechanisms of horizontal control, such as the Office

of the Comptroller as well as the Parliament, have been effective in curtailing corruption and preventing the discretionary use of anti-poverty funds, it maintains that vertical mechanisms at the local level for articulating particular needs and monitoring results are weak. This critique has been mounted most sharply by the conservative Independent Democratic Union (UDI) and should be understood against the backdrop that UDI, partly thanks to the favoured position it came to enjoy amongst poor communities during the military regime, has remained strong at the municipal level and would, therefore, like to see more power over targeting social programmes being transferred to the local level.

Notwithstanding, the opposition's critique about insufficient decentralization is shared by prominent social policy specialists (Razynski and Serrano 2001). In their view, the lack of decentralization has hampered community participation and the formation of associative welfare networks at the local level. Ultimately, this makes it difficult to respond to the various situations of poverty and social exclusion. As the analysis of eight social programmes carried out by Concha and colleagues affirms: "los programas son estandarizados, rígidos, definen soluciones homogéneas y muestran poca flexibilidad para responder a la diversidad de situaciones de pobreza" (Concha et al. 2001: 187).¹⁴

The Concertación has not been deaf to this critique. Indeed, in the mid-90s, democracy at the regional level was somewhat strengthened by creating regional governments and transferring some functions of social policy to these.¹⁵ The regional level continues, however, to be led by the *intendente* (i.e., the head of the regional government), who is appointed by the president. Also, the counsellors, who make up the regional council are only indirectly elected through the municipal governments. The regional extension offices of the ministries and central state agencies (such as FOSIS) continue to play a dominant role in regional policymaking. For instance, MIDEPLAN has a technical secretariat, the SERPLAC, that is in charge of coordinating its policies and programmes at the regional and local levels. As some responsibilities for the selection of project proposals were devolved to the regional level, SERPLAC was put in charge of the technical evaluation and, hence, guaranteeing that the projects selected apply with the technical standards formulated by MIDEPLAN (or some of its dependent agencies such as FOSIS). In fact, in 1998 it was proposed that SERPLAC would cease to be part of MIDEPLAN and instead become dependent on the regional government. However, the initiative was blocked by the Office of the Comptroller who was worried about potential politicization of SERPLAC. This demonstrated the strong authority the Office of the Comptroller commands in enforcing horizontal accountability in Chile. The downside, however, has been a technocratization of social policy.

In sum, at no stage in the process do politicians have much opportunity to use these project funds for patronage, as funds are either distributed directly from FOSIS to NGOs or the private sector, or are devolved through the technical secretariats at the local government level where SERPLAC is in charge of coordinating project execution

CONCLUSIONS

During the 1980s, many governments in Latin America began redefining their social welfare policies to emphasize poverty alleviation and create targeted programmes that put a strong emphasis on social participation. Targeted anti-poverty programmes were promoted as a solution to the crisis of the welfare state model and the dilemma of learning “to do more with less” in the wake of the 1980s debt crisis. Scholars disagree over the political implications of this new social policy approach, however. Many observers argue that targeted social programmes are instrumental for establishing new pluralist links between the state and civil society, replacing traditional forms based on corporatism and clientelism. They see targeted social programmes as reflecting a new mode of social governance that allow for more effective popular participation and representation in the social policy arena (e.g. Graham 1994; Chalmers et al. 1997). Others, in contrast, have pointed out how targeted programmes have been used to create new clientelist links between “neo-populist” leaders and the popular sectors (e.g. Dresser 1991; Roberts 1995). They argue that the new anti-poverty approach provides ample opportunities for politicians to make use of targeted social programmes in order to install clientelist networks.

This chapter shows how in Chile the outcome of the new anti-poverty approach has been technocratic governance. Hence, while the new targeted approach has not led to neo-populism, neither has it given way to the empowerment and effective integration of poor people’s interests.

Clearly, the new anti-poverty approach has contributed to social modernization through increased state-civil society collaboration. NGOs particularly have become important actors in implementing anti-poverty programmes. It is also generally assumed that the targeting of poverty programmes has been effective, guided by technical criteria emphasizing efficiency in the allocation of funds rather than political expediency. At the same time, this technocratic mode of social governance provides few tools for concerted lower-class political action. As such, the anti-poverty approach implemented by the Concertación government differs markedly from the discourse that connects it with participatory governance and poor people’s empowerment.

The approach does not exclude participation; indeed, it makes community groups and NGOs share responsibility for government policies by devolving welfare tasks to them. However, these participatory mechanisms do not empower subaltern sectors to effectively articulate encompassing social demands. Participation is structured by the technocrats within the welfare bureaucracy who remain in charge of policy design and spending priorities. Participation is reduced to the process of programme implementation. While these structures allow for the rationalization of anti-poverty policymaking by instituting technical criteria into the administration of social welfare, this de-politicization concomitantly provokes apathy and de-mobilization among subaltern sectors. As opportunities to challenge decision-making are few, subaltern sectors have few incentives to mobilize. Also, pluralistic competition between civil society groups for access to social benefits often leads to atomization and fragmentation of social

organization. Indeed, tentative evidence suggests that the system of contract-based funding has helped institute competitive relationships between subaltern sectors as community leaders and their organizations compete for the scarce resources offered by the welfare bureaucracy.

These competitive relationships work against social capital formation as some neighbourhoods may become included into anti-poverty programmes, while other similar and adjacent neighbourhoods are left out. Moreover, because of the highly technical requirements for participation, those most in need of assistance, but who lack the capabilities of taking advantage of participatory opportunities, remain excluded. Under these circumstances, more technically endowed NGOs have acquired advantages in the competitive biddings for tendering contracts. In sum, while the approach has provided for pluralistic access to social benefits, scarce resources and technocratic control over the distribution of benefits has served to de-politicize anti-poverty policymaking making it hard for subaltern sectors to demand encompassing social change.

Endnotes

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2. For a detailed discussion of the Concertación’s early anti-poverty policy strategy, see Raczynski (1995, 2000).
3. See Concertación de Partidos por la Democracia (1989).
4. The work on the Concertación’s programme was coordinated by Edgardo Boeninger (Christian Democratic Party) and Enrique Correa (Socialist Party) who also saw it as a process of identifying candidates for governmental posts (Boeninger 1997).
5. See, among others, Oxhorn (1995), Boeninger (1997), Roberts (1998).
6. The literature on the importance of NGOs under military rule is vast. It includes Loveman (1995), Oxhorn (1995), Roberts (1998). See also Repetto (2001), who supports the argument that the experience provided a crucial impetus for the anti-poverty approach adopted by the Concertación.
7. For an analysis, see Oxhorn (1995).
8. For a discussion of the breakdown of democracy, see Valenzuela (1978) and Oppenheim (1999).
9. For a discussion of the bidding mechanism, see Raczynski (1995).
10. For a detailed discussion of these changes, see Molina (1996).
11. Author’s translation: “The origin of FOSIS is connected to what was happening in Latin America in end of the 1980s, where in order to confront the crisis of those years this type of funds were launched as an emergency tool, as institutions which had to mitigate the effects of the crisis”. www.fosis.cl (interview with Nicolas Flaño retrieved from www.fosis.cl/opensite_det_20060823131127.asp)
12. For a discussion of the role of local government in anti-poverty programmes, including FOSIS, see Concha et al. (2001).
13. For a discussion of the role of local government in social programmes across the social sectors, see Raczynski and Serrano (2001).

14. Author's translation: "The programmes are standardized, rigid, define homogeneous solutions and show little flexibility in responding to the diversity of situations of poverty".
15. For a discussion of the functions of regional government and how they have been strengthened, see Serrano (2001).

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CHAPTER FOUR

Non-Participatory Reform and Institutional Gaps: The Re-organisation of Argentina's Industrial Sector in the Nineties

Georgina M. Gómez

INTRODUCTION: TOP-DOWN CHANGE OF RULES

A wave of structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) were implemented throughout the developing world during the 1990s, imbued with neoliberal views on how economies should work (Smith et al. 1994, Gwynne and Kay 1999). Argentina was part of that wave, and after 1990 the government imposed a top-down transformation of the rules and structures that organised production and exchange. The government blamed the import substitution model for economic stagnation and high inflation. It believed that the strong support obtained in the elections granted it the social mandate to implement a massive reform of the economic institutions and, consequently, it barely invited the participation of the agents whose behaviour it expected to rearrange. For several years there were hardly any protests or other forms of resistance against the reforms, but the actions of large numbers of agents hardly changed. On the contrary, the top-down changes in the regulations disorganised production and exchange, holding back job creation and causing numerous bankruptcies. Most explanations for the divergence between the blueprints of the policy-makers and the practice of economic life focus on macroeconomic variables like the exchange rate and the availability of credit. An explanation that examines the stability of economic life is still missing.

This article adopts the perspective of the Old Institutional Economics to examine the problematic of institutional change with a top-down non-participatory manner. It is consistent with the understanding of the economy as “an instituted process”, as characterised by Karl Polanyi (1992[1957]). Institutions are defined as dispositions to behave according to certain rules. They structure economic activity by assuring that in circumstances X, agents have a disposition to do Y (Hodgson 2006: 2). Institutions mediate the relations between governments and agents, both individual and collective, in stable patterns that sustain economic life. They relate agents' behaviour at the microeconomic level to the rules defined at the macro level by policy makers, so they are the crucial link that structural adjustment programmes aim to change.

The understanding that the actions and thoughts of economic agents are regulated by deeply engrained institutions that evolve out of regularity casts doubt on how these can be effectively changed top-down (Smith and Korzeniewics 1997). In some cases, governments

may sanction those that do not abide by their new rules, but they would need a whole battery of means of control, which in most developing countries are not available. An invitation to participate hence emerges as a critical instance to induce agents to reflect upon the new and old rules and understand the likely consequences of translating them into practice or not. Participation is understood as a means as well as an end in creating democracy, strengthening governance, promoting development and reducing poverty (Taylor 1998 Hickey and Mohan 2004).

This study will draw empirical data from the case of the industrial sector in Argentina to illustrate how structural reform policies increase complexity and disrupt economic activities. It will refer to the notion of “institutional gaps” to address the situation in which habits, patterns of behaviour and expectations no longer match the reality of the reformed economy. While agents struggle to understand the new institutions and embrace them as rules of action, their resources become unemployed and may even become permanently idle. The introduction of the new concept of “institutional gaps” is an effort to take a meso-level look at the effects of structural reforms.

Following this introduction, the article presents an analytical framework within the Old Institutional Economics perspective, and then it describes the background of the economic reforms in Argentina. Fourthly, it discusses the impact of the structural reforms in the industrial sector and the failure of large numbers of entrepreneurs to act according to the government’s expectations. It concludes with reflections on the top-down attempts to change institutions and behaviour.

STRUCTURAL REFORMS AS IMPOSITION

The fundamental basis of institutional economics is that economic actions are regulated by institutions, seen as the “structured processes by which individuals interact, relatively stable in time and recognised as such” (Lawson 2003). This definition includes the formal and informal organisations, rules, procedures, regulations and practices that structure social interactions (Hall 1986). Geoffrey Hodgson (2006) adds that they are the “stuff” that structures action, although some social structures are not institutions. For example, demographic growth rates are social structures but they are not institutions, which are normative and codifiable, and their transgression can be sanctioned. Institutions are subject to individual interpretation and have the potential to change agents, including their intentions and preferences (Hodgson 1998a). Prices, labour regulations, money, exchange relations and responses to similar economic downturns are examples of them. This is the approach of the Old Institutional Economics, which was popular in the early twentieth century in the United States and whose main referents are Thorsten Veblen, John Commons, Clarence Ayres and others (Hodgson, 1998a, 1998b, 1999).

Following Veblen (2004[1899]), Hodgson (2006) underlines that institutions are a disposition to act in a certain manner, which may be different to current behaviour because action always contains a degree of individual choice or agency. The distinction is critical in top-down economic policy because governments can make laws but they cannot guarantee what actions will effectively follow. In turn, most institutions are complied with unconsciously, without explicit reflection, being embedded in habits.

Not all situations are known and have a rule of action to follow. When there is a new situation for which no specific institution is in place, the agents fall into reflexive action to formulate a reaction Y to face the new circumstances. After some trial and error, when they have been able to achieve acceptable results, the response will be repeated each time the situation X presents itself. A new institution hence emerges, and it will subsequently inform a disposition to repeat the action by becoming customary (Hodgson 2002, 2004).

When responses pose conflicting intentions and interests among groups or agents, institutions emerge through a considerable amount of deliberate thinking and negotiation between groups to solve these conflicts and decide which rule of action to establish. It is another type of institutional creation, not by simple regularity, but through a political process (Boyer and Hollingsworth 1997). There are two typical situations of distribution of power. In the first one, there is an agent with the capacity to impose its rules even against the resistance of the others. Effective behaviour following the law depends on the means of control to detect transgressions and impose sanctions (Bowles and Gintis 1993). This applies to governments that dictate new laws to their constituencies, managers that direct workers in enterprises and teachers that educate children at school. In the second situation, none of the agents has the capacity to impose rules on others, so agents need to reach a consensus, and enforcement relies on social control mechanisms and the commitment of those to whom the rules apply. For example, firms in a value chain agree on production quality standards that apply to other firms that join.

Imposition and consensus are the two ways in which new rules are configured. Still, Hodgson (2006) argues that for new rules to become institutions, they need to become customary and acquire a normative status. Veblen (2004 [1899]) actually contended that institutions only work because the rules involved are embedded in shared habits of thought and behaviour (Joas 1996). Even when there is substantial capacity to impose new norms or there is a strong commitment among those who should abide by them, it is still critical that they evolve into habit to reduce the likelihood of being ignored.

When policymakers attempt to change economic rules top-down, they generate a new Y' for X. They expect agents to do Y' because Y' is what they consider more efficient in economic terms to achieve the outcome Z', their policy goal, even if other agents did not participate in the definition of the new Y' or do not share the preference for Z'. They impose it top-down based on the legitimacy of their authority. They assume that agents would subsequently elaborate on the new rules and adapt to them. However, the process in reality is considerably less smooth because they rarely impose the new institutions in an empty institutional landscape, what Stark (1992: 6) calls a "tabula rasa".

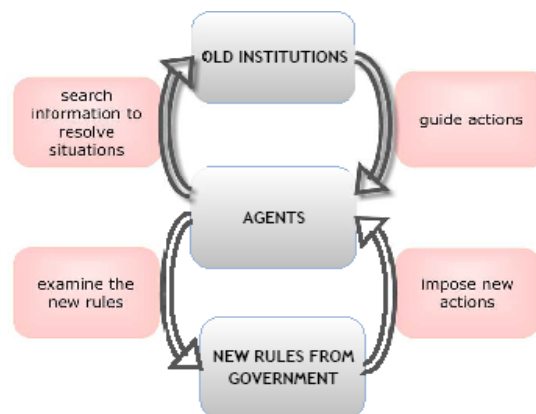
The design of institutions to change agents' behaviour at the micro level is therefore an extremely complex task which cannot ignore the evolutionary nature of how institutions emerge. The new Y' may overlap, combine or even conflict with the old Y that agents are disposed to do in a situation X. The inertia of institutionalised life inclines agents, by default, to continue to do Y. In the end, some agents may do Y, others will do Y', others will do Y'' if they consider it an option better aligned with their intentions Z''. The discrepancies between what different agents do cause new uncertainties, new situations in which agents are unclear about how to respond. Thus, from a world in which economic life

was structured and uncertainty was relatively under control, the top-down reform of institutions pushes agents into a world in which there are no clear dispositions to act.

The concept of ‘institutional gap’ addresses this situation of an unstructured segment of social and economic action that used to be structured before the top-down imposition of a new rule (Gomez 2009). It is a gap in the sense that agents do not know how to act, react or decide in situations that were previously ruled by practice, norms and habits. Agents are pushed into reflection to reformulate what to do in circumstances X to obtain Z, but until a tested routine evolves, they will stick to what they know. Arguably, institutional gaps will be resolved in the long run, and agents will do Y’ if policymakers are successful and Y’’ if they are not. The point is that it may take a long time to re-harmonise the organisation of the economy, or it may not happen at all. In the meantime, resources – human and material – remain unemployed.

The argument is illustrated in Figure 1, which is a re-elaboration of Geoffrey Hodgson’s graph of the institution-action loop (1998a: 176). The original graph includes only the upper part of the one presented here and addresses the permanent interaction between institutions and agents. The one presented here adds the role of government attempting to reconfigure institutions top-down, hence changing the disposition of the agents to act in a certain manner. The arrows of both loops converge on the position of the agents, placed in the centre, because it is up to them to make sense of the rules and act. That is, it depends on their own reflection whether they will behave according to the old rules (upper loop), the new rules (lower loop) or neither. The result is *a priori* unpredictable, and this increases the complexity of economic action.

Figure 1: The institutions–action loop, with government



It is in this stage that participation becomes critical. The participation of those agents whose actions are expected to change substantially increase the chances of successful reform. Agents that participate in the reconfiguration of rules delve into a process of shared reflexion and collective experimentation in the search of an acceptable action. If they find that Y’ is acceptable, they will repeat it each time X appears. If they do not agree with Z’ or do not think Y’ is conducive to it, they will still gain in terms of awareness of the

consequences of not acting according to the reformed economic structure. Institutional change with participation comprises moments of negotiation, resistance, compromise, adaptation and the building of the capacities to interpret new rules (Steinmo and Thelen 1992).

The theory on participation distinguishes between two main approaches: as means and as ends (Nelson and Wright 1995). The former focuses on efficiency arguments for participatory processes (achieving better outcomes) and the latter centres on issues of empowerment (enhancing the capacity of the disadvantaged to achieve social change) (Cleaver 1999). The analysis developed so far has addressed the first argument, of participation as a means to improve the outcome of structural adjustment programmes and to mitigate the costs. However, the second rationale is also relevant. Agents may configure Y” as a superior alternative in terms of costs or benefits and address power imbalances.

THE ECONOMY’S INSTITUTIONAL LEGACY

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Argentina was one of the ten most affluent nations in the world. The per capita income was higher than that of other Latin American countries and of several Western European countries, including Spain and Italy (Gerchunoff and Llach 2005). This success was a result of the abundance of natural resources, export staples (meat and grain), slow demographic growth, rapid urbanisation, large-scale migration from Europe, and the “British connection” in trade and infrastructure investment (Ciria 1992). The country promulgated a constitution as early as 1856, assimilated millions of migrants, had a stable society and was an integral part of the international division of labour at that time.

The boom lasted until approximately 1930, when first the Great Depression and then the Second World War marked a turning point in Argentine history. Growth then became more erratic, with alternating periods of progress and stagnation (Sawers 1996). After 1940, Argentina changed its development strategy to a state-directed economy, protecting key sectors and implementing other usual ingredients of the import-substitution industrialisation model prevalent around the developing world at that time.

Import-substitution industrialisation was the basis of growth in Argentina for almost fifty years. It was more inclusive than the previous model, in the sense that the urban middle class grew from 40.7 per cent to 47.8 per cent of the population between the 1940s and the 1980s (Beccaria and López 1996). The situation of skilled workers in the manufacturing sector and blue-collar employees improved substantially (Murmis and Feldman 1993) and they enjoyed the highest wages in Latin America, including both employed and self-employed workers.

At the same time, with the import-substitution industrialisation model, the Argentine economy behaved in what was termed a stop-and-go business cycle (Ferrer 1989, Gerchunoff and Llach 2005). There were regular periods of growth, in which wages, consumption and imports grew. These led to balance of payments deficits, devaluations and rapid price increases. This was followed by recession, an adjustment in the main macroeconomic variables, and then an increase in exports that triggered a period of growth and rising incomes. The cycle started again when the bottlenecks in the economy pushed it

into a new balance of payments deficit and inflation. The stop-and-go trajectory was blamed on the dependence of production on domestic demand, weak international competitiveness, and the high need for foreign inflows to pay for technological imports (Dorfman 1983).

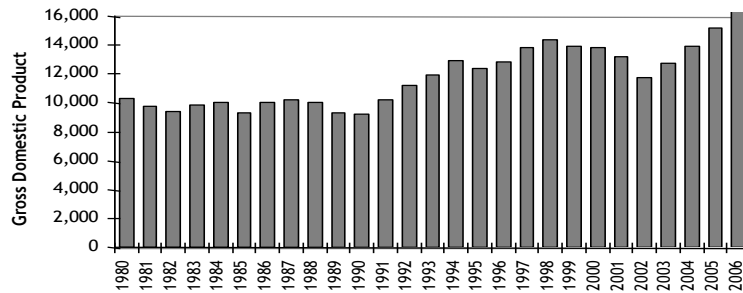
By the mid-seventies it was clear that the import-substitution industrialisation model was running out of steam. High inflation was becoming chronic, while recessions were becoming deeper and lasting longer. While economic agents were used to these cycles, to the point that they had institutionalised responses to cope with them, the downturns of the cycle were more severe each time.

In the political arena, democratic governments alternated with military dictatorships, and between 1929 and 1989 no civilian president was able to complete the six-year-mandate period. The first to succeed in finishing his mandate was president Raul Alfonsín, chosen in 1983 in the first democratic elections after seven years of a military junta. He was sworn-in with high expectations of the recovery of democratic governance and economic growth. However, his government could not frame a consistent development strategy and in economic terms, the eighties were known as the “lost decade”. Inflation averaged 300 per cent a year between 1975 and 1990, with several years being marked by 1000 per cent. The decade ended with hyperinflation. A country that was among the wealthiest in the world at the beginning of the twentieth century witnessed looting of supermarkets by the rioting poor at its end (Botana 2002).

A second democratic president, Carlos Menem, took over in 1989 but still faced two periods of hyperinflation before he could define a consistent macroeconomic policy. This was a programme of structural reforms in conformity with the prescriptions of the Washington Consensus (Smith and Korzeniewics 1997). The structural reforms in Latin America during the 1990s posed such a challenge that Smith and Korzeniewics compared them to the Great Transformation through the nineteenth century, analysed by Polanyi (Smith and Korzeniewics 1997). In Argentina the newly sworn-in neoliberal government attempted to reform the ways in which the economy was organised at the micro level, but it imposed new rules in disregard of institutionalised and resilient economic behaviour. While inflation had been regarded until then as a problem that needed to be addressed and corrected with specific measures, the new government saw it as an inherent dysfunction of the model. It understood that inflation could only be solved by changing the model entirely and it intended to do precisely that.

To end inflation the peso was pegged to the dollar at parity in 1991. This was the Convertibility Plan, which also transformed the Central Bank into a currency board and imposed fiscal discipline. While the peso was pegged to the dollar, prices in the national currency kept rising, so the exchange rate was unusually low throughout most of the nineties (Heymann 2000). In turn, one of the most ambitious and swift privatisation programmes in Latin America was launched, involving almost all state-owned enterprises, public utilities, the pension system, much of the health care and the banking sector. This launched the third development model in Argentine history: an open economy and deregulated markets (Kosacoff 1993).

Figure 2: Argentina's real GDP, 1980–2006



Note: GDP in thousands of 1986 real pesos.

Source: INDEC, www.indec.gov.ar.

As Figure 2 shows, the structural reforms of 1990 triggered a significant growth rate of 8 per cent a year from 1990 to 1994. All in all, GDP increased by 27 per cent between 1991 and 1994, although the crisis of 1999–2001 pushed it down again. In turn, the seemingly positive GDP growth and controlled inflation during the 1990s tells only one part of the story. There were substantial differences between productive sectors. The industrial GDP hardly grew between 1991 and 1994, while the service sector bloomed and with it part of the middle class. The economic structure changed: there was less state intervention in the economy, a more competitive private sector, lower inflation rates and an open market in which foreign goods, technologies and credit were available (Kosacoff and Heymann 2000).

The micro and meso level, where individual and collective agents perform their economic activities daily, showed another landscape. The new rules of action still had to fit in the institutional legacies of a protected economy. While some sectors quickly adapted to them, others were in a severe state of disarray. The reform disrupted and destabilised the economic action of a substantial segment of the population. A high proportion of agents was unable to adapt to the reformed institutional structure and gradually became disengaged from the regular economy. Unemployment and bankruptcies rose and a few years later the country entered an economic meltdown. The next section examines the industrial sector in the light of the framework depicted in Figure 1.

REORGANISING INDUSTRY

The Argentine industrial sector dates back more than a hundred years, and for half of that time it was ruled by the institutions of import-substitution industrialisation with strong state intervention (Barbero 2007). This policy orientation guided routines and expectations that organised the industrial sector around certain patterns. The state was central to the process, imposing rules, choosing winners and losers, providing subsidies and tax exemptions. The industrial sector hence offered fertile ground for rent-seeking activities, but there was a significant accumulation of human and physical resources. The learning process centred on adapting imported technologies and integrating links within the manufacturing process in order to reduce supply uncertainty (Kosacoff and Gomez 2000).

The stop-and-go trajectory of the economy defined that investments in foreign technology and modern inputs were normally possible during the expansionary phase of the business cycle. On the retraction phase, they were restricted to basic repairs and maintenance. The stop-and-go trajectory also shaped typical entrepreneurs that were risk-averse due to frequent macroeconomic swings and imbalances. Businesses invested only to solve the bottlenecks in production that appeared when demand increased and the government offered credit incentives. More aggressive modernisation of equipment to gain competitiveness was rare and was not perceived as essential to run a firm (Bisang et al. 1996).

The manufacturing firms were polarised into two categories. The first was a large number of small firms in the hands of local entrepreneurs and with relatively low technological needs, linked to European immigrants who had arrived with craft skills. The second group were the large public and foreign companies engaging in activities that required higher investment and technological complexity (Kosacoff 2000a, Kosacoff and Gomez 2000).

By the beginning of the 1990s, this type of industry was seen as the mother of all evils. Most importantly, Argentine industry was not competitive internationally. The value of exports was low while industry depended on imported inputs and technology (Bonvecchi 2000). The government tried to correct this problem through an institutional reorganisation that centred on opening up markets and liberalising trade. The assumption was that, faced with competition from cheaper imports, local industry would have to make the necessary investments and adjustments to improve its competitiveness. Within the menu of structural reforms mentioned in the previous section, the one that had the greatest impact on the manufacturing sector was the opening of markets. Average tariffs were reduced sharply for all imports, with the extreme that they were completely eliminated for capital goods. Export duties and other taxes were also removed. The preference for national firms in government purchasing was suspended. Industrial imports went up from 12.4 per cent of all imports in 1990 to 34.5 per cent in 1996.

In the import-substitution industrialisation model, the disposition to act in the situation X of low exchange rates and low import barriers (the beginning of the expansive phase of the stop-and-go business cycle) was well-tested: increase imports, invest in foreign technology to solve specific production bottlenecks, diversify the scope of products and expand the distribution network to protect the market share, take advantage of credit incentives. At the same time, the rule of action Y included “wait until a devaluation would correct prices again in favour of domestic manufactures”, which was consistent with a goal Z of staying afloat across the business cycle.

The change in the legal framework reflects the expectation of the government that entrepreneurs would change their behaviour to Y'. In the circumstances of the low exchange rates and an opening economy (X), they had designed a rule of action consistent with their goal Z' of increasing competitiveness and exporting more. The action Y' the government had in mind included; invest in complete ranges of state-of-the-art technology, use foreign credit in a relatively low foreign currency, modernise production techniques, raise competitiveness, and increase the scale of production by exporting which implied gaining access to markets abroad.

The government did not enter any consultations or negotiations with the industrial sector on how to achieve this change in behaviour. It believed such invitation to participate was unnecessary (Kosacoff and Gomez 2000) as it had widely explained the goal 'Z' it was pursuing. The government thought that as soon as entrepreneurs had interpreted the signals of an open market economy and felt the pressures of competing with cheaper imports in the domestic market, they would change their actions to the 'Y' it had designed. In the framework depicted in Figure 1, the government changed the legislation and normatives (lower loop), hence it induced economic agents to behave according to the rule of action ('Y') it had designed for the circumstances ('X'). However, most entrepreneurs were trapped in the old institutions of the import-substitution industrialisation and continued to act informed by the old rules of action (upper loop).

The mismatch between the old and new structures resulted in de-industrialisation and unemployment. Skilled and unskilled workers of failed companies, with technical and managerial skills accumulated over decades, were no longer needed. The main accumulated technical capacities were related to manufacturing an article of decent quality for an acceptable price to serve a small protected market, which implied reducing the scale of expensive imported technology and charging for the labour in the final price. These skills had no place in the new economic model (Kosacoff 2000a). Many factory buildings, machinery, tools and other physical infrastructure were left idle, although some were reabsorbed for other production.

The difference between what the government expected from the new rules of action it imposed, on the one hand, and the old institutions that used to regulate entrepreneurs' actions until then, on the other, created havoc in the manufacturing sector. Entrepreneurs found themselves lost in the quest to compete with the imported goods that flooded the domestic market and were frequently cheaper, of higher quality and better designed. Some firms left the market and others tried to adapt and increase competitiveness to varying degrees (Bisang et al. 1996). The 1994 industrial census registered 6000 firms less than five years earlier. In the segment of firms with eleven to fifty workers, 21 per cent exited the market (Fiel 1996). They mostly used labour-intensive production methods, so the impact on employment was high (Yoguel 2000). Another 20 per cent were sold to foreign owners (Kosacoff 2000a). By 1995 the industrial sector produced approximately the same value added as two decades earlier, but with significant qualitative differences (Kosacoff 2000b).

About 80 per cent of all manufacturing firms applied what Bernardo Kosacoff (2000b) designated 'defensive' responses. That is, they barely adapted enough to stay in business hoping for a policy change. In the framework presented above, they stuck to doing 'Y' in the situation 'X'. They incorporated minimum technology to reconvert as post-sale service firms for imported goods, increased the assembly or straight sale of foreign inputs, and downsized the workforce. Excluding micro-enterprises with fewer than ten workers, the 25,000 factories comprising the 'defensive' group were responsible for 60 per cent of the country's total industrial product. In contrast, the remaining 20 per cent of the firms adapted, became competitive and could make the most of the market opening. That is, they changed to doing 'Y'' under circumstances 'X', following the new rule of action imposed by the government's policy. They incorporated new technology, reorganised the productive process, rationalised employees, subcontracted all non-core business functions, changed to

foreign suppliers, and started exporting to niche markets, especially within Mercosur (the regional market comprising Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay, with Bolivia and Chile as associate members) (Kosacoff 2000b).

State-owned enterprises were closed or privatised. They required substantial investment in technology and were often not profitable in the small Argentine market. Therefore they were transferred to mostly local conglomerates with a transnational partner. The new owners dismissed workers, outsourced non-core functions, disintegrated vertically, incorporated state-of-the-art technology, closed non-crucial sections (research and development facilities were a regular target) and aligned prices to international levels (Kosacoff 2000b). All in all, privatised companies were able to do Y'.

Authors like Hodgson (2003) and Hollingsworth et al. (1994) emphasise the double role of institutions as enablers as well as constrainers of behaviour. For Argentine entrepreneurs, both roles played an equally significant part. On the enabling side, the firms had better access to imports, basic inputs and technology. There was a macroeconomic environment from which inflation and scarcity of foreign currency, among other uncertainties, had been eradicated. Stability made the usual survival toolkit of indexation and financial management redundant. On the constraining side, quality and price were no longer under the control of the firm. Trade liberalisation acted in practice as a comprehensive list of maximum prices and minimum quality standards.

Agents found that their economic action suddenly became unstructured. That is, they found themselves in an “institutional gap”. In the framework of this study, it meant that they continued to do Y while they should have done Y'. In Figure 1, the top-down reorganisation of the economy posed agents into an unstructured situation. The upper loop informs a certain disposition to act. The lower loop (the reforms introduced by the government) guides them to a different type of action. Economic agents are thus positioned in a complex situation in which the rules of action overlap and do not clearly guide them in one clear direction. They cannot define which action to take: they could follow the inertia of their economic life until the opening of the market or they could shift to the unknown, highly uncertain rules of action designed top-down by the government. In other words, managers, entrepreneurs and workers alike did not know what to do, how to react to the changes around them resulting from the structural reform policies. In the end, many of them were unable to change according to the governments' expectations and continued to do Y. This uncertainty eventually prevented them from obtaining either their goal (remain in business) or the governments' aim (increase industry's competitiveness).

CONCLUSIONS

Argentina is exceptional among the economies of the world. From one of the richest countries in the world in 1900, it deteriorated into a developing country a century later. By the turn of 1990, three hyper-inflationary periods clearly signalled that the model had to be reviewed. A structural reform programme was then launched to reorganise the economy in line with the Washington Consensus.

The government's reforms overlooked or misunderstood the institutional framework that gave stability to the economy. There was barely any understanding that the structural

reforms were not being applied on a *tabula rasa* but on an institutional legacy that had allowed agents to make decisions and take actions in the economy for several decades. Many agents continued to follow the rule of doing Y in circumstances X, with the unsatisfying result that they did not obtain Z. That is, they did minimal specific investments, increased imported components, shed labour and waited for a change in the economic policy. In contrast, the government expected that entrepreneurs would change their behaviour (Y') by making the most of the low exchange rates and investing in complete ranges of state-of-the-art technology. They would hence achieve Z', which was to gain competitiveness and export.

The discrepancy created institutional gaps; economic action became uncertain and unstructured. Entrepreneurs were exposed to a complex situation in which new and old rules of action overlapped for the same circumstances X. They could not define which of the two actions to follow. This uncertainty eventually prevented them from achieving either their goal (remain in business) or the government's aim (increase industry's competitiveness). In the medium term, large numbers of industrial entrepreneurs were not able to sustain their businesses in the new economic structure.

A participation process could have assisted the change in the dispositions to act in at least two ways. Firstly, it would have pushed them into a reflexive period on how to reorient their behaviour to the expectations of the government. Secondly, the policy would have contemplated the needs and demands of the agents whose actions were supposed to change in a top-down approach. The government assumed entrepreneurs were able to change their actions in line with the expected Y'. That is, it thought most industrial entrepreneurs had the capacity to find state-of-the-art technology, to obtain a foreign credit and find buyers for their exports.

This does not imply that they will agree; the argument is that participation will ensure that a reasoning process happens and that agents are given the chance to break the inertia of economic life by reflecting, understanding, and eventually accepting or rejecting the reforms. It would also have led the government to adapt the policy to the capacities and needs of the real agents, while perhaps contemplating support measures for many of them. Participation is normally understood as a means as well as an end in creating democracy, strengthening governance, promoting development and reducing poverty (Taylor 1998, Hickey and Mohan 2004,). Supporting the reorganisation of economic life represents an addition.

The concept of institutional gap contributes to the understanding of why economic actions do not result in the expectations of certain policies. Why do agents not respond as policies would induce them to? The answer in the light of the new concept coined is: because economic behaviour is institutionalised. It is resilient and stable. Agents continue to behave in the ways they had been acting for many years, and it takes a period of reasoning and adaptation to change their dispositions to act. Alternatively, an invitation for them to participate can speed up the process of making sense of the new legal framework and acquire the skills to adjust to them.

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CHAPTER FIVE

Private Sector Reform of Egyptian Solid Waste Management

Jamie Furniss

Today, in Egypt, if one encounters ‘participation’ at all, it is likely to be as a buzzword attached to ‘development’ projects involving foreign donors(1). With its rhetoric of inclusiveness and empowerment, a ‘participatory’ approach promises to help overcome the crisis of legitimacy faced by these large, outside agencies that, unlike their ‘grassroots’ counterparts, cannot ensconce themselves in a purported organic oneness with the community in which they work, claiming that it is the very soil out of which they have sprung and which continues to nourish their roots. Undoubtedly these organizations promote what they believe is best, but faith in their magnanimity is a slender guarantee, particularly when not so long ago it was the sincere pledge of the colonialist and the missionary, come to remake the world in the name of ‘progress’, ‘civilized standards’ and the good. Meanwhile, the Government of Egypt’s own much worse crisis of legitimacy is not so much overcome as rendered moot, through the use of naked force, political repression, and manipulation of information.

‘Participatory development’, which is bound up in the work of Robert Chambers, was born alongside the ‘Participatory Needs Assessment’, the ‘Participatory Rural Appraisal’, the ‘Participatory Rapid Appraisal’ etc. (see e.g. Piffero 2009). In other words, like the democratic process writ large, of which it is a variant or a constituent, the substance of the concept of participation is inseparable from (perhaps we should simply say: the substance of the concept *is*) its form: participatory development consists more of *a way of doing* than of a series of prescriptions about what ought to be done. And since, like apple pie and baseball in America, almost no one dares to declare himself against it in principle—though many do not espouse it in practice—what conflicts the concept of ‘participation’ is able to generate tend to be low-intensity ones: practical arguments over how it can best be achieved. These might turn around which type of local organization should be called upon in order to have the best chance of creating ‘real participation’, for instance: must citizens be allowed to participate directly, or is the participation of NGOs and community-based organizations sufficient?

In the meantime, a number of innovative thinkers – we might mention Ferguson (1994), Mitchell (2002), and Murray Li (2007) – who perhaps have in common, above all, that they are among the Anglophone interpreters of Foucault, have been describing a sea-change in the source of legitimacy/power, which they believe is increasingly derived from and concentrated in a particular kind of knowledge: expertise. This is accompanied (achieved?) by progressive de-politicization and technicalization of decision-making, and appears to be

particularly prevalent where distant intervention is involved, making the sites where international development agencies, international institutions such as the World Bank and IMF, and modernist central governments encounter their objects an exciting field for this kind of study.

Their numerous differences notwithstanding, participation and expertise are the same *type* of concept in the sense that both are bases from which one can derive, rhetorically and ethically, legitimacy, and therefore power. They compete – sometimes in a zero-sum manner and at other times in a manner that is complementary – with one another and with other sources of legitimacy, such as divinely bestowed legitimacy or the paternalistic legitimacy of benevolence (‘wanting what is best for the other’). Each of these is a way of constructing an authoritative voice and gaining ascendancy over certain people, places or spheres of existence.

It is the manner in which a problem is framed that determines whether the knowledge needed for its resolution is that which comes from having lived one’s entire life ‘on the ground’ in the community, or from having been educated in engineering or international development in distant, elite environments. For the technical voice to acquire authority, it is necessary to construe problems as being technical in nature, and therefore requiring expert advice. We can easily see, in this context, the manner in which authority and power are not merely forces for overpowering objections, but also, perhaps especially, for pre-empting them, for preventing – through feelings of embarrassment, inadequacy, awe or respect – their very formulation and expression. We willingly yield or defer to an expert, even in matters of life and death (for example, when we go to the doctor), if we are convinced that the problem at hand requires a type of knowledge that we do not possess. In such cases, consent, and even the formulation by stakeholders of what are apparently their own wishes (which, because of so-called Pygmalion or Abilene effects may in fact only be what Mosse (2001) calls a ‘ventriloquizing’ of stakeholders, that is, a mere reformulation of the experts’ desires) cannot be regarded as a proof that there is no coercion, but on the contrary, it testifies to how diffuse and potent the power is.

However, even when the formal avenues of participation are closed off, stakeholders sometimes force their way into these processes as a reaction to their exclusion, or retain a degree of creative autonomy to appropriate and inflect global forces even while yielding to them. This is what we propose to examine through the case of the garbage collection in greater Cairo.

NEOLIBERAL REFORM

One ideology, which some call the political creed of the 1990s (e.g. Lee 1997: 139; Post 1999: 203; Obirih-Opareh and Post 2002: 97), to rise on the swelling tide of expertise and typically at the expense of participation, is neoliberalism. Since it is the medical profession that popularized the conflict between beneficence and autonomy through its changing theories over whether the practitioner can ignore the patient’s wishes because she feels that more good will be achieved by following her expert opinion than by respecting the patient’s own amateurish opinion of their situation, it is perhaps fitting that Egypt’s President, Hosni Mubarak, once publicly likened the IMF to an unqualified doctor

prescribing life-threatening dosages of medicine (quoted in Seddon 1990: 96). This is a weak form of contestation since it accepts the criterion of expertise and attempts to overcome the IMF within the four corners of its own logic: it is implicit that were the doctor *qualified* (i.e., a genuine expert), then Egypt would yield, as it in fact did a while later.

'Privatization' and, more broadly, neoliberalism, is not new in Egypt, even if it has recently taken on new dimensions. Following the 1973 war with Israel, President Sadat famously initiated Egypt's *Infitāḥ* (opening or 'open door') economic policy: a series of structural adjustments and market liberalizations that made Egypt more 'friendly' to Western investment, but which were, economically, 'no more successful than the Nasserist project' they sought to reverse, and ended with food riots in 1977 (Bush and Bromley 1994: 202). Nevertheless, the policy was drastic enough that in 1986 the World Bank estimated that 'Egypt is currently the most open economy of any developing country with a population greater than 20 million' (World Bank 1986: 1).

However, in a manner that puts into question openness as a sufficient condition for economic success, Egypt still found itself in crisis in the late 1980s. According to Seddon (1990), external debts reached US\$45 billion in 1987. This was too much for the country to keep up with, and repayments basically stopped, triggering a series of responses that exacerbated the situation: the World Bank withheld loans, Australia and France refused to sell food on credit rather than for cash etc. The bigger problem, however, was that US military debt repayments, when 12 months in arrears, trigger an automatic suspension of all US civil and military assistance – US\$2.3 billion annually, at the time – which Egypt could not afford to lose. The country's Paris Club creditors made debt rescheduling, which was needed to provide some breathing room, conditional on an agreement with the IMF. Despite this significant duress, between 1987 and 1990 Mubarak more or less resisted the proposed reforms, seemingly in fear of the domestic political backlash they might cause and in remembrance of the events of 1977. In 1990-1991 Egypt capitulated, however, and an IMF stabilization plan and a World Bank structural adjustment loan were finally agreed upon. This set Egypt on a new course. In contrast to the earlier gradualism or outright resistance, Mitchell's (1999) reading of the events is that the IMF plan, once it was finally agreed to, was followed even more eagerly and fully than was required. This led Egypt to achieve a reduction in the government deficit that the IMF called 'virtually unparalleled in recent years', making the country a neoliberal success story, at least on paper.

Much of the improvement in financial indicators seems to have been facilitated by harsh political repression, however, and to have come at the expense of the majority of the Egyptian population for the benefit of a select few, whose wealth and power was either further consolidated or simply changed form, shifting from the political to the economic realm (Mitchell 1999). Thus it has been argued that, in Egypt's case, economic liberalization not only failed to deliver the organic up-swell in democracy its advocates promise, but was accompanied by political *deliberalization* (Kienle 2008).

Even though it was supposed to be 'at the centre of the adjustment process' envisaged in the early 1990s (Bush and Bromley 1994: 201, 205), Egypt 'grasped the nettle of privatization' late, around 1996, when it began divesting state-owned enterprises through share sales. However, by 1998, the IMF was praising Egypt for its 'remarkable' commitment to privatization that made it fourth in the world in terms of privatization

income as a share of GDP (Mitchell 1999: 460). This is a process that has carried on to the present day. By the first half of 2008, despite opposition accusations of ‘selling the country’, socially and politically damaging bread shortages, and even the state-owned media openly referring to the ‘economic crisis’, the state maintained its privatization-based economic policies, backed by Gamal Mubarak, the one-time investment banker son of the aging President, and his expected successor (e.g. El-Din 2008; Ezzat 2008).

‘Privatization’ may encompass more than the sale of state assets. For instance, Tadros (2006) considers that the introduction of user fees for the sake of cost-recovery in public hospitals (the World Bank’s suggestion) constitutes a form of privatization of the health care system, and that there is a *de facto* privatization of Egyptian public education as teachers force their students to pay them for outside-of-class private lessons because their formal salaries are too low. Nevertheless, divestiture of state-owned enterprises (SOEs) has been a cornerstone of the process in Egypt. After significant divestitures had already occurred, Egyptian Investment Minister Mahmoud Mohieddin stated in 2007 that 159 public companies were still slated for privatization (quoted in El-Din 2008). Many of these took place in the financial sector: banks, insurance companies, and so forth. Public-private partnerships (PPP), particularly of the Build Operate Transfer (BOT) kind, have also been important, especially in areas involving network infrastructure, for instance in the area of water and wastewater networks (International Resources Group Ltd. & Winrock International 2001: 9).

Just as in many other countries experiencing privatization(2), Egypt’s solid waste management (SWM) sector was one of those affected. The process began in Alexandria, where a \$US446 million fifteen-year solid waste management contract was signed with Onyx, a subsidiary of the French Véolia conglomerate (formerly Vivendi), on 3 September 2000 (Rashed 2002a; 2003c). By October 2001, USAID-paid consultants, in a report prepared for would-be private-sector investors as a basic information resource about environmental business opportunities in Egypt, noted that

large-scale municipal waste management contracts for private sector operation and management, are gradually being tendered by the government through the Governorates. To date 7 tenders have been conducted. It is likely that at least 10 other Governorates will be tendered over the next 2–5 years, presenting major private sector business opportunities. (International Resources Group Ltd. & Winrock International 2001: 9)

This included contracting foreign multinational waste management firms to take over the bulk of garbage collection in Cairo. Within the national context of significant market-based reform across many sectors we have been describing, the reconfiguration of garbage collection was called a ‘privatization’, both in the media and in academic literature (e.g. Fahmi 2005). However, because the bulk of the service prior to ‘privatization’ was provided by the informal sector (there were also a small number of formal, Egyptian companies), and therefore was not the government’s to divest, that is a misleading characterization. Up to that point, the responsibility for SWM had been split between public authorities, who cleaned public spaces such as streets and market places, and a community of informal sector garbage collectors, known as the ‘Zabbaleen’, who collected waste from homes and businesses (what we might think of as ‘private’ space). The

Zabbaleen's jobs, which represented the lion's share of the work, were in a sense outsourced to entities that were *foreign* and *formal* but certainly no more *private*.

In fact, waste collection had already been the target of a large number of reconfigurations since the late 1970s, all of which involved the private sector in one way or another, whether by initially supporting the existing indigenous collectors, or later attempting to alter the domestic private sector landscape through regulation. Rather than being a 'clean break' with the past under a newly ascendant neoliberal logic, the latest move inserts itself into this long continuity of measures on the part of public authorities to 'modernize' and 'beautify' the city. The broad trend of privatization, therefore, was the occasion for concluding contracts that are, arguably, more fundamentally motivated by aesthetic and symbolic imperatives than neoliberal ones. The public authorities' key concern seems to have been that the companies be Western and operate as in the West, in the full symbolic and technical sense: the service was to be 'modern', mechanized and 'rationalized' in terms of routes and schedules. Since the West defined progress, modernity and cleanliness, as it has long done in the minds of Egyptian elites and policymakers (see e.g. Chiffolleau 2001), the Western means for achieving them had to be imported. Perhaps above all, the informal-sector system of waste management, and all that it represented, was to be eliminated, at last. The press and academic articles discussing this so-called privatization (Fahmi 2005; Fahmi and Sutton 2006) – almost all sympathetic to the 'traditional' garbage collectors' cause – predicted the fall of the Zabbaleen as a result of the 'multinationals' takeover'. In 2010, however, the Zabbaleen were still present, whereas most of the companies were embattled or bankrupt.

THE WORLD BANK, 'IRRESPECTIVE OF OTHER TECHNICAL CONSIDERATIONS'

Shortly after Egypt's declaration of the Open Door economic policy in 1974, the World Bank arrived on cue with funds for 'urban development'. During the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Bank catalysed significant change in the waste management sector in Cairo by supporting the extension of the indigenous informal private sector. If the IMF is neoliberalism's battering ram, perhaps the World Bank is one of its Trojan horses: evincing the manner in which it sometimes serves as the vehicle by which countries are penetrated by global discourses and priorities, the first and second World Bank projects (3) (called the 'First Egypt Urban Development Project' and the 'Greater Cairo Urban Development Project') had important components designed to improve 'solid waste management', despite the fact that the Egyptian state did not appear at that time to be requesting assistance with SWM, which 'in Egypt was not considered a public service' (WB 1986a: §34). It was made a priority notwithstanding the wishes of the Government of Egypt because, as the Regional Office for Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, which proposed the loans, later admitted in its Project Completion Report, it had 'essentially applie[d] strategies recommended by the World Bank for populous urban areas in developing countries' (WB 1993: §2.5). According to the same report, these strategies, published in 1976 and which guided one-third of all World Bank lending for urban development worldwide in the late 1970s and early 1980s, attempted to integrate infrastructure, transport and solid waste management in order to produce a 'synergetic

approach to metropolitan development' (*ibid.*: §2.3) that appears to have been undertaken largely without regard to social, political or historical context.

A few framing remarks on the general approach of the World Bank in the two loans we will discuss may be helpful at this stage. One gets a real feeling for the Bank's orientation from an experiment it decided to carry out with a form of stakeholder participation somewhat different from the one in vogue today: participation in cost defrayal. The main 'new approach' that the Bank tested in the first project was whether development projects could operate on a 'cost-recovery' basis by charging fees to their beneficiaries. The Bank envisaged fees that even 'the lowest income groups [...] could afford, thus eliminating the need for direct public subsidies and permitting the project to be replicated on a larger scale' (WB 1986b: v). To give an example of how the fees were to be made so low, in a move it recognized might be 'politically sensitive', the Bank sought euphemistically to make a 'reduction in design standards' for housing, arguing that government housing was too high in quality and therefore mismatched to the means of the urban poor (WB 1978: §6.09 *inter alia*).

Beyond and perhaps above a probable neoliberal confession, it is clear that the World Bank espoused the kind of technocratic discourse that misleadingly proclaims its own political chasteness by espousing technical (read: as opposed to ideological) engineering, management and planning measures that merely seek to improve 'efficiency'. The word 'technical' itself is probably the most overused in the appraisals and audits, appearing twenty-two times in the proposal and forty-eight times in the final report and audit of the first project. The Bank's techniques, especially in the second project, place very heavy emphasis on providing 'technical assistance' and training to the various branches of the Egyptian government. The Regional Office's final report on the first project emphasizes that, where things went smoothly (specifically, the solid waste component of the project), it was because they were dealing 'with clear technical issues and solutions' (WB 1986a: §5.09). The few times when the audit praised the Regional Office for the first project, it emphasized that the measures were 'technically sound, affordable and propitious to eas[y] maintenance and operation of assets' (WB 1986b: §31) or reflected the 'application of sound technical criteria' (*ibid.*: §36). Criticizing the Regional Office for the poor quality of the housing mentioned above, it pointed out that 'appropriateness' in housing standards had simply been equated with lower standards, 'irrespective of other *technical* considerations' (*ibid.*: §60; emphasis added). The obvious *non-technical* objections to the decision – such as the fact that people suffer when forced to live in low-quality housing – were not raised.

According to the World Bank, three principles constituted the 'conceptual framework that served as the basis' for its approach: 'economic viability', 'financial viability' and 'efficiency' (WB 1993: §2.5). What differentiated 'economic' from 'financial' viability, or what constituted 'efficiency' – terms of art in the World Bank's discourse – is not further explained in that report, which is precisely part of the rhetorical strategy of this kind of techno-politics, which attempts to evacuate grounds of contestation by implying that policies are derived of necessity from principles as unarguable as they are unspecific. Whatever they may have meant, to the extent that the World Bank believed *a priori*, as it appears to have believed, that efficiency, and economic and financial viability are always best achieved through the private sector, we might say it was ideologically committed to

neoliberalism, an ideology that – according to Elyachar (2005) and Mitchell (2002), for instance – has dominated a whole cross-section of development strategies of NGOs and state and international agencies in Egypt in recent decades.

The First Project – a small-scale pilot loan of US\$14 million to ‘explore new approaches to urban development in Egypt and demonstrate their feasibility’ (WB 1978: §6.09) – aimed to supply poor areas in Cairo and elsewhere with a combination of housing, infrastructure (e.g. water, sewers, electricity) and garbage collection. The Zabbaleen component was already important in the proposal and became more important as the project was implemented and setbacks provoked the abandonment of many original non-Zabbaleen elements. The audit later deemed the project a failure in virtually all areas except solid waste management (WB 1986b). Two main parts of the loan to carry through concerned the Zabbaleen directly: new garbage collection routes and ‘slum upgrading’ of one of their living spaces, in Manshiet Nasser.

Even while the first project was mired and collapsing, and even though Egypt’s World Bank borrowing status was being downgraded from International Development Association (IDA) terms to less favourable International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) terms, the World Bank authorized a second line of credit eight times larger than the first (WB 1982), again for urban development in Greater Cairo. The second project was a US\$116 million (WB 1982: §2.07) transport-related credit that included US\$15.4 million – more than the entire first project – for waste management.

The World Bank’s observation that in Egypt SWM ‘was not considered a public service’ reflected the actual state of affairs, but, as is often the case in Egypt, formally (in law) things were somewhat different. According to Law No. 38 of 1967 ‘On the Public Cleanliness’, amended by Law No. 31 of 1976 and Law No. 129 of 1982 and the Executive Regulations adopted under these laws, Local Councils (the ‘concerned authority’ in the garbage sector) ‘must assume the responsibility of collecting and carrying the garbage, rubbish and wastes’(4). However – and this is a big however – the law provided that in case of the aforementioned authority not fulfilling its responsibility directly, it could license people to ‘practice the profession of garbage and waste collection’ and it would be up to ‘the occupants of buildings [to] agree with a garbage contractor’ the modalities of collection. The World Bank did not disagree with this approach by suggesting that garbage collection should be directly provided by the local councils, and its conception of ‘the state’ does not appear to have included, of necessity, the provision of garbage collection services. However, having observed that many areas were falling through the cracks, the Bank did believe that garbage collection services needed to be provided by *somebody*. It therefore took upon itself the role of demonstrating to the Egyptian state that a universal garbage collection service could be provided by supporting the pre-existing private indigenous system (the Zabbaleen) to extend their services.

The World Bank located the most economically viable and efficient solution to the waste management problem in the indigenous informal sector. The Bank arranged fee-paying contracts for the Zabbaleen so that they would collect from areas whose waste was too valueless to attract them otherwise (in the absence of this kind of contract, the Zabbaleen make most of their money from recycling and pig raising, not from the collection of fees). The Bank initially paid these fees on behalf of the poor residents, but its hope was

seemingly that one day it might invite them to ‘participate’ in the project, by taking over payment themselves. At the same time, a neighbouring Zabbaleen slum in Manshiet Nasser was targeted for ‘upgrading’. Thus, the Zabbaleen were both the object and the instrument, the target and the technique, of the World Bank’s development project.

In the final review, the World Bank audit noted that, ‘project performance was disappointing in most respects [...] with the important exception of the area of solid waste management’ (WB 1986b: §44). In this area where the solution was achieved ‘on a self-financing, private service provision basis’ (*i.e.* by the Zabbaleen) with minimal government involvement, the project was praised (*ibid.*: §49). Conversely, the housing component, which supported Government of Egypt initiatives, was criticized. ‘[I]n retrospect,’ the audit concludes, ‘supporting the private supply of rental housing’ would have probably been better, though ‘the audit recognizes that this type of analysis was not usually part of project preparation when the first urban development project in Egypt was appraised’ (WB 1986b: §62). The lessons the Bank seems to have taken were a strengthened preference for the ‘type of analysis’ leading to private-sector solutions, and a strengthened resolve to avoid dealing with the Egyptian state as much as possible: the failure of the projects was explained to a great extent in terms of the ‘institutional and cultural framework in Egypt that could arise to hinder progress’ (WB 1986a: §5.07). However, the Bank’s approach to the SWM file did not quite fit the quintessentially neoliberal proclamation of ‘a resurgence of the market and a reduction of state control’ (Obirih-Opareh and Post 2002: 98). To the extent that the Bank hoped Egyptian authorities would continue supporting private waste collection after the loan was expended, the Bank actually promoted an expansion in the state’s role, albeit as indirect purveyor, rather than direct provider. This model eventually took root, but in an altered form discussed in section IV, and only after a detour, which is the subject of the next section.

MODERNITY AND ITS DISCONTENTS: GARBAGE, FOR EXAMPLE

The Egyptian state continued to support or accept the role of the ‘the private sector’ in waste management throughout the 1980s and 1990s. If the World Bank’s ways of thinking lived on, however, it was in a form the Bank would not have recognized: indigenous symbolic and aesthetic concerns either de-natured them, or perhaps revealed, as suggested above, that the same vagueness that partially constitutes their rhetorical force also makes them highly susceptible to being instrumentalized opportunistically to divergent ends. In this section we discuss the Egyptian state’s unwillingness to continue to support the Zabbaleen after the World Bank pulled out, even though that was also the recommendation of the foreign consultants who prepared the 1990 Solid Waste Management Strategy for Cairo.

Obviously the World Bank’s demonstration project failed to convince the key audience since, around the same time the World Bank was preparing its pullout, the concept of establishing a single, centralized cleansing authority ‘emerged as the concerned Governorate agencies realized that traditional approaches [were] not feasible in finding a solution for the cleanliness problem’ (Government of Egypt 2000: 117). Jurisdiction over Cairo city cleaning in the early 1980s was splintered. Each of Greater Cairo’s twelve districts maintained its own sanitation department (EQI 1997: 41). These were

amalgamated by Presidential Decree No. 284 of 1983, not under the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (EEAA), but under the auspices of two new organizations, called the Giza and Cairo Cleanliness/Cleansing and Beautification Authorities (GCBA and CCBA) (5). Under Egyptian law, such ‘General Authorities’ are more or less parastatal: with oversight from the Governor, they are run by boards of directors, have their own budgets, sign contracts independently, and ‘manage [their] own affairs to achieve the purposes for which [they are] established’. In terms of financing, it was noted that since ‘public cleansing is a service utility subsidized by the State budget, [...] the concept of regarding it as an investment process or a profit generating utility was excluded’ (*ibid.*: 118).

To the public authorities at that time ‘cleanliness and beautification’ basically meant garbage collection and disposal, the washing of pavements in public areas (e.g. streets and marketplaces) including the removal of ‘debris and excess dirt from the streets’, minor street repairs, and the establishment and maintenance of parks and green areas (Wilbur Smith Associates 1990: 7-8). Door-to-door services for residents and businesses continued to be provided privately, on an informal basis, by the Zabbaleen. Thus, when they were set up, the CCBA and GCBA did not take on more than the public authorities had previously done, but were simply administrative amalgamations reflecting a preference for centralization and the ‘total perspective’.

On the matter of whether the new general authorities should support the Zabbaleen as the World Bank had done, the consultants who prepared the 1990 *Cairo Governorate, Solid Waste Management Strategy Plan*(6) thought that ‘in spite of their living in smelly and unhygienic surroundings’, the Zabbaleen should be allowed to remain since they continued to turn a profit and their disappearance ‘would seriously impair Cairo’s solid waste management capability’ (Wilbur Smith Associates 1990: 47). However, the CCBA and the GCBA could not see the Zabbaleen as potential allies in the effort to achieve cleanliness and beautification. If anything, they appear to have interpreted their mandate as requiring the elimination of the Zabbaleen, who were seen as the sources of pollution, contamination and garbage, rather than removers of it, as ironically contributing to the city’s dirtiness rather than its clean-up.

The donkey-cart was a veritable lightning rod in the clash between the technical thinking that ignores appearances and the Egyptian state’s more aesthetically and symbolically-minded discourse. EQI, an environmental consulting firm that had worked closely with the World Bank, assessed the donkey-cart’s ‘appropriateness’ according to its cost-effectiveness and technical capacity to provide service, not contemplating whether it projected the right ‘image’. The firm believed that ‘[t]he use of low cost, animal drawn vehicles is particularly appropriate for the extension of affordable service to low income areas and is especially suited to the physical conditions in these areas where streets are often narrow and unpaved’ and that ‘the system of choice for low income communities is the traditional donkeydrawn cart. [...]’

Mechanization of waste collection service should be restricted to upper income areas of the city that are willing to pay for it’ (Neamatalla et al. 1985: 45, 91). The firm’s founder, an Egyptian Christian, was particularly influenced as a graduate student in the USA by the concept of ‘appropriate technology’. When he encountered the Zabbaleen, he was not, the way many Egyptians are, disgusted and embarrassed, but rather amazed and impressed to

find ‘the perfect example’ of the appropriate technology concept in his own home country.⁽⁷⁾

However, in the CCBA’s view, the donkey-cart could not provide a ‘full, *modern* service’ (Wilbur Smith Associates 1990: 114; emphasis added). EQI lamented that,

[w]ith the municipality's growing interest in enhancing Cairo's image as a modern city, the pressure on the Zabbaleen to mechanize the system increased. The authorities increasingly viewed the Zabbaleen's donkey carts as eyesores and traffic hazards [even] in the areas to which they did provide adequate services (1997: 39).

The Governorate and its agencies desire not only to meet technical requirements but also to create a ‘modernized system of solid waste management’ (EQI 1985: 7), based on ‘mechanization’ and purged of what they considered symbols of rural backwardness, resulted in a ban on donkey-carts in the 1980s. By 1990 the CCBA had ‘issued an edict that all Zabbaleen donkeys are to be seized by the police and turned over to the Giza zoo’ (Wilbur Smith Associates 1990: 26). Lest one mistakenly picture a growing herd of donkeys delivered from being beasts of burden and living on popcorn fed to them by children, their fate at the zoo is in fact to feed the large carnivores (Rashed 2003e).

Mechanical technology seems to have been central to the Governorate’s goal of ‘progressing’ into something that might be called ‘modernity’, at least by the Governorate itself. There exists a broader connection between Egyptian perceptions of modernity and ‘showy’ engineering, underscored for instance in Moore’s book that discusses how Egyptian ‘images of development’ often focus on engineers, the country’s ‘most politically influential profession’ (Moore 1994: x). The Egyptian engineer’s long-standing prestige (now waning, as recognized in Moore’s second edition epilogue) was due precisely to a national mystique of industrialization. Engineers produced many of the country’s most powerful modernist and nationalist symbols, from the Aswan High Dam to the appropriation of the Suez Canal, an act Engineer (*mubandis*) Mahmud Yunis was symbolically chosen to perform (see, e.g., Moore 1994: 23, 44, 88).

Lamenting the failure of Egypt to continue down the path of modernity since the construction of the High Dam, Egyptians complain about the downfall of its atomic energy and rocketry programmes, and the Egyptian-born head of the International Atomic Energy Commission, Mohammed El-Baradei, is lionized and considered by many to be a good candidate to lead the country. Anyone with even the vaguest claim to the title – for instance, a plumber – is called *mubandis* or the diminutive *bash-mubandis*, as a sign of respect. Parents whose children have gone to engineering school, even if they only earned the dubious and common qualification ‘agricultural engineer’, are eager to boast about this to neighbours or acquaintances, often mentioning only afterwards, if at all, that their son now works in a shop selling gold, or a tourist bazaar in Khan el-Khalili. And so forth. It should be clear that this kind of engineering fetishism is very different from technical-mindedness. While the World Bank’s work in Egypt in the late 1970s and early 1980s was completely driven by ‘technical considerations’ and ‘efficiency’, it had no *a priori* preference for mechanical technology and technologically complex solutions, or their symbolism.

Beginning in 1987, having rejected the extant Zabbaleen system, indeed having been constituted *as* a rejection of the Zabbaleen system, the CCBA sought to create a new system under which door-to-door and building-to-building collection would to be done by state-licensed private companies. The cleansing of public areas, historically in the hands of the public authorities and at that time dealt with by the CCBA, remained public and was not affected by the reforms. The licensing requirement applied in many areas where the Zabbaleen had been collecting for years or generations, but their rights were not ‘grand-fathered’ and they had to bid alongside would-be upstart competitors. The Zabbaleen were not, at least in theory, excluded from this system since bidding was open to domestic companies and the licensing areas were small. However, only formal (i.e., incorporated) companies were eligible to bid, and one of the conditions on which the licences were issued was that service be provided with a mechanized fleet. The requirements pertaining to the state of the ‘mechanical fleet’ were the lengthiest section in the contract that license-holders had to sign with the CCBA, and were generally aimed at ensuring the ‘internal and external cleanliness of the vehicle [...] as well as disinfection and [attentiveness to] overall appearance’ (Wilbur Smith 1990: 109, 110, where the contract is reproduced in full).

As should be clear, this was in pith and substance a system for either putting the Zabbaleen out of business or forcing them to reform along the lines of the state’s modernist, hygienist vision. The new licensing and contractual arrangements had nothing to do with privatization, but rather sought to erect barriers that would exclude certain private-sector actors already in possession of going concerns. Ironically, given the ‘rolling back the state’ concept, the state’s role was actually augmented under this system as it took on the new administrative burden of creating and enforcing the licensing system.

EQI wanted to keep the Zabbaleen from being shut out, so it created a share-holding corporation called Environmental Protection Company (EPC) which was designed to allow them to formally bid for licenses (EQI 1997: 41-44). EPC functioned for several years before declaring bankruptcy in 1993. Still, even after its bankruptcy, the Zabbaleen managed to survive without it, only partially incorporated into the formal system. Initially the CCBA regulated the Zabbaleen by requiring that they possess permits that could be obtained only upon signature of a contract. Later, however, it eased the requirement to deposits of ‘insurance’, only obliging formal companies to sign the contracts (Iskandar 2001: 17). Over time many Zabbaleen did convert to mechanized collection, though using standard production-line trucks rather than specialized vehicles with compactor devices. Even the Zabbaleen who abided by the regulation, to say nothing of those who did not, continued to operate in a highly informal fashion.

However, just as a significant amount of Zabbaleen collection is done with donkey-carts even today, especially in poorer areas far from the city centre, where police presence and traffic control is limited, the symbolic struggle over the cart continues. In the summer of 2009, when Giza Governor Sayed Abdel Aziz banned the carts for the *n*th time, it was business as usual for the *arbagīyya*, (cart drivers, including not just the Zabbaleen, but fruit sellers and so forth as well) despite campaigns by police to implement the decree. Justifying the decision in the media, one public official declared that banning donkey carts in the streets was a necessity to preserve the ‘civilised face of the capital’, and in order to prevent the offence they cause ‘to the public’s tastes’. He reaffirmed that the campaigns to

eliminate the donkey cart would not cease until the *caro* (cart) disappeared once and for all from Cairo's streets.(8)

MEMORANDUM OF (MIS)UNDERSTANDING (9)

It has been suggested by authors writing on the privatization of waste management in Africa that most of the policy literature driving the process is based on the experience of industrialized, high income 'Northern' countries where public-private partnerships were first experimented with from the 1980s onward. The PPP notion did not properly translate from the Northern 'context in which the state services were already a "going concern", with near universal coverage' to the Southern context in which 'the problem is more about the extension of creation from scratch of services for communities which currently lack them altogether' (Ayee and Crook 2003: 4, references omitted). In a similar vein, writing about the privatization of solid waste infrastructure and services in Asia, Lee argues that:

whereas urban infrastructure and services in developing countries are invariably characterised by deficiencies such as partial coverage and inadequate cost recovery, urban services in the developed nations are mostly 'mature' systems in the sense that near-universal coverage has been achieved, [the] 'user fee' concept has been accepted, and concerns with cross-subsidy between social groups are less imperative. Given the fundamental differences in the *nature* of the deficiencies of urban services between the developed and the developing countries, arguments for the privatisation of urban infrastructure and services in the developed countries may thus have very limited relevance for the cities of developing countries. (1997: 141)

In other words, as the French say of their wine, some ideas don't travel well. The problem of what happens to systems of thought when they are imported from abroad needs to be analysed in a slightly different way in the present case, however. This is not merely because divestiture contemplates the transfer of existing publicly-provided services to private provider(s), whereas in Egypt, as we have seen, there was already a spontaneous market-based solution and the state had no significant going-concern to sell. Although it may have been hoped that the foreign SWM firms would be the *deus ex machina* that many Egyptians probably believed, by the 2000s, was the only plot device that could get them out of their inextricable waste problems, the decision to contract foreign firms in fact had a long genealogy lying in large part outside the neoliberal turn of the 1990s, as we have been seeking to explore.

The longstanding effort to solve Cairo's festering 'dirtiness' and 'modernity' problems, which are perhaps nowhere more acutely felt than in the garbage portfolio, was recast in terms of the logic that happened to be in vogue at the time. The point is not simply that PPP is not a modular gadget and hence cannot be bolted onto dissimilar contexts and expected to produce consistent results, or that neoliberalism is not merely a juggernaut in the face of which Egyptians had no agency, though both of those statements are undoubtedly true. Rather, what this case shows is that as neoliberal concepts migrated into Egypt, their importers' local agents were not passive recipients, but actively appropriated and inflected them through local logics and priorities extrinsic to the (economic) rationale underpinning them at the origin. This helps to explain why the Egyptian state often

frustrated the realization of the supposed benefits of the private sector after having itself claimed to embrace them. Privatization could be used as a buzzword to repackage a process that was ongoing for a longer period of time, much the way it has served to concentrate and consolidate elite power, transmogrifying it from political to economic form, but preserving essentially the same repressive, nepotistic structure that existed prior to the 'reform' (see, e.g., Bush and Bromley 1994; Mitchell 1999; Kienle 2008).

In 2000, the Government of Egypt published a *National Strategy for Integrated Municipal Solid Waste Management* that described 'the existing undesirable state' and outlined an 'aggressive national strategy' and vision that would allow the country to move toward 'the desired future state' (p.19; references to the *National Strategy* are given only as page numbers in this section). The government had promised the USA that it would develop this strategy in a 1999 Memorandum of Understanding it signed with USAID, aimed at 'improv[ing] efficiency and performance of the solid waste management systems through a combination of strategic planning, improved administration, greater public awareness, and more active participation in the private sector' (International Resources Group/EPIQ 2002).

One of the cornerstones of the strategy was a 'more active participation by the private sector', and the *National Strategy* was part and parcel of the subsequent calls for tender that culminated in the contracts with foreign SWM firms. This must have pleased USAID, since, as it explains in its document 'Privatizing Solid Waste Management Services: USAID helps provide a cleaner, healthier environment for over 15 million Egyptians', it had invested significantly in the effort to see Egyptian waste collection privatized: 'Due to the growing inadequacies of SWM service provided by the public sector, USAID began working with the government of Egypt to privatize these services in areas that are homes to more than 15 million Egyptians. In the past five years, USAID has devoted some \$5.72 million to this effort' (USAID/Egypt undated). However, the two partners to the Memorandum of Understanding, as we will see, understood the meaning of the contracts with foreign companies differently.

Ignoring the fact that formal-sector waste collection jobs were often created at the expense of the livelihood of informal-sector collectors,⁽¹⁰⁾ USAID exclaimed that 'privatization of SWM services created thousands of better paying jobs and encouraged foreign investment. Over 15,000 new general labor jobs have already been generated or will soon be created in the private sector, and' – in a manner that ironically attempts to eat the cake of the state while having it too, to simultaneously roll it back while rolling it out – '1,000 new contract monitoring jobs created in the public sector' (USAID/Egypt). In addition to whatever neoliberal ideological belief in the superiority of private service USAID may have espoused, the move also had its predictable self-interested dimension, since it aimed to create markets for US businesses: USAID boasted that 'total estimated value of equipment and materials provided by US manufacturers for the new activities in this sector could eventually exceed \$140 million'. Indeed, as USAID's consultants point out, 'donor financing and technical assistance' (i.e., the practice of international development) 'has been a crucial driver of environmental business opportunities in Egypt' through the 1990s, and was likely to remain so (International Resources Group Ltd. & Winrock International 2001). Funnily enough, one of the growing business opportunities the consultants were able to identify in the

environmental sector was the business they were themselves in, the ‘market for local and outside consulting services’ (*ibid.*: 16).

From the Egyptian perspective, however, the contracts embodied the hope that the ‘city would soon rise to international standards of cleanliness’ (Rashed 2004). The *National Strategy* observed that, in the current situation:

Increasing waste amounts have been accumulating at various places and becoming foci for pollution, bad smells and non-appealing appearance. Also, ineffective and environmentally unsound handling, treatment, recycling and disposal methods become prevalent [an indirect way of referring to the Zabbaleen, J.F.], adding more to the already deteriorating environmental quality. (*National Strategy*, p. 8)

In the context of a ‘general progressive national movement’ – that is, a national preoccupation with achieving ‘progress’ – the ‘time was ripe for action’, according to the Government of Egypt (p.7). The ‘consequences on public health, environment and national economy (particularly as related to manpower productivity and tourism)’ of the accumulation of waste in Cairo, which had become ‘quite apparent and acute’, ‘culminated in political commitment at the highest level [the standard euphemism for President Mubarak] for a decisive confrontation towards a complete eradication of this pervasive problem based on a well-founded scientifically planned approach’ (p.7). Science and planning must be read as the antithesis of the existing system, which is characterized as ‘primitive’, ‘dating back to the early decades of this century’ (p.25), ‘random’ and so forth.

‘The problem – very apparent’ was that ‘litter and Solid Waste (SW) accumulations are seen everywhere’. Although there are many causes, the key one picked out for the executive summary of the *National Strategy* was ‘inappropriate (appearance and function wise) means and methods’ (p.5) for disposal. Notwithstanding the conversion of the Zabbaleen to a mainly mechanized service, which would appear to have resolved the main rub of the late 1980s, the *National Strategy*’s position was that that ‘[w]hile maximum recovery [i.e., recycling of waste] is achieved at the *Zabbaleen* settlements, the aesthetics and hygiene at these areas are unacceptable’ (p.24). Indeed, the Zabbaleen are often seen not as removers of waste who clean the city, but rather as the sources of pollution who, by their presence, make the city dirtier. Consistent with this attitude, the report considers that among the ‘symptoms of the problem that are clearly evident to everybody’ is the ‘frequent resort to ineffective and environmentally unsound handling, treatment and recycling techniques that may pose health risks’ (p.12-13). If the *National Strategy* does not explicitly envisage the elimination of the Zabbaleen, that may only be because they had already been dealt with in the mind of the *National Strategy*’s authors, who note that their settlements were already in the process of being ‘relocated to assigned areas further from the cities (about 40–50 km)’, which would be ‘well-planned from the beginning’ (p.26). In any case, no role was allotted to them under the *National Strategy*.

The government affirmed that in its vision for the future, ‘public cleansing services and SWM will be gradually delegated to the private sector. The role of governmental agencies will then be [...] grounded [in a] “public-private partnership” approach’ (p.8). Although it is not explicitly mentioned that the private partners will be non-Egyptian, the *National Strategy* foreshadows this with its observation that ‘most developed and rich developing

countries have achieved high standards of public cleanliness' whereas 'many developing countries (in the middle on [sic] low-income bracket) are struggling with MSW problems since they lack most of the prerequisites for success' (p.32). In that light, it would be senseless to search for the solution in places that are constitutionally lacking the prerequisites for public cleanliness, rather than importing the techniques of locations with proven track records.

Since 'time is money', the *National Strategy*, like the whole neoliberal turn, seeks to bring those few services, objects or relationships that have escaped pricing into the fold of monetization in the belief that setting price signals will cause us finally to begin relating to them in more 'efficient' and 'rational' ways, albeit in the highly idiosyncratic economic definitions of those terms. Thus the *National Strategy* introduced what it seems to believe was a novel concept that would at last imbue the environmental portfolio with a logic the lack of which perhaps explains the perennial trouble in getting people to take 'ownership' of it, as the phrase goes: in the future, 'the concept of attaching an economic value to wastes, as being recoverable resources, will be fully stressed as a necessary means for reducing their disposal costs and negative environmental effects' (p.11). Of course the Zabbaleen have been doing this for decades; it is the very premise of their existence. The point is not to show that the *National Strategy* is unoriginal, but rather that the intellectual personality of neoliberalism is that of Isaiah Berlin's hedgehog: it seeks to relate everything to a single, universal vision or organizing principle in terms of which alone all things of the world acquire their significance. In a logic that makes economic value the measure of all things, even, or perhaps especially, that which is defined precisely by the absence of value – waste – and therefore poses a challenge to the ultimate of objective of encircling and enclosing all existence into a grand unified theory with a single coupling constant at its base – economic value – even that which is *defined* by its lack of economic value must be re-absorbed into the market logic.

Though the term 'participation' is not part of the *National Strategy* as such, it might well have been, at least in the sense Mosse has observed – 'public works agencies often view "participation" as a means to reduce operation and maintenance costs' (Mosse 2001: 29) – and the World Bank earlier practised: 'cost recovery' mechanisms (user fees) would be introduced. These were justified through recourse to two 'two basic principles': 'the "polluter and user pays" principle, and the fair cost burden distribution among the masses, taking into account the socio-economic realities of the served community' principle (p.60). The principles themselves are not justified, but are regarded as the axioms from which the shape of a SWM system can be deduced. The 'polluter pays' principle is transformed from a concept of justice designed to defeat impunity in the international environmental legal scene into a model for cost-distribution.

The process of privatization was overseen by a Ministerial Committee composed of representatives of the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Finances, and the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency. No members of civil society, and certainly no Zabbaleen, appear to have been invited to participate in it. The only 'participation' was by multinational corporations in the tender process. According to a call published in *Al-Abram* on 6 May 2000, bid documents were available *abroad*, from Egyptian embassies. This, along with the requirements for eligibility – 'specialized international companies with experience

and technical, financial and administrative expertise in waste collection, sorting and transportation from all sources, using modern technology in treatment, either through recycling or sanitary landfilling, according to international regulations and specifications’ – made clear that the Egyptian state was seeking foreign contractors. The phrase ‘specialized international companies’ was, as though for emphasis, repeated in each of the three paragraphs of the announcement. The outcome of this process was the conclusion of a series of contracts with mainly Spanish and Italian firms.

Under the 1980s licensing system, the service was paid through a fee the companies collected for themselves directly from service recipients (as well as from the recovery of recyclables and fattening of pigs, where the Zabbaleen were concerned, as we have seen). Conversely, the multinationals were paid by the state, which raised the funds to meet its new obligations – estimated at \$2.6 billion between 2000 and 2007 (International Resources Group Ltd. & Winrock International 2001) – by adding a levy to the electricity bill.⁽¹¹⁾ The levy is a fixed monthly fee depending on the categorization of the premises (commercial, residential etc., and depending on the social class of the neighbourhood). With the company providing the service and the state acting as its billing department (which is much more effective than private-party billing: by threatening to cut power the state can leverage the coercive power of the utility to extract payment), a system like that proposed by the World Bank had been finally implemented, albeit to the detriment rather than in support of the Zabbaleen. One of the lesser ironies of this story is that the Zabbaleen themselves are charged (on their electricity bills) for ‘garbage collection’ even though, needless to say, the companies do not serve them.

PARTICIPATION AS REACTION

The manner in which the Zabbaleen ‘participated’ in this process from which they were formally excluded (to such an extent that they seem to have learned of the foreign contracts, as a *fait accompli*, from the press (Dollet 2003)), mainly involved a complex series of adaptation strategies and what Scott famously called ‘everyday forms of resistance’ (1985). Their attempts to oppose the companies’ arrival politically – what ‘participation’ perhaps conventionally refers to – were brief and futile. Just as they were violently suppressed for protesting the slaughter of pigs during the H1N1 flu crisis in May 2009, a number of Zabbaleen were immediately arrested during a protest they staged against the arrival of the foreign companies on 3 July 2003 (Dollet 2003), and the brief period of formal political activism against the arrival of the foreign companies seems to have gone no further.

The Zabbaleen’s only significant source of political clout is formidable in theory but impossible to execute in practice: a strike would bury the city in waste in short order, but in addition to lacking the organizational structure to coordinate this kind of action, their power to withhold their services is thwarted by their own dependence on a regular stream of waste. In addition to financial precariousness that makes reducing their revenues difficult, the need to feed the pigs (in the early 2000s, no longer the case today) ensured extreme regularity of collection. ‘Collection never stops’, except in the case of those Zabbaleen who can afford to purchase feed for their pigs in order to liberate themselves for several days to travel to Assyut for the festival of the Virgin Mary in the summer.⁽¹²⁾

More broadly, Egypt's repressive totalitarian regime practises arbitrary detention, frequently tortures prisoners, and has very limited tolerance for democratic expression, either in the press or through public gatherings. The country's emergency law, which temporarily abrogates normal due process and vests extraordinary powers in the executive in order to face an urgent, critical situation, has been continuously in force for nearly 30 years, making protest a perilous and above all fruitless avenue for participation, no matter who is concerned.

The Zabbaleen had much greater success with 'weapons of the weak'-style 'participation' (which is to say, resistance: whether participation can be expanded to include resistance is a question addressed in the conclusion). They began robbing and sabotaging the foreign companies, engaging them in a sort of guerrilla-style war of attrition. The companies had huge problems with theft of waste bin (not just by the Zabbaleen – many Egyptians found they made handy containers for selling cold beverages, storing meat, pickling vegetables etc.), and with deliberate dumping of waste outside of the containers in the zones from which they were supposed to collect, apparently to prove that they could not do the job and to cause them to incur fines from the city for non-compliance with their contractual terms.

The key struggle, from the Zabbaleen point of view, concerned access to and ownership over waste, which is a resource and a source of income over which the Zabbaleen did not wish to relinquish control (see, e.g., Rashed 2002a; 2002b; 2003d; 2003b). One informal garbage collector stated in a 2002 interview with a journalist: 'We want the garbage because it is our lifeline' (quoted in Rashed 2002b). Indeed, the main source of Zabbaleen revenue both before and after the arrival of the foreign companies was the sale of recyclables recovered from the collected waste, and the slaughter and sale of pigs raised on the inorganic waste.⁽¹³⁾ Collection fees were never a major source of revenue; low to begin with, they were often fully or partially retained by middlemen. Where the garbage is particularly rich, the Zabbaleen often actually pay owners/gatekeepers for access (e.g. Meyer 1987: 81). For example, in 2007 the Nile Hilton received 3000LE (approx. US\$500) monthly for the exclusive right to its garbage.⁽¹⁴⁾

Under the contracts, in addition to taking over the formerly public responsibility for cleaning streets, market-places and so forth, the firms also became responsible for household and business waste collection both in areas serviced by the Zabbaleen and un-serviced areas. In the areas un-serviced by the Zabbaleen, companies used uniformed employees, most of whom were hired from outside the traditional Zabbaleen profession, which is a closed-shop, hereditary group. In these areas, the companies faced challenges like the narrow streets (which required specialized equipment, hence the earlier discussion over 'appropriate technology'), but there was no direct conflict with the Zabbaleen, since they were not interested in collecting the waste produced by the poor.

However, in the areas serviced by the Zabbaleen, the Egyptian licensing authorities stopped renewing the licences of the existing service providers, unilaterally putting them out of business (Rashed 2003d). The manner in which each individual *zabbal* (singular of Zabbaleen) succeeded, or in some cases failed, to maintain access to waste is exceedingly complex and cannot be fully discussed in the present paper.⁽¹⁵⁾ Briefly, it inevitably involved a sophisticated and idiosyncratic series of building- and apartment-level

negotiations and bribes with doormen, local police, shop owners, the uniformed employees of foreign companies themselves, and anyone else with a sliver of authority they reckoned on transforming into a sliver of the pie. For example, some enterprising doormen [masc. sing. *bawab*] took advantage of the new system to tell residents that the *zabbal* would no longer be coming to their door, but that they, the *bawab*, would carry the waste to the street-level dumpsters for a small fee. In such cases, the *bawab* would typically store the waste then extort a fee from the *zabbal* in order to access the waste, or sort out the plastics himself in order to sell them to itinerant buyers of *bekia* (a different livelihood group from the Zabbaleen), or both. Where Zabbaleen collected from marketplaces or businesses such as the Bab el-Louq market or the American University, they often paid bribes to the uniformed company employees to allow them (the Zabbaleen) to pass prior to the company trucks and skim off the valuable items, or so that the uniformed employees would set valuable items aside in pre-agreed locations as they went about and swept up the streets.

Access also depended on the attitude of the person producing the waste. For instance, many inhabitants, especially Christian ones, take pity on their *zabbal* and continued to employ him as a form of charity. Others felt loyal to their longstanding relationship. Others, who could not afford to do this or were more rigid in their desire to conform to the new system, might allow the *zabbal* to take their waste but refuse to pay him his usual fee, arguing that they now paid for his services via their electricity bill. Still others refused outright to hand over their waste, and began to carry it themselves to a public container (the *zabbal* normally comes to one's door), where it might be scavenged by a *zabbal* other than the one who used to collect it.

Although it involves glossing over a great deal of complexity only just hinted at, it is possible to make some broad remarks about structural factors that influenced access to waste. In the areas where the companies did not have a contractually stipulated right of ownership over the waste, it was easier for them to accept that the Zabbaleen skim off the items they desired. These included Giza and Alexandria. However, in Cairo proper, the companies tried to deny the Zabbaleen access to the waste because ownership over it was given to the companies under their contracts. In these areas, where the companies 'owned' the waste, the issue of access varied, structurally, based on whether the company in question used Zabbaleen as subcontractors or not. Although both the subcontracted and the non-subcontracted Zabbaleen were able to maintain access to waste, they did so in different ways.

Zabbaleen under subcontract

Those companies that employed the Zabbaleen as subcontractors – above all, AAEC – fared the best. Indeed, when the Spanish firm ENSER terminated its contract prematurely, its zones were taken over by AAEC, a move many of the other companies were not in a position to make, since they were too busy licking their wounds and fighting rearguard actions on their initial territories. A spokesman for one of the foreign companies in the Cairo zone initially held fast on the point of waste ownership, saying that although his firm was willing to hire some informal sector workers as employees, it would not give them access to the waste even after it had been deposited in the landfill: 'the waste remains our

property as the contract we signed with the governorate stipulates' (quoted in Rashed 2003a). However, this position proved impossible to maintain in practice. AAEC reached a sort of gentleman's agreement with the Zabbaleen subcontractors that allowed them to skim off the items they wanted from the waste they were hired by the company to collect. The Zabbaleen who work for AAEC collect as they have always done, with their same privately owned trucks and typically (but not always) without uniforms, except that they are forbidden from requesting fees from apartments directly, and must provide the service in exchange for the fee they receive from the company. In practice, matters are different, and the companies have often complained that the Zabbaleen pressure the inhabitants to pay them directly also, so as to double the salary they receive from the company (Abde Raouf 2006). At the end of their workday, they take the waste they have collected back to their home and sort it for the valuables they wish to keep. The following day, as they begin work, they back-haul the unwanted waste to AAEC transfer stations where company trucks carry it, at last, to landfills.

Zabbaleen not under subcontract

IES, on the contrary, did not to employ subcontractors to provide door-to-door collection, and relied on a more Western-style system of placing containers in strategic public locations, hoping inhabitants would carry their waste to those containers. Since the Zabbaleen wished to access the waste and most inhabitants were not eager to carry their waste to the containers, agreements were reached behind the back of the company and the former system of collection was little perturbed. Essentially, IES took over the cleaning of public space – the service once provided by the government – and in parallel to it, just as before, the Zabbaleen went on collecting their waste from private dwellings and businesses. In these areas, the Zabbaleen have no formal arrangement with the companies to use their transfer stations, but often take advantage of their containers in order to get rid of the portion of the waste without economic value (they also do this even in AAEC zones, since not all the Zabbaleen operating in AAEC zones are hired by AAEC). The companies are legally required to dispose of the waste in their containers by taking it to the city's dumpsites and are fined when the dumpsters are not regularly cleared. Many therefore interpreted the Zabbaleen dumping as sabotage, but that was not always its intent.

On the contrary, the Zabbaleen who do this actually assist the companies and the residents, since they both diminish the amount of waste the company must dispose of by extracting recyclables, and also transport the remainder to the containers, where it is supposed to end up, saving the residents from having to do so. This has also, paradoxically, been of some benefit to the Zabbaleen, who, ironically, have themselves always had their own waste problem: how to dispose of the items they cannot sell or feed to pigs. In the past they have burned this waste, engaged in fly-tipping in hilly or desert areas, or disposed of it in municipal dumps (subject to tipping fees), depending on the circumstances. The manner in which the Zabbaleen have piggy-backed on the foreign companies and now use them to help dispose of their non-recyclable waste is one of the creative forms of participation/resistance they have devised in response to this new system.

Scavenging

The increase in the number of public containers, which are magnets that create waste concentrations in public spaces and create suitable sites for scavenging, as well as the increased exclusion of Zabbaleen from private space under the system of the foreign companies has led to an increase in the amount scavenging activity. Indeed, this seems to be one of the major shifts in the profession over the last decade. Historically, unlike the informal waste collectors in many developing and almost all of those in developed countries, the Zabbaleen were not mainly what are alternatively called scavengers, roamers, foragers, etc. EQI remarked in the mid-1980s that '[i]n contrast with many major metropolitan areas in the Third World, scavenging on municipal dump sites is a relatively limited phenomenon in Cairo' (Neamatalla et al. 1985: 25; see also Neamatalla et al. 1987). That continued to be the case just prior to the arrival of foreign waste management firms, when another consulting firm with significant Zabbaleen experience estimated that only 10 per cent of the Zabbaleen roamed the city skimming valuables from public dumpsters (Iskandar 2001: 8, 12).

Increasingly, even those Zabbaleen with regular collection routes are conceiving of themselves less as service providers and more as scavengers. For instance, many Zabbaleen have begun sorting their waste in the city as they collect, rather than transporting all collected waste to their home for sorting. This phenomenon was exacerbated after the H1N1 flu crisis because once their pigs were slaughtered the Zabbaleen no longer had any use for organic wastes. Relatedly, in a limited number of neighbourhoods that fall outside the catchment areas of the companies, Zabbaleen may collect on a one-off basis, requesting that the residents pay them on the spot for their services, rather than monthly, as was once the norm.

CONCLUSION

Driven from the outside into the country, then from the top down within the country, the private sector reform of SWM of the early 2000s was supposed to simplify and 'rationalize' the system, but instead resulted in a system more complex than ever before. By super-imposing new layers of bureaucracy and administration, the 'rolling back the state' rhetoric that justified these reforms may have ironically led to the state inserting itself into a sector from which it was previously absent.

These were expert rather than participative processes. Nevertheless, the two main Egyptian 'actors' – the state and the informal sector – each retained an important amount of agency. The Egyptian state, rather than being overrun by a foreign juggernaut, preserved a domain of creative autonomy even while yielding to international trends and pressures. It 'privatised' SWM in a manner that creolized the neoliberal creed, giving it new, local meanings. The government's longstanding aesthetic and symbolic preoccupations over garbage and its relation to Cairo's modernity and image have a kind of protean power to recast periodically themselves in whatever are the terms of the day. Neoliberalism is certainly not a series of forgone conclusions: a highly 'neoliberal' institution such as the World Bank took a stance almost exactly opposite to that of the Government of Egypt when confronted with the same informal-sector garbage collectors. Meanwhile the

Zabbaleen, who were, on a formal level, completely excluded from the process (one of its objectives was precisely to exclude them), managed to force their way in through acts of resistance. Ultimately they survived, which is more than can be said of some of the companies.

Should the Zabbaleen role in this case be considered ‘participation’? If we take ‘neutrality’, ‘withdrawal’, ‘indifference’ and so forth as participation’s opposites, then resistance or contestation of the kind the Zabbaleen manifested may be, *stricto sensu*, defined as forms of participation. Even though participation need not always involve agreement, it seems to involve a collaborative aspect or a dimension of shared purpose or taking part that would be lost on this interpretation, however. Analytically, it is probably more useful, therefore, to distinguish resistance from participation, than to try to equate them, lest participation become the kind of concept that in attempting to touch everything, grasps nothing.

While there is of course planning involved in the creation and implementation of any project, participation advocates a casuistic approach rather than a drawing-board approach. Instead of designing picture-perfect master plans, participation emphasizes a detailed, needs-driven rather than elegance-driven approach. In this sense it can be said to be a bottom-up process, more in the nature of the common law, building piecemeal solutions to specific cases into a larger system, rather than trying to impose the elegance of a prefabricated system onto all the myriad cases it may encounter. Planning is a term that should be associated more with a expertise-derived system of authority.

Outsiders seeking to intervene in a community ought to be bound, at minimum, by a duty to notify those who will have to live with their consequences and listen to their opinion about the intervention. More likely, the duty should be interpreted as going much beyond consultation and accommodation, to the point of requiring full involvement of the community through discussion, project design and implementation, and of course informed consent. The scope or extent of this duty can perhaps be interpreted as varying according to the circumstances, particularly the impact of the proposed intervention and the nature of the intervening institution (for instance, is it elected, governmental, grass-roots, national, or is it foreign, expert, technical, etc.?). The means for discharging the duty could be called ‘participation’.

Endnotes

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1. One of the most significant partners of the Egyptian government for the purposes of ‘development’ – the Federal Republic of Germany’s agency for technical cooperation, the GTZ – builds participation into the very title of its mission in Egypt, which it calls the ‘Participatory Development Project’ or PDP (see generally Kipper & Fischer 2009).
2. Garbage collection, jargonized as ‘solid waste management’ (SWM), is an important sector in the global trend toward market-driven reform, particularly in the area of resource management. For instance, some authors claim that it is the foremost example of a traditionally public service experiencing widespread privatization in Asia (Lee 1997: 144) and there are numerous examples of

cities privatizing SWM throughout Sub-Saharan Africa (Post 1999; Obirih-Opareh and Post 2002) and Latin America (Batley 1996: see esp. 741-744), for example.

3. Other loans were made earlier and throughout this period. Here we focus on those World Bank projects calling themselves ‘development projects’ and which focussed on urban Cairo, containing solid waste components.

4. Based on the outline of the applicable legal framework in Annex 3 of the Government of Egypt’s 2000 *National Strategy*.

5. [*bayit al-nazafa wil-tagmil*] is also sometimes translated as ‘Beautification and Sanitation Authority’ (e.g. Neamatalla et al. 1985). Most details concerning the legal framework are once again borrowed from Annex 3 of the Government of Egypt’s 2000 *National Strategy*.

6. Not an official document but a report prepared by consulting firm Wilbur Smith Associates, of the Deloitte and Touche Development Consulting Group, Public Administration and Service branch of the Engineering and Geological Consulting Group, who were under retainer by USAID Egypt through the 1980s in the context of its ‘Local Development II Urban Project’.

7. Interview, 13 April 2009, Cairo.

8. *October Weekly*, 9 August 2009.

9. Special thanks to Lise Debout without whom it would have been impossible to complete this section.

10. Similarly, officials who claimed to have created 10,000 new job opportunities by formalizing waste collection in Addis Ababa failed to take into account the manner in which their decision dispossessed and evicted the pre-existing, informal collectors (Baudoin et al. 2010).

11. This method has been used for garbage collection billing in other settings (in some cases the water bill is also used) to avoid the so-called free-rider/civil disobedience problems of non-payment (Post 1999: 212).

12. Fieldnotes, August 2007.

13. In May 2009 the H1N1 (‘swine’) flu crisis led Egypt to slaughter all pigs in the country as a preventive measure. The Zabbaleen economy was severely harmed as a result. Egypt appears to have been the only state in the world to take this bizarre and scientifically unjustifiable step.

14. Fieldnotes 16 August 2007.

15. The brief account given from this point to the end of the section is based on various observations and collection rounds which were performed with the Zabbaleen, especially those of Ezbet el Nakhl (who collect on both IES and AAEC territory), as well as a ‘stakeout’ of a site on Falaky St. (Downtown), which was observed and photographed from a balcony for a period of 24 consecutive hours on three separate occasions. Special thanks to Nicole Javalay, Chantal Hudson, Pierre Desvaux, Reinout Meijnen and Camille for their vigils on the balcony. Thanks to Pierre Desvaux for sharing scavenging and collection adventures out of Ezbet el Nakhl – some of the best fieldwork moments – and to AAEC and the ‘Trashopolis’ film crew for facilitating a view of things from a very different angle. The Zabbaleen, whose help was of course the greatest, are named only in confidential fieldnotes.

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CHAPTER SIX

Actors' Interactions at the Policy Level and Implications for Exclusion: Nepal's Community Forestry

Manohara Khadka

INTRODUCTION

Community Forestry (CF), a forest management policy based on partnership between the government and local communities, is used in more than fifty countries (FAO 1999: 29). It is seen by international development agencies and governments as a tool for poverty reduction and sustainable natural resource management. In Nepal, CF is heralded as an appropriate instrument to help accomplish the poverty reduction goal of the country, as per the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper of 2002 and the Millennium Development Goals (Kanel 2004). CF is seen as a potential strategy of development in Nepal, consistent with the current global environmental agenda against climate change (DoF 2008).

Much has been written about the changes taking place in Nepal because of CF. Forest conditions have improved in community-managed forests (Karna et al. 2004, Gautam and Shivakoti 2005). CF has contributed to enhancing the capacity of government staff and civil society (Pokharel and Niraula 2004). Civil society organisations are engaged in policy deliberations (Britt 2002, Ojha and Timsina 2008). Opportunities for livelihood improvement for the poor have been created at the grassroots through change in forest management systems (Hobley 2008). Community forest user groups (FUGs hereafter) have been able to generate funds from the sale of forest products, and these funds are being used for forest conservation and community development (Kanel 2004, Shrestha and Khadka 2004, Koirala 2007).

However, in addition to these positive changes, the CF literature also discusses the problem of exclusion. Limited access to resources and economic benefits and lack of influence over the operation of FUGs by the poor, *dalits*, landless nomads, indigenous ethnic groups (e.g. *majhi*), women and other disadvantaged groups has been commonly reported in the CF literature (Baral 1993, Agarwal 2001, Lama and Buchy 2002, Winrock 2002, Adhikari 2005, Dev et al. 2003, Dhakal 2006, Rai Paudyal 2008, Yadav et al. 2008). These problems were first identified in the 1980s and persist in CF to the present (see Khadka 2009).

Socio-cultural, economic and institutional factors at the community level have been blamed for the exclusion of people with low influence. However, these community-level factors are not sufficient to explain selective inclusion in CF. CF policy in itself is exclusionary

(Khadka 2009: 227). For example, the policy does not recognise social concepts in managing local forest resources. It largely focuses on scientific forestry ideology in the terms and conditions of partnerships. The provisions articulated in the legislation are not conducive to the poor and illiterate participating in the executive bodies of FUGs. The required maintenance of environmental and financial records and submission of progress reports to forest authorities demand literacy and networking skills from members of FUGs. This in turn blocks the poor, illiterate *dalits* and differently able people, who have little access to information and informal networks, to hold leadership positions. The policy recognises people's participation to some extent, but the forest department (DoF hereafter) has power over the mobilisation of FUGs. While the policy recognises the power relationships between the state and the community, it does not recognise the role of power of local elites over FUGs (Khadka 2009). The restriction of FUG membership to household heads excludes many women. Although all women provide a significant amount of labour for the rural production system, most lack control over production assets (Buchy and Rai 2008: 131). The membership fee excludes the poorest of the poor from membership (ibid: 128). Similarly, FUGs' norms for forest protection increase the economic burden of the poorest. Poor households pay a relatively higher amount of fine if they illegally take out basic forest products from community forests. FUGs' policies on forest use do not meet the needs of the poorest and *dalits* for subsistence living (Timsina 2003).

This paper explores why CF policy has not been changed to address these problems, despite the increasing attention to people and poverty in the CF discourse. One potential answer to this question is that the dominance of eco-centric ideas in the CF discourse has not shifted. Ideas and policies are shaped by the interaction of powerful national and international actors, and the structure and organisation of these interactions and embedded power relationships tend to reinforce techno-scientific and instrumental ways of doing things. As a result, there is little acknowledgement that CF policy and practice needs to change to address persistent exclusion.

With this hypothesis in mind, this paper analyses the key actors engaged in the operation of CF policy, their perceptions of exclusion, and institutional factors that contribute to developing these perceptions. The analysis is based on interviews, observations, and a literature review and documentary analysis done in 2006. People interviewed included forestry and non-forestry professionals, members of non-state actors engaged in CF, key CF actors within the forest ministry, the DoF, key CF donors and the staff of CF projects in Nepal.

The following section gives a brief overview of the structure of CF in Nepal along with its documented exclusionary outcomes. The paper then defines concepts employed in the analysis. Thereafter, the paper identifies the ways in which actors' interactions at the policy sphere have addressed or failed to address local exclusionary social-cultural, economic, and institutional factors to improve decision making power and resource opportunities for the excluded groups.

NEPALI COMMUNITY FORESTRY AND ITS EXCLUSIONARY OUTCOMES

As a response to the environmental crisis, the government of Nepal passed the CF policy in 1976. The policy embraces the participation philosophy (MFSC 1988a). More than 70 out of 75 districts implement CF under the administrative arrangement of the DoF with donor support. The current model of CF is based on FUGs, i.e., village-based organisations established to protect, develop and use a particular area of national forest as a community forest under the Forest Act of 1993 and Forest Rule of 1995. FUGs receive technical, financial and institutional support from a large number of national and international actors.

A FUG consists of a specific group of households. Each FUG has its executive committee which is elected by the general assembly of FUG members, in order to coordinate and implement national policy and FUG decisions. To be legally recognised, a FUG must develop a constitution and register at the district forest office (DFO), the district level authority of the DoF (Kanel 2001). The district forest officer hands over to the FUG a delineated part of national forest as community forest under the conditions and terms specified in a forest operational plan, which must be consistent with the forest legislation and decisions of the forest ministry and department. In this sense, district forest officers who approve the plans and constitutions of FUGs are the institutional 'gatekeepers' in the CF operation (Kanel 2001: 72).

Many scholars have documented exclusionary outcomes in CF, focusing primarily on households that do not have access to CF benefits. One study in Nepal found that almost half of the FUGs studied have excluded the blacksmiths from charcoal collection (Dhakal 2006: 28). By some accounts, access to forest resources by the poor and the low castes has even decreased since the CF programme in Nepal began (Winrock 2002, Adhikari et al. 2004, Aryal 2005, Dhakal et al. 2005). Others have shown that poor households benefitted less than wealthier households from the forest policy change (Bhattarai and Ojha 2000, Thapa 2001, Dev et al. 2003, Malla et al. 2003, Koirala 2007), and that the costs of participation for the poor may exceed the benefits. FUG's price and payment policies enabled better-off households to capture the annual benefits generated by community forests (Iversen et al. 2006). The socio-economic profile of individuals, social relations and the caste system shape participation of the poor and *dalits* in the CF, which in turn affects their access to forest resources and benefits (Lama and Buchy 2002, Timsina 2003, Adhikari 2005, Maskey et al. 2006, Yadav et al. 2008).

In explaining the causes of exclusion, scholars have focused exclusively on local socio-cultural, economic and institutional factors. The rich, local elites and high-caste people have been able to influence the use and distribution of forest resources and income generated from community forests, as they dominate decision-making position in the executive committees (Iversen et al. 2006, Koirala 2007, Rai Paudyal 2008, Yadav et al. 2008). Moreover, the caste ideology, private resource entitlement, social perception towards *dalits* and women, and traditional gender ideology have constrained *dalits*, the poor and women from taking part in decision-making position in FUGs (Inserra 1988, Hogley 1990, Chhetri and Nurse 1992, Baral 1993, Bhattarai and Ojha 2000, Agarwal 2001, Lama and Buchy 2002, Nightingale 2002, Lachapelle et al. 2004). This evidence reminds us of the

importance of policy processes at the macro level in which national and international actors interact in CF development.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This paper conceptualises exclusion not only as the result of local economic, social, political and physical factors but also as an outcome of actors' interactions at the policy-making level. Actors' interactions can be defined as the process that takes place between national and international actors in order to design and implement CF policy in Nepal. Whether the outcome of the interactions supports the poorest and socially excluded groups depends on three factors; the power relationships between actors, their perception of 'exclusion' issues in CF, and institutional factors that perpetuate the dominant ideology for the operation of CF.

Social exclusion/inclusion

Social scientists talk about social exclusion in terms of complex processes, encompassing multiple dimensions along which people are disadvantaged as individuals, households, residents of a particular place or members of a social group (Silver 1994, Kabeer 2000, Percy-Smith 2000, Silver 2007). The concept of social exclusion is broader than poverty and goes beyond the distribution of resources to individuals or households in need. Social exclusion recognises social change from 'relational' and 'rights' perspectives rather than focussing on characteristics of socio-economically disadvantaged groups (De Haan 1998, Silver 1994, 2007).

In this paper, exclusion is defined both as material exclusion from resources and benefits and as exclusion from influence and decision making (Khadka 2009). In Nepali CF, exclusion is manifested through outcomes such as reduced and inequitable access to common resources, benefits of forest production and development opportunities, and the lack of decision-making rights for social groups who depend on natural resources for their livelihoods (Khadka 2009). Achieving inclusion in the Nepali CF context would thus mean achieving access to resources and decision-making power by those who are traditionally excluded.

Transformative participation and a supportive ideology for natural resource management

The concept of participation has emerged as one of the pillars of the basic needs approach to the poverty reduction goal of development policy in the 1970s (Cornwall and Brock 2009: 6). Participation in the development context can be defined as the process through which primary actors influence and share control of development initiatives, decisions and resources (De Haan 2009: 161). Two approaches to participation, namely the 'instrumental' and 'empowerment' (or 'transformative') approach, have been discussed in the development literature. An instrumental approach considers participation as a means to achieve better cost-effectiveness of projects and programs, while an empowerment approach values the process of increasing participation as an important end in itself (Guijt and Shah 1998: 9). Hickey and Mohan (2004) recognise participation as the citizen's right.

They argue that participation must be a process of transformation that addresses existing unequal power structures and political empowerment at different levels. Social scientists criticise the misuse of instrumental participation as ‘tyranny’, which emphasises the reproduction of power relationships at the local level (Cooke and Kothari 2001).

Natural resource management (NRM) scholars who adopt the transformative view of participation (Admassie 2000, Buchy and Subba 2003) argue that participation is a socially embedded phenomenon linked with power relations. This means that the concept of participation in the CF policy process cannot bypass structural and institutional issues arising from local power relations. This paper conceptualises participation from the transformation perspective and examines whether key CF actors recognise the institutional and structural causes of exclusion in order to create a space for participation of excluded groups in CF.

Actors’ ability to practise CF from a transformative perspective depends on the ideology of environmental management they adopt. Two major strands of ideology can be observed, namely ‘eco-centric’ and ‘ethno-centric’. Eco-centrism adherents believe in green consciousness where human beings are considered as agents of environmental protection and development. The focus of this ideology is always on the environment rather than on the interrelatedness of environment and human beings. An ethno-centric ideology, in contrast, focuses on human beings as the centre of natural resource management. In this ideology, all policies and processes on natural resources are oriented towards conceptualising the ecological process for people and not the other way round. This ideology considers the recognition of ecological, economical, social and political dimensions in environmental management as an opportunity for tackling environmental issues (Dryzek 1997). Adopting the latter view is essential if one is to recognise people’s diversity based on gender, caste, class and social status in natural resource management, Dryzek points out. This view is similar to that held by NRM scholars who argue for the need to apply multiple perspectives for tackling environmental management problems through a participatory approach (Mahanty 2000, Child 2004, Fabricius 2004). Adopting an ethno-centric ideology enables actors to recognise social issues in the CF management system and development. This perspective is a critical stepping stone to adopting a transformative view of participation in CF.

Power and knowledge in policy development

Policy scholars recognise the importance of power/knowledge relationships in policy processes, and that these in turn have an impact on social outcomes (Keeley and Scoones 2003, Leach 2008). There are various ways of looking at power. In this paper, the relational view of power (Foucault 1972: 94) is adopted. This approach considers power as a process rather than as a resource; power exists only when it is put into action. The relational view sees discourse as a powerful tool for creating and maintaining the power of certain human beings. Discursive power is manifested in aims, objectives and strategies (Foucault 1972: 90). In a discourse, these elements determine and shape the dominant knowledge base which in turn produces the system of power relationships. Thus, knowledge and power are inseparable. Knowledge does not simply emerge from scholarly work, but it is produced and maintained through the work of different organisations and social practices (Gordon

1980). For example, science produces certain knowledge. Engaging a single science in the formation of knowledge reproduces ideas that sustain non-transformative thinking in development (Foucault 1972). The concept of knowledge as power provides a guide for understanding the scientific and social practices that form perceptions (Hoy 1986: 129).

Importantly, the relational approach to power tells us that power is unequal, and thus to study societal change one must look at power wielded by actors in making certain ideas dominant (Eyben 2006). The power relationships between actors allow some of them to deliberately change the incentive structure of others, a process which Rowlands (1998: 14) calls 'power over'. This form of power eventually affects the way the CF discourse is directed and which ideas become influential. This paper takes up these ideas and considers power/knowledge dynamics at the policy level as an essential factor that shapes the behaviour and attitude of CF actors.

DOMINANT ACTORS AND THEIR RELATIONSHIPS IN CF

The actors involved in CF intervention in Nepal can be divided into state actors, non-state actors (CBOs, NGOs, civil society and private firms), and aid providers (multilateral and bilateral donors and INGOs). The key players at the policy level include the Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation (MFSC), the Department of Forests (DoF) and donors. These actors operate within unequal power relationships, and donors exercise power to introduce and maintain their preferred policy model.

The Government

The MFSC coordinates multilateral and bi-lateral funding. Both the MFSC and the DoF take part in the planning and decisions of projects related to CF. The DoF, with the expertise and human, material and financial resources provided by aid donors, implements the CF policy. Under the Forest Act of 1993 and the Forest Rules of 1995, the DoF with its district forest offices has the power to hand over community forests to FUGs, and it monitors the functioning of FUGs with particular emphasis on forest management and use. The government practices of assessing CF from a social perspective are mostly limited to establishing FUGs, handing over community forests, delivering training, measuring FUGs' performance in controlling forest encroachment and illegal felling and the prevention of forest fires, and on the use of FUG funds for forest and community development. At the government level, there are still no efforts to analyse the participation process in CF from the perspective of social relations and structures or its implication for access to resources and influence for the powerless. The identity of the DoF and the MFSC is primarily one of 'agent' when interacting with donors, but of 'principal' or 'controller' when interacting with non-state actors. As shown later, non-state actors are excluded from meaningful participation at the policy level.

The Donors

Donors are also major actors in CF because the funds for CF operation mostly come from them, and because they shape ideas in CF policy debates. In the late 1990s, 60 per cent of Nepal's annual forest development budget came from donors. Donor involvement in CF

programmes is even higher as they share 80 per cent of the total annual development budget (Khadka 2009: 89). There are currently three donor-funded CF projects. More than twelve donors with a wide diversity of working approaches interacted with the sector between 1970 and 2005 in the CF development context. As of 2006, 70 of 74 district forest offices of the forest department have CF aid.

Donors' identity as principal actors has been established and maintained through giving resources such as money, human resources, expertise, ideas and materials. For example, over the past more than 30 years donors have introduced a variety of ideas in CF development ranging from forest conservation and promotion in the 1970s and 1980s, FUG development in the 1990s and pro-poor livelihood in the early 2000s. The giver always has the upper hand when interacting with the taker, and the relationship thus becomes one of domination (Eyben 2003). Donors interact mostly in a 'power over' relationship with government and non-state actors because of aid money, knowledge and ability to influence knowledge acquisition and dissemination. Nonetheless, in everyday social interactions, donors want to keep others happy for political reasons and do not push agendas that would encourage the government or other actors to understand power and its role in poverty reduction.

Non-State Actors

The role of non-state actors in CF started when German Technical Assistance (GTZ) included local government bodies and NGOs as implementing actors in CF projects in 1992. Since 1996, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) has also started to involve non-state actors as service-providing agents, with a major role of assisting the DoF. The involvement of non-state actors in project delivery has increased since 2001 when donors changed their operational strategy during the political insurgency.

It is observed that influential non-state actors are aware of power relationships, but instead of challenging these they use them for two purposes; establishing and advancing their organisation, and establishing their role as service providers to the forest sector and donors. Moreover, although non-state actors such as the federation of FUGs have been supported by donors in policy activities, the organisations have little ability to raise an agenda that challenges power issues at all levels of forestry governance. Their ability to make exclusion issues explicit in their actions is not developed. Their dependency on donors for financial and intellectual support is a critical limitation. For instance, CF issues identified by the Federation of Community Forestry Users, Nepal (FECOFUN) under its donor-funded 'policy advocacy programme' do not include any problem related to social inequities and gender. While the issues mainly focused on are forest resource management, forest marketing, forest taxing, institutional barriers from the forest department in CF operation and incompatibility of forest policies with FUG empowerment, none of the issues is related to gender and social issues (FECOFUN Calendar 2006, PAC 2006). It means that the non-state actors talk about pro-poor livelihoods, but they lack commitment to raise the issue of power and power relations in implementing livelihood strategies as a prime concern of CF development.

PERCEPTIONS OF KEY ACTORS

Actors' perceptions of particular issues shapes their policy agendas and how they react to policy proposals. Interviews with 99 people involved in CF policy making and implementation at the national level revealed that there are differences between and within actor groups in understanding the cause of and solution to exclusion in CF. However, the dominant perspective is that there is nothing wrong with CF policy or with the actors' own actions. Most actors locate the cause of exclusion outside themselves or their organisations. They do not see solving exclusion as their responsibility. Although they recognise poverty and exclusion issues in CF, they take an instrumental view of participation in tackling the problem. Their ideas for addressing exclusion focus on material approaches, such as providing physical services, skills and income generation opportunities, and involving the poor in FUG executive committees. They claim that the poor or *dalits* are not able to capture the opportunities offered to them. Actors see the community or FUG as an appropriate site for addressing poverty. They do not consider the forest sector as a development sector, with a priority for dealing with social issues.

Within each of the major actor groups, however, there are some minority views that see the problem of exclusion in a transformative way and focus on their own organisation or CF policy as contributor to exclusionary outcomes (Khadka 2009). These minority views are held by actors who are low in the institutional hierarchy. They perceive that they cannot change the thinking in their organisation because of power relations.

In principle, actors work for the shared goal of poverty reduction through participatory forestry policy intervention. However, most actors believe in instrumental ways of dealing with poverty. Why do instrumental views prevail and where do they come from?

WHY DO INSTRUMENTAL VIEWS DOMINATE?

Scholars who have studied gender issues at organisational level demonstrate how the institutional norms, values, incentives, resources, relationships and perceptions of social issues within an organisation influence the organisation's ability to produce social outcomes (Goetz 1998, Rao et al. 1999). NRM scholars also point out that the nature of intervening organisations impacts on poor people's livelihoods (Hobley and Bird 2001: 188). Actors' diversity in expertise, education, social background and relationships, and level of influence within an organisation, thus shape the priorities in everyday actions and understanding of change. In Nepali CF, two factors influence the domination of instrumental perspective: (a) the structure and nature of relationships and knowledge in the forest sector, and (b) actors' interactions in policy making spaces.

The structure, relationships and knowledge within the forest sector

The forest sector in Nepal is rather homogeneous. A single profession, namely forestry, and a single caste dominate in local, district, and national level forest offices. As shown in Table 1, actors within the sector are stratified along four dimensions: professional level, education, rank/position and role/expertise. The professional level is stratified into 'officer' and 'non-officer'; each level has staff with different ranks.

Overall, men dominate the sector, making up 97 per cent of total staff. Technical professionals outnumber the administrative staff. There are skewed power relationships between staff, as 93 per cent of total staff occupy lower ranking positions (non-officer level) without influence at the policy level. Female staff are mostly in the low ranks as they occupy only 0.4 per cent of total officer-level staff. Women make up 1.4 per cent of the total technical level staff. There are no *dalits* among the first and second rank officers.

Table 1
Actors in the forest sector, Nepal

Category Actors	Male (No.)	Female (No.)	Total		Women (% of total category)
			No.	%	
Professional Level					
Officer level	549	35	584	7	0.4
Non-officer level	7488	223	7711	93	2.7
Education					
Technical science	5649	119	5768	70	1.4
Non-technical science	2388	139	2527	30	1.7
Ranks					
1st class officer	37	0	37	0	0
2nd class officer	156	8	164	2	0.1
3rd class officer	356	27	383	5	0.3
Non-officer	7488	223	7711	93	2.7
Roles					
Foresters (officer level)	359	11	370	4	0.1
Other technical officers*	109	22	131	2	0.3
Forest ranger/other technical non-officer	1333	39	1372	17	0.5
Forest guards/game scouts	4026	65	4091	49	0.8
Administrative staff	2210	121	2331	28	1.5
Total no. of staff	8037	258	8295	100	
% of total	97	3		100	

Source: Adapted from Khadka 2009: 81

* Agriculturists, botanists, engineers and chemists working in the department of soil conservation and watershed management, the department of plant resources and the department of forest resource survey

The recent change in Article 24 (*gha*) of the Public Service Rule of 1992 of the government of Nepal, has allowed government staff to be self-promoted based on his/her job experiences. However, salary is the main incentive for the self-promotion, as roles remain the same. For example, as of January 2010, 660 forest rangers (non-officer) including 14 women rangers were promoted to officer level in the forest sector, but their roles and

responsibilities have not changed from the ranger position. Therefore, they are not included in the officer-level staff in Table 1.

In addition, the sector is characterised by the unequal position of decision-makers by caste/ethnicity and gender. The high caste (*brahmin/chhetri*) and advantaged ethnic group (*newar*) who have a low incidence of income poverty (Deraniyagala 2005: 53), hold the decision-making positions of the forest ministry, DoF, regional offices, ministerial and departmental divisions and district level forest offices. The DoF as the key implementing agency of CF is dominated by high-caste and ethnically advantaged men. Table 2 shows the unequal positions of forest officers by caste/ethnicity, gender and regions within the forest department.

Gender	Terai	Hills	Total no.	%	Dalit	BCN*	Ethnic group	Minorities**
Male	70	159	229	97	2	218	7	2
Female	1	5	6	3	0	5	1	0
Total	71	164	235		2	223	8	2
%	30	70			1	95	3	1

Source: adapted from Khadka 2009: 84

* Brahmin, Chhetri and Newar

** religious minorities (e.g. Muslims)

Only one out of 74 district forest offices, the smallest in terms of land coverage and forest area, has a female forester as the head of the forest office.

The sector is very hierarchical. Low-rank staff are labelled as ‘the followers’ of their superior (Khadka 2009: 82). The majority of the high-level forestry officials in the centre offices maintain their traditional forestry norms, values and bureaucratic procedures (Pokharel 1997: 349).

Whilst the structure of the forest sector is homogenous, the human resource development programme offered by donors reinforces homogeneity. Aid-funded training for higher ranks among DoF staff is not diverse. Staff receive higher education scholarships from CF aid to pursue forestry science or a related field. Moreover, aid-funded studies and curriculum development activities support the reinforcement of techno-scientific knowledge in CF. The aid-funded activities define forestry, the role of the forest sector and foresters in CF development with high priority for techno-scientific knowledge. This contributes to the dominant perception that foresters have to deal with forests, not people. Compared with the forest sector in government, donor-funded CF projects are more

heterogeneous in terms of professional disciplines, gender and caste/ethnicity in staffing. However, foresters are in power at the decision-making level (Khadka 2009: 84-85).

The crucial point is that the strategy of the forest sector does not recognise human resource management as a tool for dealing with exclusionary outcomes or equipping people to take a more social perspective. Despite an awareness of the knowledge crisis at government level in dealing with social issues in CF (Kanel 1993: 4), knowledge inclusion has not yet been put on the agenda of CF aid.

The chance of making the forest sector more inclusive is very low unless the forestry training centre in Nepal gives due emphasis to the inclusion of ethnic minorities, *dalits* and women in forestry education. The high and middle castes represent 90 per cent of the graduate population in Nepal (Deraniyagala 2005: 53). As shown in Table 3, *brahmin/chhetri* students (87 %) outnumbered all others in the BSc Forestry training programme between 1981 and 2001. *Dalits* and religious minorities are low in number. By region, 75 per cent of total students represent the hill residents. Until 2001, there was no female graduate from *dalits* and religious minorities.

Gender	Terai	Hills	Total no.	%	Dalit	BCN*	Ethnic group	Minorities**
Male	176	490	666	91	4	583	73	6
Female	4	62	66	9	0	59	3	0
Total	180	552	732		4	642	80	6
%	25	75			1	87	11	1

Source: Khadka 2009: 85

* Brahmin, Chhetri and Newa

** religious minorities (e.g. Muslims)

The domination of high-caste and ethnically advantaged males in education institutions has the implication of continued dominance in recruitment in the sector. The nature of forestry education is equally important for maintaining an instrumental view of CF at the policy level. The content of the CF course at the Institute of Forestry (IoF), for example, focuses on physical rather than social issues. While the content emphasises the formation of FUGs and preparation of forest management plans, it lacks content on transformative participation and gender-, class- and caste/ethnicity-based power relationships.

Clearly, institutional dynamics has a role in organising policy-making spaces in which the chance to include different views is low.

POLICY-MAKING SPACES

Cornwall (2002: 2) conceptualises space in three ways; as political space, policy space and space for participation. The structure and organisation of spaces shape the participation process. The interplay of power between actors determines who is included or excluded and which knowledge is acknowledged. In Nepali CF, policy spaces which are organised by the government and shaped by foreign aid agenda lack room for other ideas.

The forest ministry and DoF coordinate and organise several formal and informal policy spaces financed and facilitated with donors' funds. For the CF operation, six main types of spaces exist. These include (a) the Forestry Sector Coordination Committee (FSCC), (b) the sub-working groups of the FSCC, (c) the CF interactive group, (d) an issue-based task force, (e) the national CF workshop preparatory committee, and (f) the Gender and Equity Working Group (GEWG). The objectives of these spaces are to discuss both policy and implementation issues related to forestry and CF intervention, and to give new directions for CF development (Khadka 2009: 195).

Actors in the policy space

Government, civil society, (I)NGOs, and donors participate in the spaces, but powerful actors such as foresters, high-caste and ethnic advantaged groups and men dominate. The spaces are very hierarchical. The chance of inclusion of field staff and community members with low social positions is relatively low. Spaces like the FSCC are the most important sites to push and pull agendas for CF development. However, only top-level officials from member organisations are selected for FSCC. While acknowledging stakeholders' participation, the FSCC neglects power relationships in the participation process.

Meeting	Gender	GO	Donors	INGO	Non-state	Total no.	% of total
9th/2000	Male	48	21	5	3	77	94
	Female	2	2	0	1	5	6
11th/2003	Male	45	29	3	6	83	95
	Female	0	3	0	1	4	5
Total no.		95	55	8	11	169	

Source: Khadka 2009: 198

Table 3 shows the composition of participants in two FSCC meetings held in 2000 and 2003. Government and donors including INGOs constituted 94 per cent of total invitees. As of 2001, foresters made up more than 90 per cent of these participants (Shrestha 2001: 64).

Only 5 per cent of the participants invited to the meetings were women. As of 2006, the sector had five women foresters in low-rank positions in the central office. None of them are involved in any policy spaces as ‘resourceful actor’. Moreover, high castes and ethnically advantaged groups dominate in the policy spaces. This is due to their prevalence in decision-making positions in the participating institutions (Khadka 2009).

One policy space theoretically open to all is the national CF workshop which is held every five years. In practice, however, access to this space by socio-economically disadvantaged groups is restricted. For the recently held fifth CF workshop, there was a prohibitive registration fee of NRs 500. Those who could not pay needed to apply to the workshop secretariat office, and only 40 participants were admitted on a ‘first come first served’ basis (DoF 2008).

The DoF convened five CF workshops between 1987 and 2008. The workshops varied in focus, objective and output over time (Khadka 2009). They became more inclusive in terms of represented organisations. However, foresters, senior staff, high-caste and ethnically advantaged groups and men from forestry institutions (government, donors, INGOs, NGOs) dominated the workshops in numbers and roles. Importantly, progressive ideas evolved over time in the workshops, but they are defined vaguely. Social issues raised in one workshop are ignored in the next (Khadka 2009: 204).

Power dynamics in the policy spaces

Although the spaces have encouraged the participation of multiple actors, power relationships continue to shape their interaction process. At the same time, the spaces reinforce existing power relationships. The forest ministry and DoF invite civil society organisations and NGOs, but donor-funded projects have a major role in creating this invited space for participation. Participating non-state actors feel the ‘domination’ or ‘control over’ of the government and donors. An NGO member expressed this:

I attended the forest sector’s meeting in 2001 as NGO representative, but the meeting was dominated by government and donors. The forest ministry presented agenda. All papers were about bio-diversity, collaborative forest policy and community forest handover in the *terai* (Khadka 2009: 200).

Individuals from non-state actors are selected based on their personal relations with government and project staff. They participate mainly passively. A respondent from civil society remarked:

I am the chair of FUG in my village. I am also the chair of organisation X established for empowerment of local NRM groups. With the support of CF project Y, I was able to establish this organisation. I have a good relationship with the forest sector. I know many senior people in the sector and the project Y. I represent my organisation in several policy meetings. The role of civil society in the meeting however is a ‘witness’. We do not have any power to influence the policy agenda. (Khadka 2009: 200).

Project staff feel it is their responsibility to participate in the policy dialogue and advise the government about who participates and what to discuss. Government policy makers give low priority to the voices of grassroots NRM NGOs run by women (Rajbhandari 2001).

Some have observed the exclusion of women in recently created policy spaces, such as the working group on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD) (Gurung and Quesada 2009:7). CF, in rhetoric, is heralded as participatory policy engaging people in defining and implementing programmes in order to improve the social and ecological system. However, in reality this sort of interaction does not happen frequently either at the local level or in the national policy dialogue.

A deeply rooted institutional practice of the forest sector is contributing to sustain non-participatory and exclusive policy spaces. Institutional norms such as giving priority to professionals with a forestry background and working experience have contributed to enrol selective people in policy power. Donors recognise the knowledge of top-level government foresters and involve them in influential policy events, policy reviews and project impact studies (Khadka 2009). The implication is that it is hard to include new ideas or views in the space which would emphasise structural issues of exclusion.

CONCLUSION

The dynamics and complexity of actors' interactions, perceptions and power/knowledge in participatory forestry play a role in the exclusion of the poor, *dalits* and other disadvantaged social groups. While CF in principle emphasises social as well as environmental objectives, there is, at the policy level, a lack of attention for social issues that would help tackle exclusion in a transformative way.

The institutional setup and structure of policy-making institutions such as the DoF, power relationships between key CF actors, and the process of knowledge development have contributed to develop and maintain an uncritical perspective. These institutional processes contribute to understanding and operating CF in an eco-centric view of forest management. This view ignores power as an important issue to be addressed for providing a space for participation by the poor, *dalits* and women.

To argue that 'community' or 'local institutions' are the cause of exclusion and an obstacle for poverty reduction is not sufficient in the Nepalese CF. It is argued that actors' interactions and power relationships at the policy level impact negatively on the poor and other marginalized groups. The extent to which CF policy supports these depends on power relationships between national and international actors, structures and knowledge within the government, and relationships, behaviour and power positions of individual actors. Progressive ideas introduced through external forces will not benefit the poor and other disadvantaged groups unless actions are taken to overcome the current hurdles of actions and behaviour put up by key CF actors.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

Speaking Up: Citizen Demand for Accountability and Improved Services in a Nairobi Slum

Mariana Cifuentes

INTRODUCTION

In the last two decades there has been a shift in many countries towards reforming lower-tiers of government through participatory mechanisms. These reforms aim to encourage citizens' groups to engage in collective action to provide public goods in co-operation with public authorities. These local government reforms decentralised decision-making while opening channels for citizen inclusion, theoretically resulting in better services and greater accountability of the state (Cornwall and Coelho 2004).

In Africa these types of reforms have 'failed' in nearly all cases (Crawford 2005; Manor 2004). Crook and Aye (2006) argue that this is because participatory reforms are not easier or cheaper than central government-driven service provision. Opening participatory spaces for citizen representation is a radical challenge to traditional forms of state organisation. For such provision to work public officials need to be flexible and adapt to new ways of working that may involve more onerous and time-consuming tasks, such as more consultation, changes in delivery practices, open access to information and complex co-ordination. These changes often require reforms of public agencies to develop new organisational cultures centered around incentives and continuous staff training. Furthermore, the reforms require improvement in the political legitimacy of governments in order to encourage citizens to co-operate with public authorities. This is essential as political relations between communities and city governments are characterised by hostility and mutual mistrust.

In 2000, Kenya adopted a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) which outlined reforms involving citizen participation in service delivery. This chapter describes the implementation of one of these participatory reforms in a slum in Nairobi City, Kenya. The aim of the chapter is two-fold. First, it explains how the reform was interpreted by officers working within the Nairobi City Council, and second, it describes how an action research methodology helped residents to voice their concerns, which in turn led to improvements in the participatory process.

THE LASDAP REFORM

In Kenya today, both local government authorities and line ministries share responsibilities for the provision of basic services, such as health, education, garbage collection, street lighting, road provision, water and sewerage infrastructure. This parallel modality of service provision has led to confusion regarding the role of local governments. The extent to which local governments undertake service delivery depends on the willingness to firstly define and then fulfil their governance role. As a result, local governments' role as service providers is limited and they are often accused of corruption and inefficiency, making 'informality' the dominant mode of urban administration (GOK 1995).(1)

In 1998, the Government of Kenya and the World Bank initiated discussions for the introduction of a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). Among other things, the PRSP looked at reforming local governments in order to help them regain financial health and improve their ability to deliver public services for the urban poor. By 2000, the Government of Kenya had introduced a local government reform that included a participatory component called LASDAP (Local Authority Service Delivery Action Plan). LASDAP invited people (as service users) to participate in forums organised by the local government. These forums identified priority services, which were later funded through annual grants made by the central government. Interestingly, the urban poor inhabiting slums were considered as one of the main target audiences for the reforms. This was a significant change as in the past slum communities were not seen as the responsibility of local governments.

The LASDAP participatory process involved a number of steps implemented by local governments. First, each councillor (i.e. an elected political representative of an urban Ward) was expected to disseminate information among their constituencies about LASDAP. Then, councillors were required to organise consultative meetings within their Wards involving civil society organisations and residents.(1) The councillors then presented prioritised infrastructure projects agreed in the consultative meetings to the Nairobi City Council to secure approval and funding. At the end of these negotiations the councillors were then responsible for supervising the successful implementation of the approved projects. The reform, thus, placed councillors as the key actor leading the participatory process. However, by placing too much reliance on the councillors the reform process ignored the corrupt organisational culture within the Kenyan local government, which in turn undermined compliance with the LASDAP objectives.

The context: Korogocho slum

Nairobi's slums are the product of a historical process that started 100 years ago under the British rule. The city was planned by the White ruling elite to ensure spatial segregation between residents of different races. Interestingly, the city's layout did not change with independence and rural migrants settled in unplanned slums, which rapidly expanded city boundaries. By 2004, there were 177 slums, roughly 55 per cent of the city's total population, covering six per cent of the city's total residential area (Rweria 2004). These slums are densely populated areas characterised by inadequate housing and failed infrastructure.(2) Houses are made of corrugated iron sheets with dirt floors. Less than one

quarter of the houses have electricity, and water has to be sourced from private vendors. Less than half the residents have a pit latrine in the plot where they live; most residents pay for private toilets which offer better quality services. Many residents dispose of their solid waste by dumping it on the street or in vacant plots. As a result, slums have a high incidence of health problems, especially among children. A study found that child mortality rates in slums in Nairobi City are higher than in rural areas of Kenya (APHRC 2002: 113).

Roads are determined by those who build structures, resulting in poorly planned and difficult to access communities. A combination of high unemployment among youth, bad lighting and poor road access results in high levels of violence. Despite hosting different ethnic groups slums are sites of considerable ethnic tension, which is often exploited by politicians. Overall, Nairobi's slums are a vivid example of the high levels of inequality in Kenya.

This research project started in 2005, five years after LASDAP had been introduced. The research team selected Korogocho Ward, which hosts the fourth largest slum in Nairobi, as the best-fit research site.⁽³⁾ Korogocho, with an estimated population of 100,000 people distributed across nine "villages", which was given informally to civil servants (as a political reward) who then built semi-permanent shacks for rental by rural migrating populations.⁽⁴⁾ As in other slums, the absence of adequate public services in Korogocho has opened the door for a myriad of informal providers, including private operators, landlords and community members. For example, there are sixteen private health clinics that vary in prices, quality and availability of services. There are more than ninety private primary schools offering both formal and informal (literacy-based) education. Thus, Korogocho was a good place to assess how LASDAP had been implemented.

Another advantage of Korogocho was the fact that there was a youth movement, called Miss Koch, located there. Miss Koch had a broad membership that brought together youth from different ethnic groups in all the nine villages. They also organised beauty pageants encourage community discussion on rape and gender-based violence. Miss Koch was interested in participating in the research as it would provide a useful platform to raise service delivery issues in the community.

Role of councillors in the implementation of LASDAP

The research started with a survey of one thousand residents to understand citizen perceptions of the achievements of the local councillor, as well as LASDAP. The study found that 40 per cent of people interviewed did not know the councillor's name or what his role was. Only 27 per cent had heard of LASDAP before or knew what it was. Less than 13 per cent of people had attended a meeting organised by the councillor. Furthermore, only one per cent of people surveyed had been invited to attend a LASDAP consultative meeting. Thus, Korogocho residents had no information about the LASDAP process. By controlling information on LASDAP, the councillor had full control over the 'participatory' process. Only a few selected people were invited to take part in LASDAP meetings, and in most cases they represented the interests of the councillor.

In February 2005, the research team attended a LASDAP consultative meeting in Korogocho and found that the organisers lacked knowledge of the correct procedures to

involve citizens. The councillor who chaired the meeting tended to ignore citizens' demands and discussion was dominated by officials talking about irrelevant issues. The councillor ended this meeting when he felt his power was being contested by citizens' complaints for accountability. A member of an attending civil society organisation made the following statement about the meeting:

“It is only the right stakeholders who are invited for the meetings. The discussion was dominated by the four councillors who had attended and the chairman hardly gave the other participants an opportunity to present their views. There were accusations and counter accusations over the status of the LASDAP monies. No written proposals were submitted. Instead, councillors and a few participants requested time to come up with proposals for their wards’, (NGO, Korogocho, 2005).

It was also found that during consultative meetings, the councillor was accused of corrupt deals, especially during the procurement and tendering of LASDAP projects. When this issue was raised with the LASDAP Desk Officer of Nairobi, he said:

“There is a lot of political interference in the procurement and tendering for the implementation of the projects, reducing the quality of projects that have been implemented. Related to this is that the council officers on the ground have in some cases colluded with the implementing agents to defraud the council. The tendering and procurement process is slow and not transparent. Therefore other than delaying implementation of the prioritised projects, it is also open to abuse. Councillors have taken advantage of this to earn huge sums of money from the council. Any effort to change the process to prequalification of contracts which is less time consuming has been systematically opposed by the councillors’, (Nairobi City Council, 2005).

Thus, despite pledges for a reformed framework the LASDAP process was financing the rent-seeking enterprises of the councillor. This is similar to what Gaventa and Valderrama (1999) found in other participatory initiatives controlled by local governments; those who control the decision-making structures will inevitably define the space, actors, agendas and procedures to be followed. In the case of Nairobi, the lack of information regarding rules for citizen participation was a barrier for their effective involvement. Does this mean that LASDAP was a complete failure? To answer this question it is important to understand that LASDAP was the only public space where urban dwellers could engage with their elected councilors. Thus, the research team decided to focus on ways to encourage citizen engagement in LASDAP to improve service delivery.

Strengthening LASDAP through citizen involvement

The research team decided to follow an action research methodology in order to strengthen participation of Korogocho residents in the LASDAP process. This required their active collaboration in LASDAP, stressing the importance of co-learning as a primary aspect of the research process (Gilmore et al. 1986: 161). Following an open selection process, the research team hired 27 local youths to become co-researchers. The youths were selected based on their experience in community mobilisation activities, as well as having finished secondary education. The successful candidates were put through a rigorous two-week training programme on the qualities of a good community mobiliser,

and the different stages of the LASDAP process (preparation, consultation, design and approval, finalisation and the implementation stage).

The team started working on the dissemination of basic information regarding LASDAP. Vernacular radio stations disseminated information by inviting co-researchers to answer questions regarding LASDAP. Once there was a buzz going around the area, co-researchers were divided into pairs and assigned to villages according to their place of residence, where they were required to visit religious, youth and cultural groups. The co-researchers attended group meetings, and encouraged residents to ask questions regarding corruption in the provision of services. The first break-through took place when women with a cultural group complained that a team working for the councillor was unaccountable in the provision of scholarships was charging parents who wanted to apply for them. The woman said that the councillor had told her that:

“If you don’t want to pay for the form, saying its your ‘right’ to receive the bursary funds, there is no need for you to confirm if you have been lucky or not’, (Woman, Korogocho, 2005).

The research team investigated this issue and found that the charged parents for applying for the scholarships. Despite this, most of the Ksh 300,000 (approximately €3,000) funds allocated for the scholarships had been given to ghost students. These findings were discussed in all villages across Korogocho and parents agreed to complain to the councillor about this. This was the first time that residents had demanded accountability for a service provided by the Nairobi City Council. The councillor retaliated by complaining to the area elders that the research team wanted to take over their jobs. However, soon the tension was rising as the challenge was interpreted as lack of respect from the youths to the elders of the area. It took several meetings to reassure the elders, the Chief and the councillor that the intention of the research was to work in partnership and make LASDAP more accountable, rather than to challenge them.

The debate regarding the role of the councillor in the allocation of the scholarships improved the status of co-researchers, and residents started paying attention to what they were saying. Soon after, the discussions grew into village *barazas* (or village meetings) where interested residents, as well as members of groups, participated. The *barazas* were the first step in the process of citizen empowerment by making people aware of the possibilities for collective action. The work took almost three months of active engagement and it was possible because of the leadership of Miss Koch and the enthusiasm of the co-researchers. The *barazas* addressed all type of issues, including sensitive topics such as corrupt practices by the councillor, the unfair treatment of some residents by their landlords, and tensions between the elders and the young. The *barazas* became a space where residents not only talked about LASDAP, but started reflecting about services in the area. These debates involved people of different religion, sex, age and ethnicity, to discuss their needs for service delivery.

At the end of 2005, residents who had attended the village-*barazas* came together in a Korogocho workshop, which aimed to address specific issues related to LASDAP. Two interesting reflections came from the workshop. First, the participation of residents could not happen without a formal structure that synthesised their demands. Second, the

discussions were to be restricted to residents and were not to include the councillor. This led to the establishment of a community body that would enable residents to engage formally in the LASDAP process. At the end of the workshop, the participants elected 28 people (representing women, elders, youth and physically-challenged people) living in Korogocho. The body was named the Korogocho Residents Association (KRA). The KRA focused on a single goal: to monitor the implementation of LASDAP. Three office bearers were elected: a chairperson, a general secretary and an organising secretary. The participants of the workshop agreed that it was necessary to register the KRA as a formal community organisation under the Ministry of Social Services. This was no simple task as members worked on a voluntary basis, despite their extensive family and employment commitments.

KRA action plan

By January 2006, the KRA had developed a plan for action, which included four components: (1) establishment of what had happened to previous LASDAP projects; (2) directory of services for the area; (3) a general meeting to establish LASDAP priorities; and (4) participation in LASDAP Consultative Meetings.

First, the KRA and the research team started by collecting information on approved LASDAP projects for Korogocho from 2002 to 2006. This was the beginning of an accountability process of how funds had been allocated through LASDAP. It was found that Korogocho had been awarded nine LASDAP projects valued at Ksh 17.3 million (around €173,000) from 2002/03 to 2005/06. Table 1 below shows a list, and the implementation status, of these approved projects.

The report showed that only two of the projects approved had been completed in five years (student scholarships and rehabilitation of the road), despite the fact that the money for all projects had been given by the Nairobi City Council. Another corruption scandal was unearthed during the writing of the report regarding the rehabilitation of the road. It was found that the contractor had been paid for the rehabilitation of the road despite the fact that the work had not been finished. This was because the construction company that won the project belonged to the councillor of a neighbouring location. Because of this, the local councillor had not complained about the poor work done, nor had he pressed the contractor to finish the work on time. Thus, both projects implemented were linked to corruption scandals involving the councillor.

Not long after the report was completed, rumours started circulating that the KRA offices were going to be set on fire because of the work they were doing. After lengthy discussions between KRA, Miss Koch and the research team, it was agreed that the threat was to be reported to the police, and that it would be used as an example in the discussion groups as to how intimidation mechanisms kept people from getting adequate services. Support for the work done by the KRA grew, and the offices were not harmed.

Table 1
LASDAP Approved Projects (2002–2007) for Korogocho Location

Project Name	LASDAP cycle	Awarded budget (Ksh)	Completion (%)	Remarks
Public toilets and water/sanitation infrastructure	2002/03	1,500,000	None	Awarded contractor, project never started
Electricity supply and public lighting infrastructure	2002/04	2,500,000	None	Awarded contractor, yet to start the work
Rehabilitation of road	2003/04	1,500,000	80%	Under implementation
Scholarships for poor students	2004/05	300,000	100%	Bursary award completed
Enhancement Nyunyumu Primary school	2004/05	5,000,000	20%	Under implementation
Scholarship Fund	2005/06	500,000	None	Under implementation
Construction of classroom at St Daniels Primary school	2005/06	1,000,000	None	Awarded contractor
Construction of perimeter fencing at St Daniels, Comboni and Ngunyumu Primary schools	2005/06	1,500,000	None	Under implementation only for Ngunyumu school
Electricity supply and public lighting infrastructure construction/enhancement	2006/07	3,500,000	None	Design stage
Nine approved LASDAP projects	2002-06	17,300,000	17%	Seven projects are still under implementation

Source: Nairobi City Council, 2006.

Dissemination of the report findings was important for a number of reasons. First, it provided tangible evidence for residents of how corrupt practices orchestrated by the councillor were stopping the area's development. Second, the report gave residents a clear idea of how important LASDAP projects could have been for their welfare. Finally, it provided an opportunity for the community to work together to improve the situation. Following discussions in a general meeting, residents decided that the KRA would file a complaint with the Investigation and Information Department of the Nairobi City Council, the only body able to investigate LASDAP. After waiting for two months for a response, the KRA decided to start a petition requesting the Town Clerk to implement all approved LASDAP projects in Korogocho (with more 3000 signatures). Again, there was no response. Miss Koch approached a community lawyer who agreed to take the case *pro bono*, and to take legal action against Nairobi City Council for its failure to fully implement the approved LASDAP projects.

Second, the KRA and research team started working on a directory of services to help residents to plan for service priorities. The directory covered schools, health facilities, public toilets, water points, street lights, security providers, roads, drains and garbage disposal. This work demonstrated that the majority of service providers were private developers and community organisations that had invested in infrastructure and charged fees to residents for their use. In some cases, the owners of buildings provided toilets and drainage systems to their tenants. The only services provided by the Nairobi City Council were two primary schools, a poorly built road and a few working street lights in the area. The report helped residents to visualise the service gaps and understand what was shared among several villages and which areas were in need of improvement.

Third, the directory of services was presented during a general meeting where service priorities were discussed. This was followed by a ranking exercise that evaluated each service against others giving them equal chances of selection based on the participants' priorities. During this forum, it was agreed that four projects would be proposed in the coming LASDAP consultative meeting to take place in November 2006. These were:

- (i) Establishment of a health clinic by Nairobi City Council;
- (ii) Creation of a vocational training centre for youth;
- (iii) Access roads within Korogocho to be improved; and
- (iv) Increased number of working streetlights to improve security in the area.

Finally, by the end of 2006 the KRA prepared for the coming consultative meeting. Over 300 residents attended the LASDAP consultative meeting. The fact that the Korogocho residents now knew the rules and regulations of LASDAP obliged the councillor to negotiate with them openly instead of using his traditional practices of intimidation and manipulation. In this way, the residents were able to present their own priorities for LASDAP funds and, more importantly, to select their own representatives for other activities regarding the City Council. This was the culmination of a two-year research process involving data collection, a collective debate on possible solutions, plans of action, analysis and reflection on the findings to strengthen the LASDAP process.

CONCLUSION

The Korogocho case shows that opening participatory spaces for citizen engagement is a radical change to traditional forms of state organisation, and for such reforms to work public officers need to be flexible and responsive to citizen needs. The reforms also need to establish appropriate incentive structures to motivate street-level bureaucrats, as well as to build skills to understand, and work with, fractured low-income urban communities. All of these elements were absent in the LASDAP reform. As a result, LASDAP implementation became a rent-seeking enterprise, which simply reinforced poor service delivery, and denied any opportunities for the involvement of Korogocho residents. Nevertheless, LASDAP remained the only space where slum dwellers were recognised as having service rights by the Nairobi City Council (NCC).

The action research methodology was successful in that it helped residents to address their internal differences and build consensus with regard to the priority services that needed to

be improved within their community. The LASDAP process was taken seriously when residents realised that by not engaging with the NCC they were worse off, after which it was difficult for local government officers to return to their corrupt practices. Residents also engaged in a public campaign and a court case that requested the implementation of approved LASDAP projects. After two years, the NCC responded to the demands by assigning new contractors to build streetlight infrastructure in areas identified as dangerous by residents.

In summary, this paper has argued that a dynamic information dissemination process combined with support for citizen-led monitoring improved the implementation of a local government reform. Information changed the attitude of residents regarding the reform: it motivated them to act on corruption when they understood the effect that it was having on their lives. This motivation was the backbone for their participation as it allowed residents to overcome significant differences across age, sex and ethnicity groups. Citizen-led monitoring made it difficult for local government officers to go back to corrupt practices, eventually leading into a more cooperative relationship between residents and their local government. This study suggests that supporting these two elements might be a way of having a real impact on improving performance on local governments.

Acronyms

KRA	Korogocho Residents Association
LASDAP	Local Authority Service Delivery Action Plan
NCC	Nairobi City Council

Endnotes

1. The Omamo report of the commission of inquiry on local authorities in Kenya observed that the human resource management of the LA has been characterised by poorly trained staff, overstaffing and inexperienced management (GOK 1995).
2. . UNHSP (2003) estimated Nairobi had a population of 2.8 million in 2003, and would experience an annual growth of 2.14% for the next five years.
3. Korogocho is one of the 55 electoral areas that comprise Nairobi City. The area is represented by an elected councillor, who is responsible for the implementation of LASDAP.
4. Only ten percent of the owners of the housing structures live in Korogocho. The remaining owners live outside the settlement and use intermediaries to collect rent.

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Annexes

<p>Elimu bora kwa watoto wote na vijana wote Korogocho</p>	<p>Quality education for all children and youth in Korogocho</p>
	
<p>Watoto na vijana ambao wamesoma wanaweza kuchangia vyema maendeleo wanapoishi Tunataka pesa za LASDAP* kutumiwa kwa ujenzi wa mashule na kwa ununuzi wa vyombo shuleni</p>	<p>Children and youth who are better educated are more equipped to contribute to community development Use LASDAP* money to build and equip schools in Korogocho</p> <p><small>* Local Authority Service Delivery Action Plan</small></p>
<p>Sisi wakaaji wa Korogocho tunahitaji barabara nzuri ili kuhakikisha afya bora, usalama na mapato mengi</p> <p>Korogocho residents need proper roads in order to ensure health, security and more income</p>	
	
<p>Sisi watu wa Korogocho tunaweza kuhudumisha barabara za kuingia katika kila kitongoji cha makao yetu</p>	<p>We the people of Korogocho can improve access roads in each village</p>
<p>Sisi wakaaji wa Korogocho tunataka mazingira safi ili watoto wetu wakue na nguvu na afya njema</p> <p>The residents of Korogocho want a clean environment so our children can grow healthy and strong</p>	
	
<p>Tunataka manispaa ya nairobi ishirikiane na vijana kuendeleza uzoaji wa taka hapa mtaani</p>	<p>We want Nairobi City Council to partner with our youth to improve garbage collection in our ward</p>

CHAPTER EIGHT

When Participation and Empowerment Are Not Enough: Water Governance and Social Transformation in the Lagos São João River Basin, Brazil

Larissa Barbosa da Costa

INTRODUCTION

A great part of development literature suggests that participation, empowerment and changes in power relations are key elements in generating social transformation. The assumptions behind these ideas are that, by having access to political spaces and decision-making, disadvantaged groups will have a say about matters that influence their lives and at the same time contribute to better public policies. It is also believed that processes of participation will enhance people's capabilities and skills, improving their position to bargain for access to resources and better life chances. Much is also said about changes in power relations. In this regard, participation and empowerment are considered processes in which marginalized groups can gain power and articulate their political struggles, challenging the status quo, eventually leading to transformation.

This paper looks at such assumptions and reflects on participation, empowerment and social transformation in the context of water participatory governance in Brazil, using the Lagos São João river basin as a case study. Many participatory processes have brought social actors to the table, people have participated in decision making, improved their knowledge and skills and felt satisfaction for participating. However, the processes have rarely moved ahead in terms of generating critical reflection and challenging the status quo.

Hence, this work elaborates on why, although participation and empowerment are necessary and positive, they may be insufficient to generate the desired transformation. My assumption is that participation generates changes, but change depends on what local actors perceive as desirable. If they are blind to the need for social transformation, they are unlikely to push for it. One aspect of this refers to how people make sense of reality and how this relates to learning. Analysing learning processes, it is possible to see why a critical understanding of power relations and context frequently fails to emerge during the participatory process. Thus, using transformative learning as a guide, I look at the blockages to critical reflection and consciousness in processes of change.

This paper is based on fieldwork in the Lagos São João river basin, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. It uses a framework of power and transformative learning to analyse the data collected

through forty-four interviews, complemented by a collection of drawings and interpretations provided by the interviewees (1). The paper is organized in seven sections. The following three present the context, the conceptual framework and the case study. Section 5 explores how the different actors involved in the participatory management perceive change, and scrutinizes the assumption that participation and empowerment generate transformation. Section 6 elaborates on blockages and the reasons for them within the process of change toward transformation. The concluding section suggests a way forward, stressing the need for permanent critical reflection and vigilance in order to avoid a naïve, blinkered enthusiasm regarding participation. Lastly, it points to the need to move away from a 'doing culture', which gives primacy mainly to action, instrumental knowledge and problem solving, and towards a more reflective 'learning culture', aimed at generating deeper understanding of reality and people's role in the process of change.

BACKGROUND: PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE IN BRAZIL

Brazilian society is characterized by deep and structural inequality. The distance between people and the institutions that regulate their lives is a serious problem, generating exclusion and lack of access to services, support and resources. Moreover, it results in public policies that tend to favour only part of the population, generally the most advantaged, to the detriment of the poor. As a result, initiatives and policies that connect people and the public institutions are highly necessary (Gaventa 2002).

In the last two decades, this situation has been changing. As part of the processes of democratization and decentralization, as well as a consequence of the development of civil society, some participatory policies have been created and implemented. The Municipal Councils of Health, Local Agendas 21 and Participatory Budgeting, for instance, are significant steps towards people's participation. In the environmental field, some innovative policies have also been introduced. The most comprehensive one is the National Water Policy, based on the Water Law of 1997.

This law creates a participatory, integrated and decentralized water management system in Brazil aimed at promoting sustainable and efficient use of resources as well as the involvement of society in water care. Participation is seen as part of the trend towards state-society cooperation and also as an opportunity for people to exercise their citizenship rights and make decisions about water uses and conservation. The law also establishes the river basin as the management unit and stimulates the creation of River Basin Committees (RBCs), in which the government shares decision-making with water users and civil society organizations. Since the 1990s, more than a 120 committees have been created, mobilizing 10,000 institutions and organizations within the country.

Although an interesting idea, participatory governance is not without challenges. On the one side, it can bring positive results in connecting people and governments, increasing transparency and accountability, creating opportunities for people to exercise citizen rights, shape policies and generate change (Cornwall 2002, Fung and Wright 2003, Gaventa 2004). On the other side, there is the risk that governance is not truly democratic, does not facilitate participation of excluded groups, and people have little power to make decisions. In the latter cases, unequal power relations are simply reproduced, not generating any

meaningful change in terms of inclusion (Cornwall 2002, Gaventa 2004). Thus, considering these possibilities and risks, understanding how participatory river basin management develops and what the outcomes are in terms of change and transformation is at the centre of this reflection.

LINKING PARTICIPATION, EMPOWERMENT, NATURAL RESOURCES AND LEARNING FOR SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

(a) Participation, change and transformation

Participation has become one of the most common and abused concepts in the development field. From the NGOs at the grassroots level and development aid agencies to governments and the World Bank, participation is considered a must. Thus, used widely and loosely in so many contexts, the meaning of participation as a concept has become completely blurred.

One of the dilemmas involving participation is with regard to its purposes. One can debate whether participation is a means or an end, for efficiency or empowerment. On one side, there is the belief that participation is essential to make governance work well and development programs more effective and suitable to local people. In this sense, participation is framed as a means. On the other, participation is considered essential for emancipation and should be better framed as a right to be exercised by citizens as members of political communities. Thus, it has a political and transformative meaning; it is an end in itself (Hickey and Mohan 2005).

Thus the why and how of participation in development varies a lot, but in the search for its transformational potential, a working definition is essential. The instrumental use of participation is, as Hickey and Mohan (2004) argue, tyranny. They alert us to the process of the depoliticization and cooption of participation as a technical method rather than a process and political methodology of empowerment. In addition, they criticize the obsession about participation in projects at the local level and its consequent disconnection from the social, political and economic conditions that created poverty and exclusion. Lastly, investigating the history of participation in development, they remind us that in its origins the concept of participation was deeply connected to citizenship rights and a means of challenging subordination and marginalization (Hickey and Mohan 2004). In light of this, they argue that “the proper objective of participation is to ensure the transformation of existing development practices, and more radically, the social relations, institutional practice and capacity gaps which cause social exclusion” (Hickey and Mohan 2004: 13).

Hence, in this paper participation is regarded as the process by which people gain access to decision-making about the issues that affect their lives. Moreover, it involves gaining power to articulate their own views and needs and to bargain for access and control over essential resources as well as to struggle against the forces that generate exclusion. Furthermore, because participation is associated with social change and transformation (and these terms are commonly used interchangeably) it is important to differentiate them. I will refer to as change those processes that alter social and power relations as well as values and behaviours in a determined context, towards more inclusive practices. However, change refers to short-term outcomes, not yet in the level of the structures, indicating they could

be reversible. By social transformation, I mean a process of change that moves toward restructuring social relations, structural arrangements, perspectives and models of development in order to build more sustainable and fairer societies that put people at the centre of development. Transformation is a long-term process and involves, as a central issue, addressing social inequality.

(b) Power and empowerment

In aiming at generating social transformation through participatory processes, power is a central matter. Empowerment, as a process of gaining and building power to take control over one's life, especially for the poor, is considered a crucial issue.

Several thinkers have proposed approaches to explore the nature of power, which can be understood as a zero or a variable sum game; as control over resources or over people's thinking and agendas; as something to be possessed by individuals or groups or to be exercised in every single relation in society (Mayo and Craig 1995). Thus, considering the different approaches to power, it becomes clear that power and thus empowerment comprise multiple dimensions.

According to Rowlands (1995), empowerment refers to the process in which people become aware of power dynamics and develop capacities to gain and exercise power to control their lives and support others. Furthermore, empowerment involves changes at the personal level, that of close relationships and collective levels. On the first level, it is about developing a sense of self and individual confidence and capacity to overcome oppression. On the second, it relates to the abilities to negotiate and to influence relationships and decisions within them. The last, the collective feature, has to do with individuals working together to achieve higher impact, and includes collective political action, networking and also fostering cooperation instead of competition (Rowlands 1995).

Understanding how change occurs through participation involves necessarily looking at power relations. Social interaction between individuals or groups is governed by the exercise of power. Thus, power determines who has voice or not or whose concerns and rights get priority in decision-making (Cornwall 2004, Veneklasen and Miller 2004).

Veneklasen and Miller (2002) proposed a framework which identifies the sources and expression of power and hence is useful to examine empowerment:

- *Power over* refers to power as a win-lose game. Repression, coercion, corruption, discrimination are some examples. Based on the use of force or embedded in social rules, power over may take different forms; visible, hidden or invisible.
- *Power with* is related to the capacity to achieve together what would never be possible alone. Based on mutual support, solidarity and collaboration, power with helps building bridges across different interests to transform or reduce social conflict and promote equitable relations (Veneklasen and Miller 2002).
- *Power to* refers to the unique potential of every person to shape his or her life and world. When it is based on mutual support, it opens up the possibilities of collective action. Power to may manifest itself in the pride one has in what one can do.

- *Power within* is the kind of power to be developed from inside and is based on self-acceptance, respect and esteem. When internally enriched, power within can also unfold and extends to acceptance and respect of others as equals (Townsend et al. 1999).

(c) Participation and natural resources management

In order to understand which changes take place through the river basin management process, it is important to draw attention to both the ecological and sociological dynamics. This requires looking at a larger landscape unit such as a watershed and at the historical, socioeconomic and political forces that influence the interactions between nature, people and the productive process, while at the same time considering that these relations are governed by variables of class, gender, age and ethnicity (Vernooy and Fajber 2006).

In this regard, Vernooy and Fajber alert us to the difficulties of integrating social analysis in natural resources management, and call attention to the need to “develop better understanding and awareness of the social and power relations that governs access, use and control over natural resources. This involves understanding the differences and inequities of social actors and is dependent on the local contexts”, (Vernooy and Fajber 2006: 23). Therefore, looking at the positions of power and powerlessness, and creating room to address equity issues, emerge as essential steps towards transformation.

(d) Transformative learning

One last aspect of how people make sense of reality relates to learning. By looking at learning processes, it is possible to identify why a critical understanding of reality may not emerge during the participatory process. Thus, transformative learning has become a helpful concept in the context of this research.

The transformative learning theory which has been developing since the 1970s is based on the works of Jack Mezirow. The core idea of this theory is that “we make meanings out of the world through our experiences”. In so doing, we develop “frames of references” to understand reality, much of which is uncritically assimilated. These frames then become “habits of mind” expressed as points of view that shape the way we look at the world (Cranton and Roy 2003: 87).

The definition of transformative learning by Mezirow refers to “the process by which we transform our taken for granted frames of references (meaning perspectives, habits of mind, mind-sets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change and reflective so they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide actions take” (Mezirow 2000: 7-8).

Such a process involves questioning previously uncritically assimilated assumptions, beliefs and perspectives, leading individuals and groups to become more aware of their own knowledge and values as well as critical of their validity (Mezirow 2000; Cranton and Roy 2003). As transformative learning develops, it tends to set off changes in perceptions, attitudes and behaviours. Hence, it is emancipatory and, in changing the ways we construct reality, it has the potential to trigger action toward building a fair society (Percy 2005).

The centre of transformative learning theory rests on the process of transforming *frames of reference* through processes of critical reflection about our own and others' assumptions and beliefs. Thus, transformative learning links to participation and empowerment in the sense that critical reflection is essential to analyse different contexts, identify power relations, and understands one's position and roles in the process of change (Buchy 2007). Due to its potential of helping people to investigate and reframe their perspectives, transformative learning theory and processes have been adopted in many situations related to natural resources management, which gather different stakeholders and deal with conflicts (Leeuwis 2002; Percy 2005; Wals 2007).

STUDY CASE: THE LAGOS SÃO JOÃO RIVER BASIN

The process of decentralization of water management in Brazil has its roots in the late 1980s and 1990s and culminated in 1997 with the creation of a new National Water Policy and Management System. This is a multi-level governance system involving deliberative councils at the national, state and river-basin levels (Abers and Kerk 2006). Here I will focus on the ground level, the River Basin Committees (RBCs).

The RBC is a deliberative council composed of members of the federal, state and local governments, the private sector (water users: industrial enterprises, irrigators, fishing folk and others) and civil society organizations (grassroots organizations, environmental NGOs, neighbourhood associations, universities and others).

Officially, the RBCs are responsible for encouraging discussion on issues related to the use of water resources, giving a voice to the actors in the river basin, managing conflicts, and elaborating and approving the River Basin Plan. In addition, they must implement the water user-fee mechanisms (pricing and charging system) and decide about the allocation of the resources generated. In practice, many committees develop other activities not legally specified in their terms of reference. The legal framework informing the creation of the RBC is certainly the base but, due to diverse contexts, political opportunities and members' choices, all RBCs are different and shaped according to how they understand their roles, possibilities and regional needs (Abers and Keck 2003).

In 1999, Rio de Janeiro State approved the Water Resource State Policy, clearing the way for the creation of RBCs. At that moment, the Lagos São João region, which comprises thirteen municipalities and a population of half a million people, was facing serious environmental problems, especially in the Araruama Lagoon. Due to urban growth and a lack of investment in sanitation, in less than ten years the lagoon has all but collapsed. In 1999-2000, the quality of water and the whole ecosystem were seriously affected and the aquatic life had almost disappeared. As a result, the local economy was also affected: the tourists stopped coming, property prices went down, the number of jobs decreased and the local fishing folk had their livelihood disrupted. Such events generated great upheaval and motivated local actors to engage with water and environmental issues.

The first step toward participatory water management was the creation of Lagos São João Intermunicipal Consortium (CILSJ), an association of local governments aiming at improving regional environmental management. CILSJ was the seed of the future Committee which materialized five years later, in December 2004. The Lagos São João

RBC is composed by 54 members: 18 government representatives, 18 water users and 18 civil society organizations' representatives. Its organizational structure consists of a general assembly, three sub-committees and nine technical advisory groups.

The main objective of the Lagos São João RBC is to promote integrated environmental management and maintain the ecological integrity of rivers, lagoons and wetlands, while harmonizing human, environmental and economic needs, in order to guarantee clean water and sustainable multiple use for the benefit of present and future generations. Furthermore it has the task of managing conflicts and fostering society's involvement with water issues and care.

MAKING SENSE OF CHANGE

The social actors involved in participatory river basin management must make sense of the problems, solutions and changes in their context. In analysing their perceptions of what has or has not changed, my intention is to show how participation and empowerment are taking place and whether they are liable to generate transformation. Shifts or changes in power relations are a good indicator of overall change. Thus, I looked at people's perceptions on the four expressions of power: *with*, *to*, *within* and *over*.

(a) What has changed?

The reasons different local actors engage in participatory river basin management vary greatly. However, despite such diversity, from the beginning mobilization around water issues was seen as a strategic political opportunity to be heard and to influence decision-making about the river basin management.

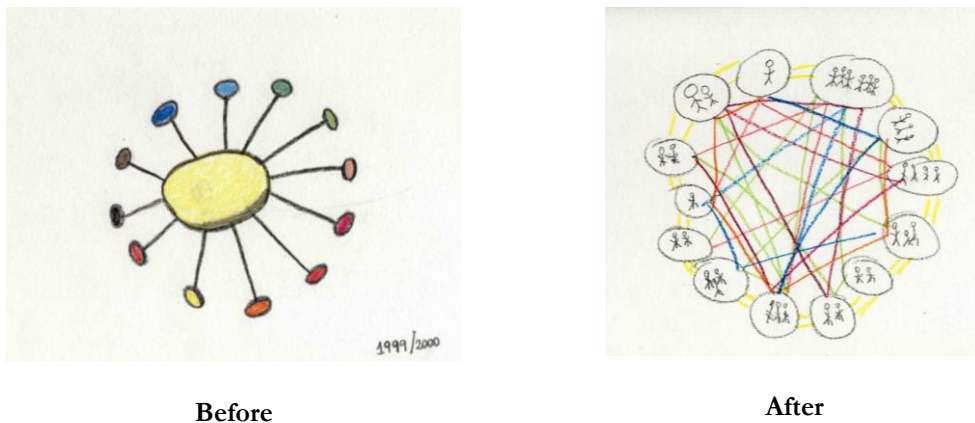
Power with

The most frequently expressed kind of power by those participating in river basin management was *power with*. Commenting on the main changes they see, respondents remarked that before the creation of the CILSJ/RBC, local actors acted alone and without any coordination. Furthermore, there was a strong feeling of distrust among people and institutions, and of frustration with regard to their capacity to address the local and regional problems. Besides, without CILSJ/RBC, local actors had no access to decision-making power, but together they were able to build such power. *Power with* refers to this feeling of being stronger as a group, and the examples provided by the interviewees suggest at least three different ways in which it was built: (a) strengthening bonds between peers; (b) enhancing the dialogue and cooperation among sectors; and (c) inspiring the creation of new participatory spaces.

Motivated by the creation of the CILSJ/RBC, a few sector groups felt the need to organize better. In 1999, the NGOs formed a local NGO Forum, where they can discuss and develop their own views and claims before these are expressed in the RBC. Another example is REAJO, the local environmental educators' network, which was initiated by CILSJ but soon became autonomous and very active due to a feeling of identification and solidarity. Government officials also emphasized that the CILSJ/RBC were essential in establishing a collaborative relationship.

One member of this group illustrated the situation by saying that in the beginning, CILSJ (the big circle in the middle) coordinated the thirteen municipalities (the small circles) but as the process developed, the municipalities established their own relations with CILSJ/RBC and others. In the end, the figure of CILSJ was replaced by a network formed by people they know, trust and cooperate with.

Figure 1



Interviewees among the fishing folk remarked that, by participating in CILSJ/RBC, fishers have achieved many of their goals. Some of them are now playing a leadership role in the state and national fishing community movement. Also, because they are more organized, they decided to try to get one of their leaders elected to the municipal parliament, aiming at influencing the local politics. Such an initiative is very positive as it demonstrates that the fishing folk are building bridges between levels, from local to national, and are attentive to other relevant political spaces where they can extend their influence.

The CILSJ/RBC serves as leverage for the organization of local groups, which soon start to develop their own participatory process and contribute to a lively and rich process at the RBC level. Participants affirmed that the positive changes they see in the region would not have been possible without the CILSJ/RBC. Achievements such as the implementation of the domestic sewage treatment, the end of the extraction of shells from the Araruama Lagoon or the construction of a new bridge, resulted in significant improvements in sanitation and the recovery of the lagoon, having positive social and economic effects as well, but these were only made possible through concerted action and cooperation among the different sectors.

One of the respondents illustrated the situation by noting that in the beginning different actors did not understand each other. However, they started to dialogue and search for a common ground. Different ‘languages’ or discourses intersected, building bridges across different interests. As a result, the group was able to create a better environment and improve the quality of life in the region.

Figure 2



Because of the positive feelings about the participatory process, a great enthusiasm about participation has been spreading in the region. Apart from the new sector spaces mentioned before, there are other examples, such as the São João Protected Area council, municipal councils and the initiative to create an Intermunicipal Consortium to deal with health issues in the region.

The maintenance of permanent spaces for dialogue and decision-making is very positive. As remarked by Cornwall, moving from “large scale deliberative events to participatory advisory panels that meet regularly” is one of the ways to make meaningful participation more likely to happen (2004: 85-86). Also, because the actors meet regularly, they have developed a better understanding of the environmental dynamics and problems and improved their capacity to debate, find new solutions and make their decisions respected, which means they are developing political skills.

Power to

The second kind of power most expressed by participants in water governance was *power to*. Such power refers to the self-confidence to carry out new ideas and activities and to the capacity to see oneself in new positions and situations in the present or future, having a close relation to *power with* and *within* as well.

One of the secrets of the success of the Lagos São João river basin management is the strong feeling of agency of some participants. Explaining how the RBC became so active, interviewees remarked that the talent of the Executive Secretary as a mediator was decisive. A few other people were also pointed out as key persons in the process. Thus, it is fair to say that the *power to* of some actors makes a difference and inspires others to do the same.

In this case, *power to* can be observed in three main ways; participants are accepting new challenges, playing leadership roles, or extending their actions to new levels or political spaces. Initiatives such as forming new groups, pursuing studies, representing their groups

at the state, national or even international levels, or leading a new participatory councils are some positive examples.

Power within

Changes in relation to this subtle kind of power are usually less evident. In general, RBC participants expressed a sense of pride in what they are doing and achieving together; they also expressed feelings of satisfaction and self-fulfilment at being part of the participatory process. Participants said they feel stronger together; they have gained knowledge, professional and personal skills. Thus, it is possible to infer that self-confidence, self-esteem and belief in the possibility of change are higher than before. However, how deep such changes are, how they come about for different groups or whether they are motivated solely by the participatory process is impossible to affirm.

One dramatic story I heard in the field came from the fishing community. They said that after the collapse of the lagoon, losing their way of life and source of income, they almost collapsed as well. They sadly described the feeling of losing their dignity and sense of independence. Suddenly their livelihood was disrupted and this was the source of great despair. Hence, the recovery of the Araruama Lagoon has had a tremendous impact on their lives, helping them to rebuild not only their livelihood but also their sense of dignity.

Power over

Power over is, in general, a negative kind of power. It is manifested through hierarchical relationships, coercion, discrimination, corruption but also by such subtle means as social and cultural rules. Power over is observable when some voices are heard and others are not, or when some set the agenda or have their rights guaranteed first, for instance. In the case of RBC, an analysis of power over must be observed inside and outside the space, in the broader context.

On one side, local actors feel there is a good degree of democracy and equal opportunities among them. Thus, the sectors represented have a voice and the chances to set and advance their agendas. On the other, it is a fact that power differences and conflicts exist. One example is in the disparities between countryside and coastal areas. Municipalities and civil society groups in the countryside site are less wealthy and organized than those at the coast. Thus, they have the feeling that the groups from the coast always advance their agendas first. The same parallels could be drawn about fishing folk and small farmers. Both groups are among the lowest income groups in the region. However, because fisheries are more organized they have benefited more. In this sense, it is possible to say that the groups within the RBC tend to replicate the regional disparities.

Aware of different needs, RBC members are making efforts to address some of these issues, such as creating mechanisms to benefit the countryside region and the rural groups. One example is the allocation of revenues generated by the water fees in the countryside area as a sort of payment for their environmental services.

Sector and class disparities also affect a group's capacity to participate. Government officials have financial support to participate, while civil society members do not. In

addition, among the civil society members there are people from different classes, who also feel the burden differently. Perhaps the greatest disparity among the RBC participants is in education. Among them, at least three-quarters have a high educational background, and one-quarter do not. This shows that the majority of participants come from the upper classes, and two-thirds are men. The differences arising demonstrate that participation in the RBC presents similar limitations to previous social, political and economic conditions.

Another serious expression of power over reported by the RBC members is with regard to local and state politics. According to participants, local politics is very much based on clientelistic relations. Stories about how local governments and politicians avoid providing good public services in order to keep the population dependent on their favours were frequently voiced. However, participants do agree that even the negative local political game had its space slightly reduced since the RBC was implemented.

One drawing presented and interpreted by a CILSJ/RBC member expressed issues of *power over*. For the author, 'before' we could see 'dark figures' dominating the scene, they represent powerful politicians and groups profiting from environmental exploitation. At the same time, the 'little green and blues figures' in the bottom, the ones protecting the environment, were weak and lacking coordination. 'After' the same elements are still present in the scene; however, the balance of power has changed. The 'powerful' have lost space and the 'blues and greens' became more organized and stronger.

Figure 3



Before

After

(b) What has not changed?

Talking about what has not changed was more difficult for the respondents. In this regard, three kinds of answers were raised. First, respondents analysed the participatory process, drawing attention to practical aspects and strategies for improving it. A second group of concerns wishes for the future but are still pretty well focused on practical matters. The third set of ideas pointed to more structural problems. One of the respondents, for

instance, strongly raised the need to open the 'black box' of the social agenda with regard to environmental issues; another voiced the necessity to empower the poor; some raised cronyism in local politics. Such concerns refer to social inequalities, power differences, and the relation between humans, nature and development.

Instrumental participation

Although a positive participatory process is going on in the river basin, participation is still limited to a small number of people and, to a great extent, understood as a *means* to achieve efficiency and improved river basin management instead of a process of political consciousness. The involvement and empowerment of marginalized populations is not embraced as a goal of the RBC.

In general, participants value participation and see it as an opportunity to democratize the management system, pursue their agendas and build commitment, but they rarely perceive it as an end in itself or as a right that will bring people into the political process and enhance their capabilities to challenge social structures. Concerns about efficiency, action and conservation are at the centre while empowerment is still a marginal concern.

Thus, considering that participation as transformation seeks to change development practices and patterns of exclusion (Hickey and Mohan 2004), it can be said that the current understanding of participation within the scope of the river basin management is more instrumental than transformative.

River basin management and development models

As the RBC is a participatory space which has the mandate to deal with river basin management, it tends to focus on that while missing the broader context in which the social and environmental issues are immersed and shaped. Environmental discourses on sustainable development underlying the water management system in Brazil rely on the idea of harmonization of human, environmental and economic needs as well as on technical approaches, to the detriment of a more critical reflection on models of development. The main causes of degradation and depletion of natural resources are linked to social and economic issues. Thus, tackling inequality should be part of natural resources management (Buchy and Subba 2003).

Participants rarely expressed opinions or reflections about the underlying values and discourses informing the water management system in Brazil. This reveals that RBC participants take the benefits of participatory river basin management and sustainable development models for granted without critically looking at the origin of this discourse. Hence, management receives more attention, while social transformation is still a second-degree concern.

Environmental and social issues

Asked about how the RBC deals with environmental and social issues, the great majority demonstrated that they recognized the importance of and the relationship between social

and environmental issues. However, social issues are perceived as not being part of the terms of reference of the RBC.

In general, interviewees say that social issues and social analysis are relevant, but at the same time they do not incorporate them into the way they look at the reality. Thus, it is possible to say that there is a primacy of the environmental over the social among the participants and in the way the RBC develops. Such primacy shapes the way they frame problems and solutions, and by leaving aside the social, they run the risk of making certain marginalized groups worse off or of reinforcing the current status quo positions.

Impressions about the local people

During interviews, I noticed that respondents – the majority are the elected representatives of different sectors or local groups in the RBC – referred to the local population in rather vague terms. Many adjectives and qualities were attributed: individualist, ignorant, have no culture of participation, just want to receive things, exploited by the politicians, victims, poor and so on. Such comments were expressed both as critique and as demonstrations of solidarity. Human beings were also described as predatory or self-interested by nature, and concerns about the rapid growth in population came up many times as well. This suggests two things. Firstly, there are many unexplored and unconscious assumptions and beliefs about local people and their relations with the environment. Secondly, groups of people are still considered homogeneous entities ignoring social geographical and gender difference (among others).

In the context of natural resources management, it is very common to overlook social differentiation and social analysis (Vernooy and Fajber 2006). This is still the case in the Lagos São João river basin. As a result, the process tends to fail in understanding and addressing differences and inequities among local people, running the risk of reinforcing current patterns of exclusion.

Gender issues

Gender was a topic almost absent from the interviews, and gender relations were not raised or perceived as problematic. Nonetheless, if we examine the composition of the RBC, the great majority are men. Among the 44 interviewees, less than one-third were women, and for the most part they were carrying out activities considered ‘more suitable’ for women. Similarly, as gender did not emerge as a concern among the RBC participants, gender analysis in the river basin management is not even on the horizon.

A reflection about how gender relates to river basin management, whether internal or external to the RBC, is still lacking, and it could be said that there seems to be a case of almost complete gender blindness.

(c) Putting changes into perspective and looking at assumptions on participation and empowerment

According to the perceptions of those involved, participatory river basin management in Lagos São João is a lively process. It is evident that different groups and actors do not

always look at change in the same way or agree on what has to be changed. Nevertheless, what comes up clearly in the analysis is that they share the feeling and understanding that changes are taking place as a result of the participatory management and, as a whole, they consider these changes positive.

Furthermore, looking at participation, empowerment and changes in power relations, it is visible that the process has contributed to increase participants' power and has led to a more democratic, collaborative and inclusive form of decision-making and interaction between state and society. This interaction has engaged different actors in the process, including some disadvantaged groups, and enabled the RBC to implement the water policy, to take measures to recover the health of the Araruama Lagoon and guarantee significant investments in sanitation, generating social and environmental benefits.

Nevertheless, there is a lot that has not changed relative to how participants perceive reality, problems and solutions. Their understandings of participation, social and environmental relations, patterns of development and gender relations do not seem to show great modifications. This suggests that a corresponding awareness and critical thinking about the broader power relationships and social issues present in the river basin did not take place.

Analysis of the changes (and the absence of certain changes) leads to reflection on popular assumptions about participation and empowerment. It demonstrates that although they are essential and positive they are not sufficient to generate social transformation. Participation creates chances for people to have a say, to influence the agenda and to have access to decision making. However, the direction changes take depends on what local actors perceive as necessary. When they are not awake to the need for social transformation, they are prone to be satisfied with the immediate.

Another common assumption regarding participation and empowerment is that they are accompanied by building consciousness and the capacity to critically assess reality, perceiving one's own power and carrying out political struggles. However, I would like to argue that this might not be always true. In cases of participatory governance which brings together diverse stakeholders, the powerful may not see the extension of their own power, and the powerless may not become more conscious of their own condition and feel encouraged to challenge the status quo. Putting changes into perspective, it is possible to say that in the case described here, there has been change but not transformation.

BLOCKAGES AND LIMITATIONS TO TRANSFORMATION

Three kinds of blockages to transformation seem to occur:

(a) 'Uncritical' participation

A great enthusiasm for the idea of participation and participatory governance was expressed by the participants. In general, respondents attributed all the good results they have achieved to the participatory process, and it is perceptible that participation is taken for granted as positive and valuable.

The fact that the RBC has achieved many victories seems to have created an over-optimism about, or even a fascination for, participation. Because of this enthusiasm, participants tend not to reflect critically on possible contradictions and pitfalls or to see problems with participation and its outcomes.

Few respondents, for instance, expressed reflections about who is participating and who is overlooked. However, looking at who the most active members are, it becomes clear that the participation of fishing folk, rural communities and the urban poor is still limited if compared with government and NGO participation. Furthermore, observation of the educational background and gender among interviewees reveals clear disparities. Without reflecting on the problems of participation, RBC participants disregard or fail to see features, practices and behaviours that reinforce exclusion from the process and, consequently, they cannot address them.

Further, because RBC members want to strengthen and legitimize the RBC as the proper space for debates and decision making, they may ignore 'protests' coming from 'outside'. A few times, I heard phrases such as, 'people like to complain but they do not want to participate' or 'certain people, when they have their interest defeated, just abandon the discussion', but little attention was being paid to the meaning of such positions. For instance, fishing folks or rural groups may disagree with some environmental laws or restrictions and resist participating in order to avoid having to comply with them. Other groups may simply have no interest in participating. However, participation cannot be treated as an obligation, and being attentive to such voices from 'outside' and understanding what they are saying is important.

Other elements in the broader context also affect participation. Almost all interviewees reported cases and stories of political clientelism in the region. Although such practices directly influence people's ability to participate, they are still perceived as a problem external to the RBC.

Whereas it was voiced many times that people 'lack of a culture of participation', this should not be understood as people's own fault but rather the result of broader power dynamics in which, for example, clientelistic relations may nullify the transformative potential of participatory governance (Hickey and Mohan 2004). Thus, recognizing such relationships as a problem to be tackled by the RBC is important, and a deeper analysis of power relations and constraints to participation and change needed.

It is clear that participation has generated empowerment and change to a great extent. However, to take the benefits for granted without considering contradictions and pitfalls emerges as a blockage. There are numerous examples of participatory processes used to conserve and maintain the status quo (Hickey and Mohan 2005, Cornwall and Coelho 2006). Therefore, it is necessary that RBC members be conscious and attentive to power differences, constraints on the participation of disadvantaged groups, cooptation and conflicts of interest.

(b) Focus on environmental conservation and management instead of people

A focus on environmental conservation and management in the scope of the river basin management is quite clear. Explaining the purposes of the the RBC, the majority of interviewees mentioned that the goal is to restore and conserve the environment and to rationalize the use of natural resources. Looking at the River Basin Plan, the main document orienting interventions in the river basin, a focus on the biophysical aspects of the river basin management is much stressed as well.

Participatory governance processes 'have given voice to the voiceless and created a space for a meaningful contribution from social sciences in natural resources management' (Buchy and Subba 2003: 323). However, a focus on restoration and conservation is still dominant, preventing attention to people and to how they may benefit differently from this.

Issues such as social justice, equity, income and resource distribution, for instance, were very rarely mentioned and, in general, are not considered as part of the RBC's responsibilities. It is not that the participants think these are unimportant. The point is that those principles, criteria and frameworks are not perceived as the core 'business' of the RBC or fully incorporated into analyses of problems and solutions. Thus, addressing social inequality does not emerge as an issue.

One aspect that may influence RBC members' perceptions is their educational and professional background. As Mezirow (2000) argues, much of what we know and believe is influenced by context and biography. Education and professional experience definitely play a role in shaping our frames of reference. Analysing the educational background of the interviewees, the great majority have a background in natural sciences and engineering, while very few have graduated in social sciences, mainly in pedagogy.

The focus on biophysical and technical approaches is still the dominant paradigm and, as the RBC has the mandate to deal with environmental issues, it tends to attract professionals with this kind of expertise. The same can be seen in the government environmental agencies and environmentalist NGOs. The situation can be related to what Buchy and Subba (2003: 324) call a 'skewed professional culture' which gives primacy to the environment over the social. It may also point to a lack of skills to deal with participatory processes in relation to social issues, explaining why RBC members are not more advanced in their understanding of social and power dynamics. In addition, RBC members seem to have little awareness about the discourses, values and frames they use. For instance, no reflection on the water management system in Brazil or on environmental management itself was stated during the interviews. Thus, a critical understanding of the rationale behind those models and the risk they present (of reinforcing exclusion) do not have the chance to emerge.

The basis of landscape management can be traced back to what Adams (2003) called 'the colonial mind'. Based on the ideas of the European Enlightenment, the colonial mind is the term used to describe the colonial rationality operating within social, cultural, political, models of production and economic relations as well as regulating the interaction between

humans and nature (Adam 2003). Therefore, principles such as human dominance over nature, supremacy of techno-scientific knowledge, and development as modernization and progress were translated into a series of assumptions and practices that came to regulate human-nature relations. Among them is the notion that humans and nature are separate and that the human engagement with nature has to be regulated by bureaucratic control and external rules and mechanisms. The creation of the term population as an 'aggregate', suppressing its differences and qualities and reinforcing the myth of 'population growth', has also long served the environmental discourse as a justification for control (Dryzek 1997). In Brazil, the colonial past has added the issues of a strongly divided class society and of an elite that sees itself as above the law. Thus, it is important to take into account that the state and laws may also operate a logic of elite control over the poor.

An issue stressed during the interviews is that public policies, including environmental ones, rarely address social concerns. In the case of the RBC, for example, the focus on conservation and management has embedded deficiencies that seriously constrain the process of change and transformation such as: (1) disconnection between the social and the environmental issues and the lack of skills to carry out social analysis; and (2) lack of engagement with more inclusive perspectives and responsibilities aimed at addressing inequality. Such constraints point to the need for a critical reflection about environmental management and its purposes and principles, in order to move toward more inclusive practices.

(c) The focus on *doing* instead of on *learning*

Participatory river basin management is a process clearly focused on doing instead of learning, in the sense that it is very goal and problem-solving oriented. In general, RBC participants associate their achievement to practices such as 'moving things ahead' or 'what is decided is implemented' and argue that concrete action is what is needed. In this sense, doing was voiced as a very strong value.

Action, efficiency and concrete solutions are positive and necessary but, because the process is too focused on them, participants tend not to dedicate time or set strategies to learn systematically. Moreover, they do not create chances to investigate their own learning, values and assumptions. As a result, the group does not reflect on why they do things in a certain way, what could be different or what is missing.

Learning can result from many different types of interaction and may enrich the participants and the process. However, to achieve higher levels of learning – critical and transformative learning – requires more than just increasing people's knowledge. They need a clear purpose to learn more systematically and consciously as well as to develop the critical thinking capacities that allow the process cyclically to move to a different level (Buchy and Ahmed 2007).

Analysing the learning processes involved in the river basin management, it is noticeable that such processes favour especially instrumental knowledge. This means that the majority of learning opportunities are related to practical issues and may offer only limited chances to generate open reflection.

Regarding what participants have learned through participating in river basin management, two sets of answers came up; instrumental knowledge (technical knowledge and know-how) and communicative knowledge (social skills).

Respondents remarked that they have learned a lot about the river basin, environmental problems and impacts, technical terms and concepts related to water management, engineering, conservation and others. In other words, they have acquired knowledge that helps them to observe and control the environment (social and natural), make plans and take action (Cranton and Roy 2005). However, since we know that 'it is easier to learn about environmental issues than about power relations or institutional relations of management' (quoted in Buchy and Ahmed 2007), this may not be enough to generate new knowledge or forms of constructing knowledge.

Communicative knowledge, based on the need to understand each other in order to interpret intentions values and beliefs (Cranton and Roy 2005) was present, according to most of the interviewees. Such learning involves the development of personal abilities such as listening, respecting different points of view and kinds of knowledge, building, negotiating agreements, and respecting the group decisions. Such skills are very relevant and may be the ones supporting the changes taking place in terms of *power with* and *power to*. Thus communicative knowledge, which connects worldviews and facilitates new knowledge to emerge, seems to happen to some extent. However, considering what has not changed, it can be said that the process is still in its early stages and has limitations in generating inclusiveness and solidarity.

With regard to emancipatory learning, a step that requires that one starts questioning instrumental and communicative knowledge and becoming critical about oneself and the social and cultural context (Cranton and Roy 2005), I could identify little evidence for this going on. Some interviewees demonstrated they have opened their minds to new issues and interpretations or showed a strong critical capacity, but questioning assumptions in order to build new perspectives was rare. This represents another blockage of transformation. Stimulating reflection and critical reflection would require that the RBC dedicate more time and resources to learning as well as to developing and implementing learning strategies. In the case of transformative learning, this would require facilitation and the institutionalization of learning as an explicit objective in the process (Buchy and Ahmed 2007).

The focus on doing limits the learning process. Thus, different kinds of knowledge and skills tend not to be developed, and the group does not move towards more critical understanding of reality, of their own roles and assumptions, and takes for granted frames of reference. As a result, the process of change does not proceed towards transformation.

CONCLUSIONS AND WAYS FORWARD

Looking at participation and empowerment, change and transformation in the context of participatory management in the Lagos São João river basin, it can be said that the process is very lively and challenging. Participatory governance, i.e., gathering government, civil society organizations and users around water issues, has created chances for people to have a say, to participate in decision-making and to alter power relations. As a result, positive

changes are taking place in the region. While this may be true, there is a lot that has not transformed, however. This reveals the limitations of participation and empowerment and points to the blockages in the process.

Why is it that participation and empowerment, although essential and positive, are not enough to generate transformation? A classic answer would draw attention to structural factors such as social inequality and power differentials, which are doubtless the most powerful barriers to transformation. Even so, I would like to add more elements to the explanation.

This analysis departed from the assumption that participation generates changes. However, the direction of change depends on what social actors perceive as desirable or necessary. I would like to argue that one reason participation and empowerment are insufficient is because a move towards transformation requires a new understanding of reality, and this does not easily or automatically emerge from the participatory process. Transforming ideas, assumptions and beliefs about the environment, the relations between people and nature, about wealth and poverty, about the colonial and indigenous mind, or about the role each person has in the process of change is a path to be constructed – a path requiring new ways of carrying out the process of change and new worldviews in order to see what has to be changed.

In this sense, transformative learning, defined as ‘the process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of references (meaning perspectives, habits of mind, mind-sets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change and reflective so they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide actions take’ (Mezirow, 2000: 7-8), turns out to be essential. Hence, I would suggest that, in the case of participatory management in Lagos São João river basin, an engagement with a transformative learning process could make a great contribution to overcoming some of the limitations and blockages preventing the process of transformation.

Participation as tyranny has been debated, and denounced, but the power of the idea of participation together with the enthusiasm, the idealism and the many positive results it generates, still easily seduces practitioners, moving them away from looking critically at participatory processes and identifying their contradictions. Participation itself is not the problem. On the contrary, it tends to be part of the solution, but to become involved in such processes requires a permanent critical reflection and vigilance in order to avoid a naïve, blinkered enthusiasm.

The ways forward also point to the need to mainstream social analysis in environmental analysis and natural resources management. That certainly calls for a deep cultural change as well as the development of special skills among the actors involved. An effective move in this direction would require that public policies truly recognize such a need and stimulate the shift. This may be still a long way off, but it can be started by the ones carrying out participatory natural resources management such as Lagos São João RBC. The implementation of water governance in Brazil has proved that important reflections, ideas, practices and innovations have been created and proposed by local groups and creative river basin committees. Thus, the possibility is there.

Lastly, moving towards transformation means moving away from a ‘doing culture’, which gives primacy mainly to action, instrumental knowledge and problem solving, and towards a more reflective ‘learning culture’, aimed at generating deeper understanding of reality and one’s role in the process of change. This represents another profound change demanding explicit institutional commitment with learning and capacity building and challenging us to ‘integrate transformative learning theory, concepts, tools and approaches to our way of working’ (Buchy and Ahmed 2007:15).

Endnote

1. The fieldwork was conducted at the end of 2007, in the Lagos São João river basin, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. During the period, the author visited 11 of the 13 municipalities in the watershed and interacted with members of the River Basin Committee from all sectors: local, state and federal government, water users and civil society organizations. The selection of interviewees reflected the different sectors represented in the Committee. Preference was given to the representatives – appointed by the government (local, state and federal) or elected by their peers (civil society organizations and water users) – as well as participants in the Subcommittees or Advisory Technical Groups. The category and number of the interviewees were: *Executive Secretary* (5) / *Government* – Local (8), State level (3), Federal level (3) / *Water Users* – Private Water Company (1), Fishers’ Association (11), small farmers (5) / *Civil Society Organizations* – NGOs (8), totalling 44 interviewees. Aiming at allowing people to express their perceptions in different ways, I also used drawings as a method of data collection. All of these were elaborated and described by the ‘authors’ themselves which provided important insights in the data analysis.

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CHAPTER NINE

Engaging Indigenous Governance in Partnerships for Conservation: Lessons from Selva De Matavén, Colombian Amazon

Eloisa Berman-Arévalo

INTRODUCTION

Indigenous peoples and partnerships for conservation in indigenous Amazonia

Indigenous peoples in Latin America, their territories, knowledge and practices have assumed a key role in global efforts for global environmental protection (Ulloa 2005, p. 97), particularly for the conservation of tropical forest biodiversity (Conklin, 1997; Escobar 1998). Linking notions of territory, autonomy, tradition and conservation (van Cott 2001; Offen 2003), indigenous movements have borrowed and transformed elements from global environmental discourses, incorporating them into the framing of their struggles for the recognition of territorial, political and cultural self-determination (Ulloa 2004; Jackson and Warren 2005). The participation of indigenous peoples in environmental politics and new types of global environmental governance (Brosius 1999; Dove 2006; Lemos and Agrawal 2006) has played a major role in shaping their processes of ‘political re-organization’ (Nagel and Snipp 1993), as well as the contents and forms of implementation of indigenous projects of articulation with ‘pluri-national’ states (Andolina et al. 2005, p. 681).

Widespread democratic transformations of Latin American states, exemplified by the drafting of ‘green’ and ‘multicultural’ constitutions during the 1990s (Assies 2000: 3; van Cott 2001), resulted in new policy and legal prescriptions integrating environmental protection, indigenous self-determination, and administrative decentralization (Brackelaire 2000, p. 46). In Colombia, the Political Constitution of 1991 (CPC-91) and subsequent legislation granted semi-autonomous status to indigenous territories, which today constitute 25% of the national territory and more than 80% of its forest areas, recognized under the figure of *resguardos* (Van der Hammen 2003, p. 7). This process implied the insertion of indigenous peoples into the political-administrative structure of the Colombian state and the attribution of public management functions, including territorial and environmental management, to new forms of indigenous government. Parallel to the strengthening of civil society actors and the weakening of the state, the devolution of public functions has been accompanied by the support of NGOs, different state institutions and international donors, which have formed partnerships with local – often

newly created – indigenous organizations. Partnerships with Amazonian indigenous peoples often materialize as projects for conservation and sustainable development (Dove 2006; Ros-Tonen et al. 2007), while also providing technical, political and financial support to indigenous territorial claims and political processes (Offen 2003; Perreault 2001, 2003; Andolina et al. 2005). Thus, these collaborative initiatives have become dynamic arenas where the mutual influence between environmental and developmental interventions and indigenous governance is negotiated.

This chapter discusses the case of Selva de Matavén in the Colombian Amazon, a 2 million-ha resguardo where a dynamic partnership process has been taking place for the past 10 years (1998–2008), integrating territorial protection, natural resource management and consolidation of indigenous self-government. Its aim is to provide a nuanced view of partnership formation and development, its conflicts and accomplishments. In contrast to common representations of such alliances between conservationists and indigenous peoples, this account situates partnerships in an arena of constant negotiations and shifting power relations between participating actors. From this analysis derives the second main aim of the chapter, namely to discuss some of the implications of the partnership process for indigenous governance, which is addressed by the creation and consolidation of a new form of indigenous organization.

After a discussion of the concepts of ‘partnerships’, ‘devolution’ and ‘indigenous governance’, I explain the methodology and provide basic information about the territory referred to. Then a history of the partnership process is laid out, specifying how it emerged, its diverse composition, objectives and actions, the emergence of conflicts and tensions, as well as its accomplishments. Finally, the interplay between the partnership process and indigenous governance is analysed, discussing the ways in which the partnership played a fundamental role in shaping different dimensions of local governance, with often ambivalent and contradictory outcomes.

PARTNERSHIPS, DEVOLUTION AND INDIGENOUS GOVERNANCE

Partnerships

Understood broadly as “more or less formal arrangements between two or more parties from various sectors (government, civil society and/or private sector) around (at least partly) shared goals, in the expectation that each party will gain from the arrangement” (Ros-Tonen et al. 2007, p. 5), partnerships integrating environmental and local development objectives have been advocated in development policy circles. They are seen as an effective response to decentralization and territorial devolution and to the increasing number of relevant actors in environmental governance (Fisher et al. 2005; Ros-Tonen et al. 2007). Furthermore, collaborative initiatives have become a common strategy for acting upon complex socio-environmental problems that cross traditional political and agency boundaries (Fisher et al. 2005), for enhancing “good governance” and for the integration of local development, social justice and environmental agendas (Ros-Tonen et al. 2007).

Aligned with governance-oriented analyses, the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Peoples (UNPFII) strongly advocates partnerships between development actors and indigenous peoples, based on the need to engage the latter in increasing trends

towards “participatory governance” (UNPFII 2005). Addressing questions of political agency and “indigenous empowerment”, the Guidelines for Engaging Indigenous Peoples (UNPFII Workshop “Engaging the marginalized”, Brisbane, Australia, 15 August 2005) emphasize the need for indigenous peoples’ participation in decision-making, respect for their chosen forms of representation, recognition of their cultural diversity, and the development of sustainable partnerships, targeted at achieving long-term objectives (ibid: 4, 5).

Adopting a more critical perspective, Ros-Tonen et al. (2007), in a review of partnerships for forest management in Latin America, recognize that the “warm and positive connotation” of the term may “mask power asymmetries and exploitative relations”, resulting in the use of partnerships as symbols of good intentions by powerful actors (ibid: 5). Indeed, substantial literature on conservation-oriented partnerships involving indigenous peoples poses sharp critiques on “top-down” conservation initiatives under the rhetoric of “partnerships”, “participation” and “integrated conservation and development” (Colchester 1996; Chapin 2004; Chernela 2005). Some scholars have framed the analysis in terms of Foucaultian “governmentality”, arguing that conservation agendas pursue indigenous peoples’ internalization of state control (Bryant 2002).

On a middle ground that recognizes partnerships’ potential for fair and sustainable environmental management while undertaking critical academic analyses, Ros-Tonen et al. (2007) point out major risks that emerge in partnership relations, generally associated with a failure to reconcile multiple interests and power imbalances or to accomplish both sustainable management and social justice. Challenges and conflicts include diverging interests, power asymmetries, perverse use of partnership “framing”, exclusion of crucial social actors, negation of social and ecological dynamism and unpredictability, and adverse effects on local governance structures, among others (ibid: 21). With respect to this last aspect, Brook (2005, 2007) asserts that, while providing instrumental support to indigenous peoples’ struggles for territorial recognition, institutional strengthening and capacity-building, multi-scale development initiatives increase pressure on village governance structures (2007, p. 225). Indeed, initiatives that are driven by external actors and lack local appropriation can undermine the capabilities of local institutions and create dependencies, and their results in terms of indigenous “empowerment” and improved organizational and technical capacities are often problematic and contradictory (Morsello and Adger 2007, p. 157).

In terms of its composition, the Matavén process has a multi-scale, multi-sector nature, with actors bringing together different kinds of skills and resources including political power, funding, management capacity, technical expertise and local knowledge. Actors include international donor governments and multilateral agencies, national and local government entities with different functions and objectives, research institutes, national NGOs, regional and national indigenous organizations, and an emerging local indigenous organization as a body for self-government. Further, partnerships in this research are conceived as dynamic processes where composition, scope, objectives and implementation mechanisms are constantly shifting according to dynamic power relations between actors and on opportunities and priorities that emerge at given moments. Finally, the partnership process analysed here includes conservation objectives, but cannot be understood as a

partnership for conservation or environmental management alone. As will be shown below, the Matavén partnership process incorporated environmental discourses and actions but was fundamentally aimed at the implementation of collective territorial rights under the post-constitutional legal framework.

Devolution and indigenous governance

Broadly defined as “the transfer of decision-making powers from the central state to local actors, such as indigenous populations, local community organizations or organized groups of forest users” (Ros-Tonen et al. 2007, p. 16), devolution of territorial rights to indigenous peoples has been extensively analysed in relation to shifts in natural resource management and the incorporation of new local actors in global environmental governance (Edmunds and Wollenberg 2003; Ros-Tonen et al. 2007). In this sense, devolution is thought to go hand-in-hand with multi-actor collaborative initiatives, as local communities join the growing diversity of actors that have a stake in environmental governance, including NGO networks, international donors and private corporations.

Within the forest management literature, Edmunds and Wollenberg (2001, p. 4) have recognized the unbalanced emphasis on the achievement of environmental objectives in analyses of devolution and collaborative initiatives, proposing to look instead at the extent to which devolution can enhance local communities’ self determination and economic opportunities.

In the case of indigenous peoples in Colombia and other Latin American countries, devolution occurs in the context of historical shifts in the relations between indigenous peoples, the nation state and non-governmental actors at multiple scales, brought about by widespread democratic transformations during the 1980s and 1990s. The Colombian constitution generated a fundamentally political process which implied profound transformations in indigenous governance structures and practices. Therefore, while an environmental governance perspective provides the global institutional and policy context for understanding devolution in relation to conservation-oriented partnerships, it is the ongoing transformations in indigenous governance (Smith and Dobson 2003; Smith 2005) that, in practice, shape partnership negotiation and implementation.

While recognizing that the concept of “governance” as applied to indigenous peoples needs to be problematized and investigated in relation to context-specific situations (Smith 2005, p. 16), a broad definition of the term is adopted. Following Dodson and Smith, governance (as applied to the local level) is understood as the “structures, processes and institutions (formal and informal) through which a group, community or society makes decisions, distributes and exercises authority and power, determines strategic goals, organizes corporate, group and individual behavior, develops rules and assigns responsibilities” (2003, p. 2). Indigenous governance emphasizes topics that are particularly relevant in indigenous contexts, such as engagement with the wider “governance environment” (Dodson and Smith 2003; Martin, 2003; Smith, 2005), questions of autonomy and self-determination, cultural adequacy and legitimacy, identity, representation and forms of authority (Smith 2005).

I use Smith's proposed preconditions for "strong" indigenous governance (2005) as reference points to analyse partnership influence, understanding that there are culturally-specific conceptions of law, leadership, representation and participation, and that culturally-based values inform local evaluations of what constitutes "good", "strong" or "legitimate" governance" (Smith 2005, p. 12).

Smith (2005, p. 13) proposes the following conditions for strong indigenous governance:

- (a) power (de facto sovereignty or self-rule): officially acknowledged and de-facto authority and decision-making power over strategic matters (making and exercising laws, resource allocation, dispute resolution and related governing processes);
- (b) resources: the economic, cultural, human and natural resources needed for the establishment and implementation of governance structures;
- (c) effective governing institutions and accountability (capable bureaucracies, effective mechanisms for decision-making and dispute-resolution, non-politicized representation, prevention of corruption and opportunistic behaviour);
- (d) legitimacy and "culture match": the ability to wield power and authority in conformity with indigenous conceptions, shared beliefs and agreed rules.

Indigenous organizations occupy a central place in governance analyses, given their central role as "cultural brokers" with the wider governance environment (Sawchuk 1998; McDaniel, 2003; Smith 2005, p. 20). In this paper, indigenous governance is addressed in relation to the creation and evolution of a new indigenous organization in the partnership context.

METHODOLOGY

This project is based on a case study, assuming that similar conditions can be found in multi-sector partnerships in indigenous territories throughout Latin America. The research covers a period of nine years, from 1998 to 2007, but this chapter focuses on the period between 1998 and 2004.

Research was based on the combination of ethnographic methods and discourse analysis.

Qualitative techniques were used, including participant observation, open interviews, semi-structured interviews and analysis of institutional documents. Data analysis combined ethnographic narratives, open coding and categorizing, and actor-centred discourse analysis. Three main bodies of data were used: field notes taken during field visits and workshops in 2003, 2004, 2005 and 2007; semi-structured and open interviews with indigenous leaders, community members and representatives of NGOs, states and donor agencies; and written documents, including projects, reports, evaluations, planning exercises, correspondence, and workshop, meeting and assembly minutes.

More recent data was gathered during four months between March and June 2007. One month was spent in the Matavén area, where I attended the General Assembly of the indigenous organization ACATISEMA and spent three weeks in Piaroa communities in the Orinoco zone. During that time, I was a "participant observer", had informal

in the north and north-eastern portions, enormous, Pre-Cambrian rocks known as *inselbergs*, and extensive flood lands in the Orinoco and Guaviare floodplains to the east and south respectively.

The Selva de Matavén is part of the Department of Vichada, which until 1991 was in the category of National Territories created by the Constitution of 1886. These extensive, largely uninhabited, areas were isolated from national centres of power and administered directly by the national government; they constituted the country's colonization frontiers to the south and east.

According to the most recent local census, there are 149 communities in the Great Resguardo of Matavén, with 12,052 inhabitants (Programa Amazónico 2004), an average of 70 inhabitants per community. Matavén's people ascribe to six different ethnic groups, namely Sikuaní, Piaroa, Punave, Piapoco, Curripaco and Cubeo. There are additionally approximately 120 small campesino farms, with a population not above 400.

Until the creation of the Great Resguardo of Selva de Matavén in 2003, the area was divided in 16 small *resguardos* titled between 1984 and 1987. These created a belt of legal protection around the un-titled centre, which was open in its western flank (Map 2). Today, previous *resguardos* are known as *sectors*, which organize the internal redistribution of the Great Resguardo's public budget and are still present in local people's territorial identification and in the recognition of the Governor of Cabildo, the authority responsible for the former *resguardos*.

THE STORY OF THE MATAVÉN PARTNERSHIP PROCESS

Antecedents and partner recruitment

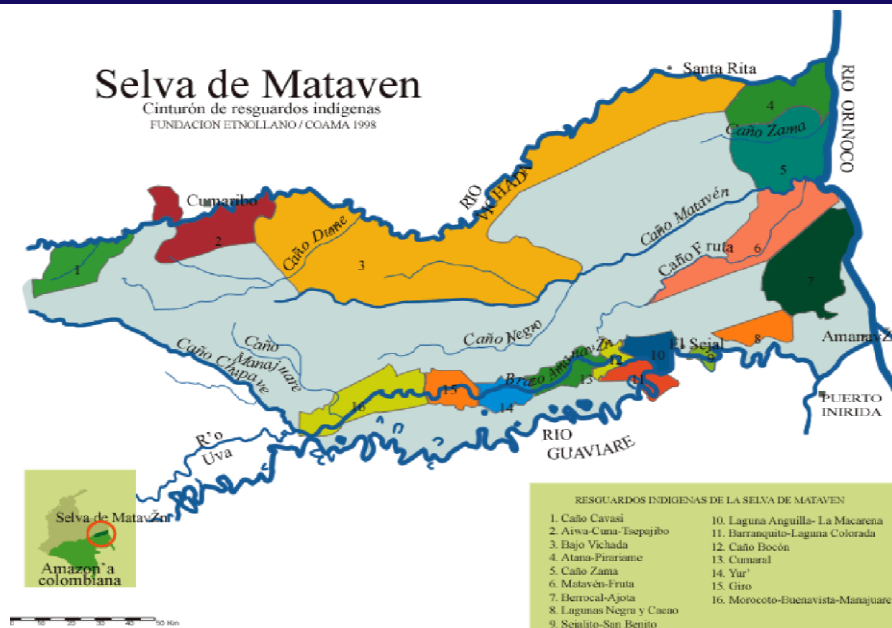
The appearance of both an indigenous organizational process and a multi-sector partnership at the level of the Matavén Forest started at the end of the 1990s, aided by NGO involvement and the emergence of objectives related to territorial protection and biodiversity conservation.

With the support of regional and national indigenous organizations, the various ethnic groups and geographical zones had succeeded in obtaining the legal recognition of *resguardos* during the mid 1980s (GEF 2001). Within a nation-wide "territorial- turn" (Offen 2003) in indigenous peoples' political processes in the early 1990s, "territory" became part of local organizations' discourses. However, it was in the context of NGO involvement that the legalization of a common area to the 16 *resguardos* became an objective for political mobilization.

Since 1983, the national NGO Etnollano has been working in the entire belt of 16 *resguardos* in a wide range of community-based development projects (Etnollano-GEF 2005). Etnollano's strongest work has consisted in community-based health initiatives and the parallel strengthening of river-based Health Promoters Associations, a new form of organization created as a response to Etnollano's work. Discussions around food security, culture and livelihoods carried out with health promoters led to concerns over territorial threats to the unprotected area circled by the 16 *resguardos*, which started to be referred to

as the ‘Heart of the Forest’ or ‘Heart of Health’ in project documents and publications and discussions between Etnollano and local leaders (Loboguerrero et al. 2000).

Map 2
Selva de Matavén. Belt of indigenous resguardos 1998



Source: Etnollano/ COAMA 2000, <http://www.etnollano.org/>

As the scope of the process expanded from community-based health to territorial protection and conservation, the need to recruit support from strategic public institutions and international donors became evident. The Etnollano Foundation had been in the area for more than 10 years, had shown financial and technical capacity to support local projects, had excellent relations with local organizations and was well-positioned among international donors. Thus, Etnollano took it to its hands to officially “launch” the Matavén initiative and stimulate the formation of a multi-sector partnership for the protection of the central area of Matavén.

Attracting partners involved the development of representations of the process, the area and its people that would serve the strategic purpose of recruitment. Framing was directed by Etnollano, which integrated indigenous leaders’ self-representations, its own perspectives and global discourses linking biodiversity conservation, multi-culturalism and indigenous territorial autonomy.

The idea of titling the central area was presented as a local request based on indigenous people’s realization of the importance of its conservation. A first official request for the protection of territory was presented in October 1998 “by a group of indigenous leaders and promoters of Matavén (...) to the national government that the central area be given to them as a *conservation zone* under the ownership and management of an association of the

16 surrounding *resguardos*” (Loboguerrero et al. 2000, p. 28). In this way, the process was presented as a rare case in which, by local initiative, protected area status was requested for an indigenous territory.

Framed in such a way, the process was attractive to public institutions with environmental and sustainable development objectives, as well as to international donors endorsing community-based and participatory approaches to conservation and development (Ulloa 2004). Partner recruitment under the leadership of Etnollano resulted in a very strong and diverse set of actors representing different scales of government and civil society, with different functions and interests. The Matavén Group, later the Institutional Support Group (GIA), was formed in 1998 in order to “coordinate efforts for the creation of the new *resguardo* and of an indigenous government to administer it” (Etnollano/GEF, 2005). Its members included the National Parks Unit, the governmental National Plan for Alternative Development (PNDA-Plante),² the Organization of Amazonian Indigenous Peoples of Colombia (OPIAC), the National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (ONIC), the Colombian Institute for Agrarian Reform (INCORA),³ the Departmental Government of Vichada and the Etnollano Foundation. In subsequent years, the Colombian Institute for Anthropology and History (ICANH), the Defensoría del Pueblo (Peoples’ Defense),⁴ the Municipality of Cumaribo and regional environmental authority Corporinoquia entered and exited the process.

Partnership objectives and actions

During 1999 and 2000, partnership actions revolved around the definition of the most appropriate mechanism for territorial protection and the most suitable form of organization to represent and administer the common area, as a first step towards self-government (Mora et al. 2002, p. 15). Plante, the National Parks Unit and Etnollano supported local workshops and meetings, consultations with external experts and inter-partner discussions, as a result of which, by the end of 2000, indigenous leaders had decided to request a *common-use resguardo* to the INCORA as a legal protection category for the central forest. In a parallel manner, an organization integrating the 16 *resguardos* was being formed which, as was decided between indigenous leaders and non-indigenous partners, aimed at becoming an Association of Traditional Indigenous Authorities (AATI), recognized as a public authority in Decree 1088 of 1993.

Besides supporting the titling process through legal and bureaucratic transactions and political lobbying in Bogotá, partners worked at the community level implementing project components in community-based natural resource management and sustainable production. Funds for these activities were provided by international donors, including the Inter-American Development Bank, the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation and the Royal Dutch Embassy.

The start of an Etnollano/Global Environmental Facility (GEF)/World Bank project in 2001 intensified activities at the local level, accelerated the fulfillment of titling requirements, and put particular emphasis on an “organizational strength” component, which soon led to the official creation of the Association of Cabildos and Traditional Authorities of Matavén (ACATISEMA) in August 2001. The “GEF project” became the main source of funding for the overall Matavén process, covering the costs of inter-

institutional meetings, local assemblies and operation costs of most activities implemented in the partnership context.

Legalization of the Great *Resguardo* of Matavén in 2003 was the culmination of five years of collaborative action. The end of the Etnollano/GEF/WB project in 2004 marked the end of Etnollano's involvement, giving way to the start of a new phase. After 2004, in a change that marked the history of partnerships in Matavén, ACATISEMA initiated the direct implementation of a three-year project funded by the Royal Dutch Embassy. Since 2004, involvement of non-indigenous organizations in Matavén has been limited to financial and administrative support, with project decision-making and implementation officially in the hands of ACATISEMA and a group of consultants.

Conflicts and tensions

Throughout the process, actors were constantly negotiating their power, ultimately expressed in their ability to influence discourses and project contents and gain legitimacy for their own participation. Successful bargaining was dependent on the support recruited from the other parties, particularly from indigenous leaders and ACATISEMA, which soon became a powerful broker between communities and non-indigenous partners.

Every one of the participants was able to exercise some degree of power, thus influencing the evolution of the partnership process. Interestingly, power relations were seldom negotiated in relation to partnership objectives and basic discourse components, which were generally agreed upon. Instead, conflicts and tensions emerged in actual partnership implementation. Throughout the process, conflicts occurred both between state and non-governmental actors and between indigenous leaders and non-indigenous partners. In the first case, conflicts were related to individual organizations gaining more influence over indigenous leaders, which could have negative repercussions for other partners' work. This type of conflict occurred when, for instance, a Plante project was implemented in 2000 through a new Indigenous Operative Committee, an organization which, according to Etnollano and the National Parks Unit, lacked local legitimacy and was highly corrupt. Later, when Etnollano started implementing the GEF project and managed to gain leaders' support through its focus on organizational strength, Plante interventions were systematically opposed by leaders.

Conflicts between indigenous leaders and non-indigenous partners were related to accusations of top-down approaches and of monopoly over administrative and budget management decisions, as occurred between the Etnollano Foundation and certain ACATISEMA leaders. In addition, the process was always accompanied by a lack of trust in non-indigenous partners. Accusations of "hidden agendas" gained strength at particular moments, often instigated by the higher-level indigenous organizations ONIC and OPIAC which constantly highlighted the need to protect indigenous autonomy and prevent "imperialist" interventions. Conflicts of this sort were particularly relevant for the National Parks Unit, often accused of wanting to impose a National Park and of being an agent of the Colombian state's militarist and neo-liberal policies. The Etnollano Foundation was also subject to this type of accusation at the start of the GEF project, when leaders were suspicious of the World Bank's intentions, given its well-known support for neo-liberal reforms and the privatization of natural resources.

Accomplishments and synergies

Partners in the process shared a solid common ground with respect to partnership objectives and discourses. All actors were interested in territorial protection, in the consolidation of local indigenous government and in supporting sustainable production and community-based natural resource management. All actors shared conceptions of the process as an “indigenous initiative”, in which unilateral impositions were out of the question. Although the participation of non-indigenous organizations was enabled by the overarching idea of biodiversity conservation as a global concern, there was a common political understanding that favoured indigenous rights over conservationist solutions that threatened local autonomy.

Collaborative efforts between the core partners resulted in the accomplishment of the partnership’s main objective, the titling of 918,000 additional hectares of forest land and the creation, in June 2003, of the Great Resguardo of Selva de Matavén. With respect to this objective, the partnership was a tremendous success in efficiently using each actor’s particular strength and expertise. On the other hand, the partnership succeeded in creating a viable scheme of territorial administration, through the consolidation of an indigenous government body that united all ethnic groups and previous *resguardo* authorities. With different degrees of involvement, all non-indigenous partners supported the creation and strengthening of ACATISEMA, in its administrative and technical capacities, its negotiations with local and regional governments and its village-level democratic decision-making.

In terms of conservation, successful inter-sectoral and multi-scale mobilization for territorial protection has been the most visible achievement of the partnership. Besides the titling of the Heart of the Forest, ACATISEMA and non-indigenous partners have coordinated actions to address a number of external environmental threats that have emerged throughout the years. These have included gold and titanium mining, commercial fishing and oil exploration, and responses have ranged from community mobilization to legal action at the national level.

Besides these main accomplishments, consistent efforts were made to agree on a conceptual basis within which to frame the process. After two years of collaboration, partners in the Institutional Support Group adopted the notion of *territorial ordering*, a broad concept that permitted increased flexibility in the definition of project objectives and activities, allowing all of the actors in the partnership to reconcile project aims with their own specific interests. Conceived since the CPC-91 as a process of “territorial planning based on the incorporation of socio-cultural, political, economic and environmental variables” (Borja 1998, pp. 17-18), *territorial ordering* was being used in indigenous contexts as an instrument of participatory planning for self-determination and articulation with the state (Echeverry 2000; Franky, 2001). This could include cultural strengthening, self-government, territorial protection, sustainable development, natural resource management, and administrative articulation with local and regional governments, among others.

Framing in terms of territorial ordering signalled a shift away from strictly conservation and development aims towards increased emphasis on a process of indigenous political organization. This shift was a consequence of a crucial development during the partnership

process, the increase in ACATISEMA's negotiating power. Representing a form of indigenous government, ACATISEMA members were aware of their power to legitimize or discredit external involvement and act as strategic brokers between communities and non-indigenous partners. Their strengthening in partnership negotiations became the driving force of shifts in power relations and of subsequent changes in partnership characteristics.

Matavén: a success story?

As can be concluded from the previous section, the Matavén process possesses many of the attributes that would make it a "success story" as a partnership integrating environmental and social agendas. According to Fischer et al. (2005, p. 12) key attributes of this type of coalition, conceived as the main reasons for their widespread implementation, include their "broad inclusivity of stakeholders", "problem-solving orientation", "integrative perspectives", "informality and flexibility" and "non-proprietary" nature. The Matavén partnership had all these prerequisites, and whether directly attributable to them or not, it did accomplish important concrete objectives. However, the Matavén process was also a complex arena for constant negotiations of power and meanings among participating actors. Indeed, despite the apparent success in enhancing "indigenous empowerment", ACATISEMA's consolidation is marked by contradictions, given its emergence in response to non-indigenous discourses and project needs, its dependency on project resources and its questionable legitimacy and representativeness at the community level. Some of the implications of reliance on partnerships for indigenous governance are discussed in the following section.

PARTNERSHIPS AND INDIGENOUS GOVERNANCE

The following section discusses how the dynamics of partnership relations and the partnership-oriented development of an indigenous organization influenced the enhancement of strong indigenous governance in each of its constitutive elements (Smith 2005, p. 13). It should be noted that this is by no means an overall assessment of governance dynamics in Matavén. Instead, it centres on only one level of indigenous governance, the organization, whose development is analysed only in the context of a particular form of "wider governance environment", the partnership process.

Power (de facto sovereignty or self-rule)

Arguably, it is in the dimension of power that the partnership process had the most significant positive impact. Partnership objectives related to self-government and "territorial consolidation" aimed principally at strengthening indigenous sovereignty, which was carried out by the legal protection of territory and support for a legally recognized form of authority. ACATISEMA emerged as a legally recognized form of self-government, which itself laid the grounds for effective recognition by external actors, guaranteeing the participation of indigenous leaders in consultation and decision-making in policies and programmes which concerned indigenous peoples in the area.

With regards to the politics of partnership relations, enhancement of ACATISEMA's decision-making power was evident. As a response to pressures by indigenous leaders, the GEF project included a specific "organizational strength" component and dedicated substantial resources to "prepare ACATISEMA to exercise its role as self-government, its social and political functions and the historical role they were playing" (Etnollano Director, written interview, July 2007). Also, active participation of ONIC and OPIAC contributed to a heightened political tone in partnership discussions, stressing ACATISEMA's responsibilities in protecting indigenous autonomy and preventing top-down interventions. Thus, indigenous representatives gained a strong political position to contest partners' proposals, request particular actions and lay out rules and principles for partners' interventions. ACATISEMA's ability to become the implementing agency for a one million Euro project financed by the Dutch Embassy in 2004,⁵ known locally as the "Holland Project", was the apex of this process. Designed by ACATISEMA consultants and its General Coordinator, the project's central objective was: "to enhance the organizational strength of ACATISEMA as articulating axis of territorial ordering and governance in the unified *resguardo* of Selva de Matavén" (Programa Amazónico 2004, p. 17; ACATISEMA, 2004).

In terms of project agendas, emphasis was given to enhancing the association's ability to conduct fair transactions with local and regional governments, particularly with regard to health, education and public budget allocation. Activities also aimed at increasing local planning and resource allocation capacities and developing local institutions for democratic decision-making, accountability and effective conduct of public affairs. As will be seen below, it is arguable whether these objectives were in fact accomplished.

Decision-making power by indigenous leaders in partnership negotiations has been treated as an indicator of increased sovereignty and authority in relation to external actors, in this case non-indigenous partners. However, the extent to which the partnership process enhanced indigenous governance and empowerment has to be questioned with regard to the reliance on partners' material and technical resources, weak local legitimacy due to externally-oriented discourses and operations, and emphasis on short-term, individual benefit seeking to the detriment of long-term policies.

Resources

"During GEF, the Etnollano Foundation was like the breast that gave us the milk. We wanted to start letting it go, but we couldn't do it until we found another one, and then another one." (Local leader, personal communication, 2 May 2007)

Since its conception, ACATISEMA has depended on external partners and projects for its operations at the village, regional and national levels. Dependency has not only been about funding, which has indeed come mainly from international donors, but also about knowledge in the form of legal, technical and political expertise.

At the local level, General Assemblies, the basis for the association's claims to be a representative and democratic government, have been entirely funded through partnership projects. Assemblies are the main mechanism for participatory planning and evaluation of programmes and projects carried out by the association in partnership with non-indigenous

organizations. They are also the space for the election of the association's Coordinating Committee (CoCo) and General Coordinator, and for the allocation of project jobs. Convening an assembly involves the transportation of committees from the different zones of Matavén and the provision of food and writing materials to assistants, whose number can range between 200 and 600 people. Between 1999 and 2003, the costs were covered individually or collaboratively by Etnollano, Plante and the National Parks Unit, which justified this spending as part of "organizational strength" project components. Between 2004 and 2007, the project funded by the Dutch Embassy and administered directly by ACATISEMA provided the basic budget for ACATISEMA's operations at different levels.

At the regional level, political and administrative transactions with municipal and departmental governments involve the transportation of representatives of *resguardo* sectors and members of the CoCo to urban centres. Although sector representatives had used national budget allocations to cover these costs, this is officially an illegal practice and funds are often not readily available. Thus, budgets for large projects such as the GEF Project and the Holland Project inevitably included coverage of "representation expenditures" for indigenous authorities.

Knowledge is an invaluable resource provided by external organizations and consultants. The organization of local meetings and assemblies has always relied on the administrative and technical support of non-indigenous project practitioners, who have also been in charge of designing the budgets, ensuring adequate accounting and reporting back to donors. Further, assembly agendas and methodologies for collective decision-making and political participation have been notably based on "western-style" practices. Indeed, before the Holland Project, each assembly was preceded by meetings of the Institutional Support Group (GIA) where the agenda and methodologies were prepared. In following workshops, the assembly agenda would be presented to members of the Coordinating Committee, who would be instructed on basic notions of participatory planning. Thus, participatory "problem identification", construction of "desired scenarios and possible solutions", reflections on "community responsibilities" and drafting of "proposals for partner's support", were often designed in advance by non-indigenous project staff who also led the exercises during the event.

Legal and political support for negotiations with local and national governments, private companies and international actors was an important area for reliance on external partners and advisors. While the titling of the Great *Resguardo* required actions at multiple levels that could not be done by a local organization alone, dependence on partners has extended to the association's successful conduct of its functions as indigenous government. For instance, legal advice and technical expertise are needed for ensuring fair allocation of national budget resources, the fulfillment of departmental responsibilities in public education and appropriate health coverage by semi-private providers.

In general, projects have become a sort of "government budget" at the level of Matavén. They not only cover the association's operations, but demonstrate – both to local people and external actors – that it is capable of taking concrete actions on politically charged issues. In Matavén, these issues include territorial protection, education, health and income-generation. Without questioning their importance for local well-being, in political terms these issues are mainly areas in which ACATISEMA legitimizes its recently acquired

status as authority through the “activation of commitments and presentation of relevant results” (Eidheim 1968, pp. 214–215, in Sawcuk 1998, p. 143). The speeches of two of ACATISEMA’s General Coordinators in the 2007 assembly illustrate the previous points:

All projects are welcome! We *do* need money because we are in an extreme poverty. The Coordinating Committee and Sector Representatives must move around, go here and there, organize meetings, you need money for that! (Juan Rodriguez, First coordinator of ACATISEMA, General Assembly 2007)

Those matters that were not addressed with the Holland project will not be excluded. That’s why we will keep looking for more resources, so that we can attend all the problems and things can level out. After this project, we can think of new paths. And the paths are more finances, to attend the things that are still needed. (Victor Yanave, current coordinator of ACATISEMA, General Assembly 2007)

As Sawchuk (1998) has noted, control over key resources such as money, programmes, personnel and technical knowledge is a fundamental means of securing and enhancing a native organization’s own political position and that of its individual members (1998, p. 134). Provision of key resources in the hands of NGOs, government and international donors clearly hinders ACATISEMA’s control over them. Although ACATISEMA has progressively gained power in deciding how resources are used, its access to them is nonetheless contingent upon non-indigenous organizations’ involvement in the Matavén process. Failure to achieve partner’s support could result in the Association’s local discredit and a lack of capacity to carry out its basic functions. In addition, partnership dependency has resulted in indigenous leaders’ strategic endorsement of discourses and actions aligned with donors’ environmental conservation agendas. As will be discussed below, this has implications for the association’s local legitimacy and “culture match”.

Effective governing institutions and accountability

It is clear that the emergence of ACATISEMA was a product of the partnership process. Besides being a legal requirement for the administration of a common *resguardo*, such a representative body was necessary for decision-making in partnerships and projects aimed at the whole multi-ethnic area. As such, its operations became inseparable from those of partners and projects.

Partners’ support for the new organization resulted in an increased focus on a small group of leaders who were given the power to decide on behalf of communities in project decision-making. This condition implied that leaders had to make substantial efforts to legitimize their new status towards local communities, which resulted in their use of partnership resources (projects funds, knowledge, jobs) to increase their local political support through handouts and short-term project benefits, often leaving aside long-term objectives. Further, ACATISEMA members became the most direct beneficiaries of partnership activities. “Organizational strength” often came in the form of workshops and meetings in Bogotá or abroad, stipends and salaries, and leaders’ exclusivity in deciding on project sites and indigenous staff.

Finally, the association's effectiveness and accountability was threatened by opportunistic benefit-seeking on the part of leaders and by a shift in partnership discussions from issues of collective importance to short-term administrative decisions. According to several interviewees, as ACATISEMA gained power in the partnership, a radical change in the nature of the discussions took place. Project decision-making became an arena for demonstrations of power and increasingly revolved around budget management, salaries and financial or political benefits for leaders or partners.

“The members of the Coordinating Committee were getting paid and going on trips to ‘decision-making meetings’ financed by institutions. Obviously, the whole issue of the management of natural resources and project contents shifted attention. Talking about logging or the watershed was not relevant anymore. Now the discussion focused on how much they spent, whether they [were] reimbursed or not, who got drunk, who was making more money, *the discussion was centered in the so-called ‘strengthening’, which is really about the administration of money...*

Assemblies and meetings focused on the presentation of project accounting and how they would negotiate their short-term interests...and very little about what they were really fighting for, the conservation and cultural topics...

Until that moment (2000), there were serious discussions, there were clear goals. But later there were no real spaces for people to reflect upon the situation and see where they were heading with this process.” (Former GEF project coordinator, personal interview, 1 June 2007)

The occurrence of individual benefit seeking and opportunism does not imply that the association lacked a political agenda. To doubt leaders' genuine interest in the territorial protection of Matavén, in local communities' well-being or in fair relationships with the Colombian state, would be to underestimate their understanding of their own history. However, this case shows that “organizational strengthening” in the context of project negotiations and unequal access to project benefits can significantly undermine the effectiveness and accountability of indigenous organizations.

Legitimacy and “culture match”

As was discussed before, ACATISEMA's “empowerment” occurred in the context of dependency on a partnership process based on western languages, knowledge and institutional arrangements. The association incorporated discourses on conservation, territory, culture and tradition in which the influence of Etnollano, the National Parks Unit and international donors was clear (ACATISEMA 2001). Its structure and operational mechanisms were based on western notions of democracy and efficient government and were designed to fit project administrative and political needs.

Naturally, this influence can have important implications for the association's local legitimacy and “culture match”. Here I focus on just one aspect, namely the strategic endorsement of global environmental discourses and community-based conservation projects by ACATISEMA leaders, a strategy that works against both the association's local legitimacy and the generation of strong local initiatives related to natural resource use.

Despite a shift to more inclusive frames such as “territorial ordering”, environmental protection and natural resource management have always been important concepts embraced by the indigenous organization through the involvement of western partners. Donors and national organizations have justified their support to the process in terms of environmental objectives and have invariably included conservation components in their projects. On their part, indigenous leaders realized early that financial and technical support to ACATISEMA was made possible by framing the Matavén process in environmental terms and including local-level conservation initiatives in project agendas. This reliance on environmental discourses continues to exist, and leaders are increasingly open to communities about the strategic importance of having a conservationist image in order to guarantee funds to cover a broader set of local issues, as the following excerpt shows:

“Because the Matavén Forest now has to finance itself, not wait until other institutions bring the money. For that, it will *sell its image towards the international level as an area of conservation and protection of natural resources*. With taking care and conserving, several agencies will finance us, and with that we can sustain ourselves, but in order for that to happen we have to design the development projects of the Matavén Forest.’ (First ACATISEMA General Coordinator, Assembly 2007, own emphasis)

The idea that local protection of natural resources is considered by the international community as a solution to global environmental problems carries the risk of generating perceptions of “conservation” as a priority for external actors, not for local communities. Indeed, for many village members, conservation is “project work” carried out because of external actors’ interests and for ACATISEMA’s benefit. The abrupt introduction of previously unfamiliar discourses of conservation and territorial ordering by the association has generated a locally perceived distance between village-level dynamics and the association’s actions. Further, as local communities view “conservation”, “participation”, “resource management” or any other project activity as a priority for external actors and as the source of ACATISEMA’s rapid increase of power, the potential of projects for generating strong community-level processes is greatly diminished.

CONCLUSIONS

The Matavén process presented many of the attributes suggested in policy circles for the successful conduct of partnerships and the accomplishment of both environmental and social justice objectives. Its composition was diverse, it focused on concrete objectives, it was flexible in its contents and discourses, and it integrated political, development and environmental aims. Furthermore, not only was the participation of indigenous representatives fundamental, but the strengthening of the indigenous political agency was in fact a central element in the partnership agenda.

Indeed, the initiative was a “success” in accomplishing several concrete objectives. The creation of the Great *Resguardo*, effective mobilization against external environmental threats and the creation and legal recognition of a common indigenous governing body for the new area were fundamental achievements. However, an in-depth analysis of the process suggests that “outcomes” and “attributes” may be underlined by contradictions and ambivalences, particularly in relation to the partnership’s effects on local governance

dynamics. This chapter is based on a conception of partnerships as dynamic processes and of partnership development as the product of power relations and negotiations between actors. By using this analytical perspective, the importance of incorporating indigenous governance into the analysis became evident. In the case of Matavén, the creation of a new partnership-oriented indigenous organization, its increased influence in project negotiations, its political strategies and its relations with the village level were fundamental factors determining partnership relations and evolution.

Using different dimensions of “strong” indigenous governance as an analytical framework allowed for a more nuanced view on partnership influence on indigenous political strengthening. In Matavén, while “indigenous power” or “sovereignty” was enhanced vis-à-vis external actors and threats, reliance on resources provided by international donors and national organizations undermined the effectiveness, accountability and “culture-match” of the indigenous association. Indeed, the strengthening of indigenous self-government, carried out as a response to partnership needs and discourses, proved to be a significant hindrance to both indigenous “empowerment” and the partnership’s effective integration of environmental and social justice agendas.

Endnotes

1. Understood according to the definition by Martínez-Cobo and adopted by the United Nations (1986): “Indigenous communities, peoples and Nations are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing in those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal systems”, (Martínez Cobo Study 1986, 5: para. 379).
2. The indigenous *resguardo* is a legal figure that represents indigenous territories with collective property titles recognized by the state. Basic characteristics include that internal management and government corresponds to indigenous local authorities, and that they are inalienable, imprescriptible and non-seizable. It is a legal and socio-political institution for the autonomous management of indigenous territories and affairs (Rodríguez 2004).
3. Definitions by Smith (2005) represent the Indigenous Community Governance (ICG) Project of the Centre for Aboriginal Social and Economic Policy (Australian National University). The preconditions for strong indigenous governance adopted by the ICG Project are in turn based on Sterritt (2001, 2002), the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples in Canada, and the Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development (Smith 2005, p. 12f).
4. This area was recognized in 2003 as the Great Resguardo of Selva de Matavén, according to Resolution 37 of 22 July 2003 by INCODER. Numerous publications about Matavén mention an area of 2,150,000 ha, corresponding to the pre-existing 16 *resguardos* and the forested central area (Loboguerrero et al. 2000; Mora et al. 2002; Hyde-Hecker 2005).
5. Created in 1996 to promote coca crop substitution and sustainable rural development in coca-growing areas.
6. Now Colombian Institute for Rural Development (INCODER), the main government body for rural development, in charge of collective titling of indigenous territories,
7. The Defensoría Del Pueblo is a state institution created with the CPC-91, responsible for ensuring the effective implementation of human rights, through the following integrated actions: human rights education, human rights promotion, human rights defence and protection (www.defensoria.org.co). Its actions in Amazonia have aimed at the strengthening of the

Colombian state through the consolidation of indigenous government, the defence of collective rights and the protection of territorial integrity of indigenous lands.

8. Project 'Fortalecimiento de la Autonomía comunitaria para la Vida, Territorio y Medio Ambiente- componente ACATISEMA' ('Strengthening of Community Autonomy for Life, Territory and the Environment-ACATISEMA').

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