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From users and choosers to makers and shapers: repositioning participation in social policy

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Summary

How do ordinary people, especially poor people, affect the social policies that in turn affect their well-being? What is the role of citizen participation in social policy formation and implementation in this era of globalisation? How do changing contexts and conditions affect the entry points through which actors in civil society, especially the poor or those working with the poor, can exercise voice and influence in critical aspects of social care, be they in the areas of health, education, welfare, social security, programmes for the disabled, low-income housing, or other significant social policy arenas?

In this paper, we take up these questions. We explore an approach to social policy that sees citizens not only as users or choosers, but as active participants who engage in making and shaping social policy and social provisioning. In doing so, we argue that the concept of 'social citizenship' that has often underpinned considerations of social welfare should be expanded to include not only concepts of social rights, but also of social responsibilities and social accountability through direct forms of democratic governance.

Repositioning participation in the context of debates on citizenship and agency, we review strategies that have been used to strengthen participation in social policy and social provisioning. We examine in turn four approaches to participation. These include: (a) those in which beneficiaries of social services are consulted as users or consumers, (b) those that have emphasised self-provisioning through civil society, (c) social and advocacy movements through which citizens have advocated for social provisioning from the state, as a social right, and, (d) lastly, accountability approaches which emphasise new relationships between service providers and citizens through their active participation in processes of democratic governance.

Reflecting on these approaches, we suggest that the more functional concepts of participation, through which beneficiaries participate as users or consumers of pre-determined public services, are of limited utility. Not only do they fail to include people in broader aspects of the policy process, but they also ignore their contribution to self-provisioning outside formal government arenas. Most importantly, they fail to recognise or realise the potential of more active citizen engagement in making and shaping social policy and with it opportunities for enhanced service responsiveness, transparency and accountability.

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1 Introduction

How do ordinary people, especially poor people, affect the social policies that in turn affect their well-being? What is the role of citizen participation in social policy formation and implementation in this era of globalisation? How do changing contexts and conditions affect the entry points through which actors in civil society, especially the poor, can exercise voice and influence in critical aspects of social care, be they in the areas of health, education, welfare, social security, programmes for the disabled, low-income housing, or other significant social policy arenas?

State-centred conceptions of social policy often view citizens as recipients of state delivered programmes. Market-led versions focus on the clients of social welfare as consumers, who participate through exercising choice from a range of services. In this paper, we argue for an approach to social policy that sees citizens not only as users or choosers, but as active participants who engage in making and shaping social policy and social provisioning. To do so raises important conceptual issues about the nature of participation, citizenship, and social policy itself. We suggest that changing contexts and conditions – demographic change, an increased emphasis on decentralisation, privatisation of provisioning, and globalisation – challenge traditional approaches to participation in social policy. Reviewing broader historical strategies through which ordinary people have participated in affecting social policies and provisions, we argue that participation must be repositioned in light of current realities, which offer new spaces as well as new constraints for citizen engagement.

2 Changing times, new challenges

Global social policy, as Deacon *et al.* (1997) contend, faces a set of unprecedented challenges. As northern welfare regimes become increasingly embattled (Esping-Anderson 1996; Pierson 1998), southern countries face new difficulties for social sector provisioning in the wake of economic reforms, globalisation and changing demography. In a literature mainly concerned with northern and transitional economies, the absence of reference to poorer countries in the south is notable. Setting 'global social policy' in context requires that we move beyond debates that have conventionally focused on various types of welfare regimes, to take account of the complexities of welfare provisioning in countries where the configuration of state and non-state actors, and indeed the responsiveness and capacity of the state to deliver welfare services, is strikingly different.

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

for this analysis is the part that strategies for increasing citizen participation in social policy might play in this broader project.

Deacon's focus on institutional reform, powered by members of global 'epistemic communities' (Haas 1992), is one that debates in the participation field have increasingly focused on (Blackburn with Holland 1998, Blackburn *et al.* 2000). An especially significant aspect of institutional reform, for the social sector and beyond, has been the prescription of new forms of governance through sector reform programmes. Mishra (1998) argues that the policy prescriptions of international institutions 'amount to the supranational steering of social policy in a neo-liberal direction … weaken[ing] further the autonomy of nation states to chart their own course' (1998: 491). Yet, as Hirst and Thompson (1996) note, global governance reform may serve to reinforce a role for the nation-state. This implies a more dynamic relationship between states and supra-national institutions, as well as opportunities for linkages with global civil society and for influence from below (Gaventa and Robinson 1998). Effective participation in social policy, then, may require looking beyond national institutions to enhancing the capacities of citizens to influence supranational, as well as national, policy (Edwards and Gaventa 2001).

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

3 Participation, citizenship and social policy

3.1 Participation

The concept of participation, of course, is not a new one in development. Over the last thirty years it has acquired a spectrum of meanings and given rise to a diversity of practices (see Cornwall 2000). For much of this time, 'community participation', usually in projects, has remained distinct from political participation, conventionally through voting, political parties and lobbying. In recent years, there has been a convergence of concern with citizen engagement in policy formation and implementation and with 'good governance', broadening political participation to include a search for new, more direct, ways through which citizens may influence governments and hold them accountable (Gaventa and Valderrama 1999). Both of these shifts contribute to new discussions of participation as citizenship and as a social, as well as a political right.

Table 1 A shift in participation

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

Source: Gaventa and Valderrama (1999)

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

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

During the late 1960s and the 1970s, there was a growing demand in many parts of the world for citizens to be involved in decision-making processes which affected their lives, including in the social policy arena. The form of participation that emerged focused largely on establishing consultative mechanisms, often in the form of user committees. The spread of this new approach was rapid and far-reaching. Citizens became involved in thousands of community health councils, parent committees in schools, tenant councils, and countless other beneficiary committees. Through strengthened participation of the clients of social services, it was hoped, providers would be better able to understand their needs and perspectives. Richardson comments:

> Not only was it seen as a key means of ensuring fair processes, and creating better decisions, but the act of participating would also bring fulfilment and understanding to those involved. Participation like motherhood, was clearly A Good Thing. (1983: 4–5)

The parallels with 'participation in projects' paradigm in development are striking, as with the emphasis on user committees that has become so pervasive an approach to participation in the south.

Institutionalised participation provided opportunities for improved assessment of needs and service responsiveness. It also provided a political space in which users could develop their own identities and voice (Barnes 1999). Yet, increasingly, even the advocates of beneficiary participation began to raise questions about its limits. The lack of a common understanding or definition of the term 'participation' meant that a whole variety of practices could be carried out and legitimated under its label (Richardson 1983). There were concerns about issues of power – what about those who lacked the power to express

their views and preferences? Could participation in itself serve to reinforce exclusion? There was a danger that the beneficiary involvement model would simply become an interest group approach, in which user groups simply became seen as 'one amongst a number of self-interested stakeholders lobbying a pluralistic system' (Barnes 1999: 79–80). Moreover, there were questions of consultation fatigue, and of the ways in which social service managers used consultation simply to legitimate their own ends (Croft and Beresford 1996).

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.2 Citizenship

The shift from a focus on users as consumers to a more direct concern with the rights of citizens raises a series of broader issues about exactly what 'citizenship' implies.[1] In her work on 'Users as Citizens', Barnes distinguishes a form of 'collective action based in common experiences of oppression, disadvantage or social exclusion' from 'an assertive consumerism which seeks to maximise individual self-interest' (1999: 82). She argues that collective action provides a means through which citizenship can be addressed in the social policy arena in three broad ways – as a social right; as a form of agency and practice; and as a relationship of accountability between public service providers and their users. We shall briefly build upon these in turn.

Citizenship as a social right

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

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

These critiques point to a paradox: universalism, by imposing a particular set of values under the guise of a concern for all, can in itself exacerbate social exclusion.[2] Ellison draws attention to a further

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

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

paradox: 'a clear aspect of the new, fractured world of social policy is precisely that vulnerable or marginal groups want "social inclusion" while simultaneously demanding social and political changes which challenge the nature of what it means to be included' (1999: 70). He goes on to note

> In this way, the desire for inclusion (in the sense of gaining access to the social rights, resource and opportunities available to others) frequently exists contiguously with demands for the alteration of, inter alia, the basis of 'social membership', the principles informing resource allocation and the means of access to resources themselves. (1999: 70–71)

Addressing these paradoxes, critics of the liberal notion of citizenship take up this concern with 'social membership' and with gaining access to social rights. They put forward a more actor-oriented view that draws on a tradition of citizenship as civic engagement, in which citizens are actively engaged in governance and politics for a broader social good. In this view, citizenship becomes an identity that extends beyond the bundle of rights defined by the liberal view. Yet questions arise about the extent to which a vision of the social good is shared; and, where it is not, how marginalised groups can assert their particular concerns.

Citizenship as agency

Repositioning participation to encompass a notion of citizenship that is both responsive to the possibilities of democratic pluralism and retains the principle of equivalence offers a way out of this impasse.[3] Conceptualising participation itself as a right, Lister argues that the

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

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

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

make strategic use of identities that they themselves play a part in defining, in order to gain or improve access to the services they need.

Citizenship as accountability through democratic governance

By seeing themselves as actors rather than simply passive beneficiaries, user groups may be more able to assert their citizenship in a third sense through seeking greater accountability from service providers. One form of greater accountability is through increased dialogue and consultation, as in earlier forms of user involvement. This raises questions about the extent to which marginalised groups are able to articulate their concerns and about the form that dialogue takes.[4] Accountability may also, however, involve broader mechanisms for citizens to identify indicators of success, to monitor and assess performance, and to demand greater transparency.

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

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

3.3 Participation and the policy process

Repositioning participation and citizenship as rights that are bound up with enhancing the ability of people to act as social agents raises important challenges for citizen participation in making and shaping the policies that affect their lives. Attempts to broaden inclusion in social policy-making have

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[4] This is an issue over which there has been considerable debate, from Habermas' (1984) work on 'ideal speech situations' in which everybody would have a voice, to the work of those like Laclau and Mouffe (1985) who argue that consensus can never be reached without exclusion.

characteristically involved the use of consultative mechanisms to seek greater citizen involvement in generating information to feed into policy formulation. Recent work on the politics of the policy process has challenged some of the assumptions on which these attempts to influence policy have been based.

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

These insights have a number of significant implications for citizen engagement in the policy process. Citizen learning through participatory research can work to assert the legitimacy of knowledge claims of ordinary people, redefining 'expertise' in terms that provide greater space for the experiences of those whose lives social policies affect (Gaventa 1993). Participatory processes can provide a means by which 'policy space' (Grindle and Thomas 1991) can be levered opened for the emergence of alternative interpretation of 'needs', and with this, alternative policy solutions. Yet processes geared at simply asking people for their views on social policy issues can serve to produce 'echoes' of dominant discourses, rather than alternative framings of policy issues. The role of deliberative and critically reflective knowledge generation processes becomes crucial in enabling citizens to analyse and articulate their own concerns, which may lie beyond the frames of reference of pervasive policy discourses.

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

In the following sections, we take up some of these issues through a exploration of some of the diverse forms participation has taken in social policy in the south. We identify contexts in which the framing of citizens as users, choosers and as active agents in the setting of priorities and pursuit of policy has led to distinctively different approaches to social policy. In doing so, we point to some directions that future work in this area might take.

4 Participation and social policy: a survey of strategies and approaches

Much of the previous section draws from literature and conceptual debates found in the north. In this section, we shall move to a brief review of empirical examples that illustrate the range of strategies that have been used to strengthen participation in social policy and social provisioning, with particular emphasis on experiences in the south. Following the framework set out above we shall briefly examine the 'user and chooser' approach to participation, suggesting that the approach found in the north has its parallels in the south, with similar strengths and weaknesses. Then, we shall turn to focus on various forms of collective action, and examine the extent to which the three types of citizenship outlined above have relevance for the southern context. In so doing, we shall examine:

- User approaches to participation in social policy – in which beneficiaries of social services exercise are engaged in consultative processes, or are empowered as 'consumers' of social services from the marketplace;
- Self-provisioning approaches – which have emphasised delivery of social services through civil society, be it through NGOs or more informal mechanisms of self-organisation;
- Social and advocacy movements – through which citizens have advocated for social provisioning from the state, as a social right;
- Accountability approaches – which emphasise new forms of accountability between service providers and citizens through their active participation in processes of democratic governance.

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

Probably the dominant approach to participation in social policy provisioning in the south has paralleled the user groups movement in the north. As has become evident, residual welfare provision has increasingly shifted into the non-statutory arena, with the de-facto privatisation of the social sector and the increasing engagement of NGO and CSOs in provisioning. This not only implies a different role for the state, but also an increasing emphasis on mechanisms for ensuring accountability, efficiency and equity.

The development landscape is littered with committees formed in the wake of these changes, mandated as 'user groups' to take on some of the functions of provisioning, regulation and management that previously resided with the state. In some contexts, these have served as mechanisms for consultation with supposed beneficiaries about implementation of pre-determined projects or government programmes – through village education committees, clinic committees, welfare groups, and the like. In other cases, these approaches have attempted to empower users as 'consumers' of social policies.

User committees

The context for these changes has been a neo-liberal perspective on participation that challenges the paradigm of state provision in which, it is argued, 'users have no real choice: all they can do is accept the

service offered or not' (Franco 1996: 16). The neo-liberal paradigm emphasises user participation, not only in project design but also in bearing the costs for service delivery. As an attempt to revitalise ailing primary health care service provision, and set firmly within the neo-liberal paradigm, the Bamako Initiative serves as an example of the kind of rhetoric that has accompanied these shifts in policy. Knippenberg *et al.*'s account of the principles on which the Bamako Initiative was founded is worth citing in full:

> Community control, involves on the one hand community responsibility for the management of local health services. On the other hand funds generated by community financing do not revert to the central treasury or health ministry but remain in the community and are controlled by it through a locally elected health committee. The involvement of communities is a fundamental feature in that it changes the balance of power between service providers and users and brings about a 'new' form of governance of public health systems. From mere recipients of health care, consumers become active partners whose voices count. Beyond improving efficiency through increased transparency and reduced leakage, the community's full partnership in the decision-making process and the fact that the poor become better organised and more vocal in demanding health services, improves effectiveness and financial viability (through increased motivation to contribute). (1997: S15)

In practice, the Bamako Initiative involves putting mechanisms of cost-recovery and cost-sharing into place in order to parcel out a share of recurrent costs to communities. Financing mechanisms include user fees, prepayment schemes and direct contributions, in cash or labour. While in principle exemption schemes provide support for the poorest, in practice these are notoriously difficult to implement and often fail to offer an effective safety net (Nolan and Turbat 1995). It is evident that mechanisms for ensuring transparency and accountability, as well as for effective co-management, are considerably more complex than has perhaps been envisaged (Reddy and Vandermoortele 1996). The mere establishment of structures like committees effectively fails to address imbalances in power between providers and the supposedly empowered users of services. This can serve to keep malpractice and financial mismanagement unchallenged, rendering committees powerless in the face of vested interests.

Questions also arise about the status of user committees vis a vis the community at large, and especially the poorest. There is, of course, no reason to assume that those who gain places on a committee will be any more transparent and accountable than health service personnel. Issues of difference pose particular challenges, as the 'myth of community' (Guijt and Shah 1998) meets the myth of singular, fixed identities (Mouffe 1992; Cornwall 1998). While there is usually notional representation of women on these committees, for example, to read off from this that 'women's health issues' are adequately represented – or indeed that those women who find themselves on committees act in the interests of women-in-general – begs a number of questions (see Phillips 1993).

What is perhaps of most significance here is that the remit of these committees generally remains confined to ensuring the efficiency of delivery rather than to give citizens more of a voice in determining the kinds of services they want or need. In this sense, initiatives like Bamako generally take a profoundly

instrumentalist approach to participation. This, perhaps, accounts for some of the central weaknesses of the 'user group' approach. By denying people the agency to make choices outside the frame of reference afforded by their role in these programmes and by overlooking the complexity of relations of power between service providers and community members, and within communities themselves, they operate with a very limited conception of 'participation'.

Box 1 Partnerships for health improvement

(Musembi and Kilalo 1999)

World Neighbours began work in Makueni District, Kenya, in 1988 through an adult education class. The class drew attention to the need for training in midwifery skills for traditional practitioners, but then looked beyond this to the barriers to access to health services faced by pregnant women. Together, midwives and the adult education group analysed these problems and came up with a need for a maternity ward, as part of the local government health facility. After discussion with the community, a decision was taken to extend the government dispensary to include other services. The initial group drew in other community members to analyse existing health services and identify areas for action.

Beyond a demand for certain kinds of services, an issue that arose was a lack of voice in decision-making on management and quality of care issues. Their action plan included a health management committee linked with the dispensary, developing links with the Ministry of Health at district level, strengthening links with World Neighbours for technical and material assistance, and resource mobilisation to improve health services. Free services were to be provided to the vulnerable, identified through village institutions where well-being ranking had been carried out. Services were put in place from 1991–1997 and now include community-based growth monitoring, Community Based Distributors, health education and sanitation. Insights from this experience include:

- the importance of communities being aware of their rights and responsibilities and having access to information that sets standards in terms of what people can expect from health providers;
- the value of working with communities to analyse the current situation and develop potential measures to address it, in this case through the use of participatory methods;
- that community can influence services that they perceive themselves to have a stake in: private health services in which they are simply consumers have not been influenced;
- the challenges of holding technical health staff accountable at the community level where the right to hire and fire remains subject to centralised control;
- the importance of engaging the local management committee more actively in monitoring health service delivery, beyond simply providing the physical infrastructure.

Strategies rather than structures alone are required to enable community members to become 'active partners whose voices count' (Knippenberg *et al.* 1997: S15). These include taking account of the complexities of partnerships (Gibbon 1999) and processes of community-building and empowerment that, if given sufficient time and investment, can bear fruit (see, for example, Nakarmi 1999; Howard-Grabman 1999). Essentially, they involve a shift in thinking from seeing people simply as 'users' to a broader recognition of their rights and agency – including rights to information and to involvement in

decision-making over issues with implications for resources. Beyond a simply cosmetic, and tokenistic, role for users in peripheral decisions, recognising citizens as agents requires far-reaching changes in the ways in which 'community participation' is currently envisaged in what amount to cost-sharing programmes. The example from Kenya (see Box 1) illustrates some of the issues at stake.

Social Investment Funds – choosers as users?

Built on similar neo-liberal principles, Social Investment Funds appear to extend the definition of participation beyond consultation and cost-sharing, to enable communities to exercise more control over the shape service provision takes, as choosers.[5] Opening up provision beyond the state, SIFs provide a vehicle for channelling resources to a range of providers – of which government becomes simply one among others – to meet 'community needs'. In principle, SIFs open space for citizen engagement. Clearly, however, much depends on how citizens take up the opportunities that SIFs make available – and the conditions under which the poorer and more marginalised are able to participate.

It is here that some of the problems that have beset the 'users as choosers' approach emerge most clearly. Despite profuse participatory rhetoric, in practice it appears that SIFs rarely overcome the significant barriers to the participation of less vocal and powerful members of communities. Siri notes that 'projects tend to be formulated by those who have experience in this area, and these often turn out to be the not-so-poor' (1996: 76). In making demands on a demand-driven structure, strategies are needed to support those who might be least well equipped to generate proposals. Yet these are often lacking. Abbott and Covey cite a study of the Guatemalan SIF, which found that:

> SIF procedures provide no mechanisms for communities to decide jointly on which project is most important to them. Rather than encourage local organising and priority setting, the social fund is perceived to penalise such tendencies. (Parrish in Abbott and Covey 1996: 12)

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

User committees and SIFs present us with an apparent paradox: on the one hand, participation is often regarded as purely functional; on the other hand, they open up space for citizens to play a more active role in increasing downstream accountability. This paradox indicates the complexity of issues at

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

stake. These forms of community participation can be seen as an arena in which different interpretations of participation, citizenship, social policy and a host of related concepts come to be contested.

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

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

Guided by assumptions about their comparative advantage in service delivery over government, there have been high expectations of the role that civil society organisations can play. So much emphasis has been put on this role, in fact, that some observers such as Alan Fowler (1994) contend that NGOs are being transformed into

> 'ladles for the global soup kitchen', either substituting for, or complementing Third World governments in providing welfare services to the ever-increasing number of poor and disenfranchised people. (cited in Rutherford 1997: 8)

Robinson and White, for example, suggest that an enhanced role for NGOs in service provisioning has often been justified on the grounds that they are perceived to be 'more participatory, less bureaucratic, more flexible, more cost-effective, with an ability to reach poor and disadvantaged people' (1997: 4). Yet these assumptions are increasingly coming under question (see, for example, Rutherford 1997). As a diverse set of actors, the impact of NGOs depends as much on the socio-political context and relations with other actors, as on their organisational characteristics. This has implications not only for accountability, but also for viability and equity in service delivery.

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

(Arellano-Lopez and Perez 1994, cited in Rutherford 1997). One example of the significance of scaling up policy models from the grassroots is that of SPARC, an association of slum dwellers in Bombay associated as well with the National Slum Dwellers Federation (See Box 2).

Box 2 Developing grassroots solutions amongst the urban poor
(Mitlin & Patel 1998)

SPARC's work began with the intention of assisting the most vulnerable in society, leading them to select Bombay's pavement dwellers as their key focus. Pavement dwellers were profoundly marginalised, and their livelihoods and lifestyles constantly under threat from municipal authorities which sought to remove them from the city. SPARC's first programme was to give women in particular the opportunity to discuss their stories and gradually consider how they could end their social isolation. The various solutions, including accessing basic entitlements such as subsidised rations, savings and credit schemes, and later on exchange and learning visits and house-construction, all emerged from the logic and priorities of the pavement-dwellers themselves. Over time, the savings and credit schemes led to the foundation of Mahila Milan, an organisation of women's collectives engaged in this activity.

In the process of learning and developing solutions the need for a broader basis of support for pavement-dwellers amongst the urban poor became an obvious prerequisite for achieving the goal of addressing their needs. This awareness brought SPARC into its first alliance, with the National Slum Dwellers' Federation. Later on, as the 1987 International Year of Shelter for the Homeless increased interest in SPARC's activities, other alliances and partnerships developed, gradually positioning the particular concerns of pavement-dwellers within wider claims and activities for and by the urban poor. These strategic alliances have built SPARC's authority, such that it is now able to influence donors and local government. The SPARC-NSDF alliance has developed new housing solutions, for instance, which are designed, piloted and refined by their constituents, before being shared through exchange visits and project replication, in other cities of India as well as in many other countries.

SPARC's approach has been to work to use what spaces were available to develop solutions for themselves, rather than to engage directly against state policies. As they write,

> The poor will not be taken seriously if the level of engagement with the state is only confrontational or ideological. No doubt advocacy is important, but it must be rooted in the practical difficulties that the poor face daily: poverty, homelessness, lack of access to services, education and health … All our activities, like savings and credit groups, or exchanges, or training in construction of community toilets and houses, are only a means to an end: the awakening of the poor with a focus upon the women amongst them. (SPARC quoted in Dey and Westerndorff 1996).

Through modelling social alternatives to housing, using participatory research approaches, local knowledge and local resources, SPARC has had a large impact on much larger scale housing policies in Bombay, and in fact, in other cities and countries as well. As they write:

> New relations have been developed with the state based on the models developed [locally]. Through these relations with the state, the alliance seeks to put in place solutions that can be scaled up across Indian cities to provide infrastructure and improve housing. Intrinsic to these models is the ambition to create a new relationship between the citizen and the state (Mitlin & Patel 1998: 5).

As the SPARC example illustrates, alternative approaches to the delivery of social services by civil society have, in some quarters, gained attention and begun to be adopted by state agencies. As such, they have contributed indirectly to policy change. Moreover, collective action through self-provisioning may contribute to the creation of identities of previously excluded groups as political actors, which then leads to their broader engagement in the public sphere. Efforts to provide services, then, can become transformed into organised struggles of the otherwise excluded and provide a platform not only for articulating rights, but also for recasting responsibilities and obligations.

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

As we move to an understanding of participation that is broader than user groups and goes beyond participation in the provisioning of social sector services, the important role that citizen participation has played in social policy formation becomes evident. Historically, social movements have played an important part in making and shaping social policy, making demands on the state based on social rights (Skocpol 1992). The platforms of many national liberation movements in the south included concerns about equality of access to education and health care. Post-independence social movements have led national struggles around rights, responsibilities and recognition. In some cases, local social movements have grown into larger movements, which have come to influence national policy; others have come to have influence beyond national boundaries. These include the movement around disability rights (Coleridge 1993); for social housing in urban slums (Mitlin and Patel 1998; Dey and Westerndorff 1996); of sex workers around health and employment rights issues (Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee 1997); for enforcement of the Employment Guarantee Scheme in India (Moore and Joshi 1999), or for social services in shanty towns in Peru (Houtzager and Pattenden 1999).

Setting the role of social movements within the broader frame of meeting the rights of social citizenship, questions arise about the extent and conditions under which social movements can effectively make claims on the state. Much previous work on social movements focused on the resources available to these movements as the key to their effectiveness. Recent work suggests, however, that differences in the capacities of poor people for resource mobilisation are less significant than differences in the nature of the *state*, which in turn affects the nature and extent of social movements themselves (Houtzager and Pattenden 1999; Tarrow 1998; McAdam *et al.* 1996). Here, the implications of the roll back of the state become especially salient, as capacity to support social sector provision and indeed to meet demands for social rights in the social policy arena has been severely attenuated in many southern contexts.

Houtzager and Pattenden (1999) examine the extent to which the poor and their allies can affect state policies affecting poverty more generally. They argue that it is the character of the state, as much as the

motivation and resources of the poor and their allies, which affect the capacity of poor people to influence state policy. In their analysis of the Peruvian soup kitchens case (see Box 3), they show that the competition amongst parties for political support led the ruling party to develop links with the community based *comedores* – community kitchen – movement. This, in turn, contributed to the influence the movement had on the development of a national programme of social services for the shanty towns. However, given the instability of the state, as well as economic factors, the gains were short lived. Houtzager and Pattenden conclude that two conditions are pre-requisite for such movements to succeed – a well-institutionalised and coherent state; and linkages between state and society that will affect how poor mobilise and make demands.

Box 3 The influence of the *comedores* movement on state policy in Peru
(Houtzager and Pattenden 1999)

The movement of 'comedores' – community kitchens – emerged in the mid-1980s as a collection of federations, and came to play a significant role in political life, representing the interests of the poor and, in particular, of poor women. Within the polarised, multi-party democratic political system of the Garcia regime, the comedores represented significant constituencies which both of the major parties sought to attract. As part of this competition, the ruling party introduced a programme to provide social services in shanty towns, in which comedores had a privileged role. Comedores actively strengthened their organisation, independently of the state but capitalising on the support of key political actors, developing stronger networks and a system of federations that culminated in the Comision Nacional de Comedores (CNC), a national-level representative of Peru's comedores. At the same time their traditional focus on survival strategies increasingly gave way to making demands of the political system in the interests of their constituents. For instance the CNC put forward demands that all poor women should have access to welfare, not just supporters of the leading party. Further, they proposed legislation that would recognise comedores as 'social base groups', thus attracting state funding, institutionalised access to state actors, and further special programmes to assist the poor.

This law was passed, demonstrating what a strong political actor the CNC and *comedores* had become. Aside from this achievement, they had succeeded in bringing women's domestic subordination onto the public agenda, developing important networks of solidarity amongst the poor, and challenging power relations within poor communities - including within the household. However, the change in political climate brought about under the Presidency of Fujimori, along with structural adjustment, economic collapse, and the constraining role over all political activity played by the Shining Path guerilla movement, meant that by 1992 the space for *comedores* to act politically had been greatly constrained, and the movement began to focus once more on basic survival strategies for the poor.

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

participatory mechanisms and processes that can provide a means for more direct citizen engagement in enhancing the quality and scope of social provisioning, and influence social policy.

4.4 Citizenship through accountability and democratic governance

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

Traditionally, in democratic governance, accountability is thought to be maintained in a number of ways, e.g. local elections, strong and active opposition parties, media, public meetings and formal redress procedures (Blair 1998). Increasingly discussions of governance and accountability focus on forms of broader interaction of public and private social actors, especially at the local level. Citizen participation in this sense involves direct ways in which citizens influence and exercise control in governance, not only through the more traditional forms of indirect representation (Gaventa and Valderama 1999). Such participation, it is argued, will improve the efficiency of public services through making government more accountable and democratic.

Participatory approaches have increasingly been used to enable citizens to express their concerns more directly to those with the power to influence the policy process. Participatory policy research processes such as Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPAs) have helped create spaces for change at local government and national level, as well as in international discourses (Holland with Blackburn 1998; HelpAge International 1999; 'Consultations with the Poor' 1999). As noted earlier, perhaps the most important contribution these processes have made has been to create new possibilities for dialogue between citizens and those involved in the implementation, as well as the formulation, of policy. By bringing together those who are directly affected by policy and those who are charged with ensuring responsive service provision, opportunities are opened up for enhancing accountability and responsiveness.

The recognition that policy change rests on more than simply the provision of information, as we note earlier, has led to significant shifts in the ways in which PPAs are conducted. Earlier uses of participatory techniques for consultation have given way, in recent work, to the creation of constituencies among a broader base of stakeholders, including 'secondary stakeholders' from government. As the example from Ghana above (see Box 4) illustrates, by bringing together those who are directly affected by policy and those who are charged with ensuring responsive service provision, spaces are created for change. The Ugandan Participatory Poverty Assessment Process is another example: conducted in conjunction with local governments and NGOs, UPPAP is located in the Ministry of Finance and has led directly to changes in polices and priorities in national and local budgets.

Box 4 The contribution of older people to development in South Africa

(HelpAge International 1999)

HelpAge International's recent work using participatory learning approaches to interact directly with older people in South Africa has helped put some of the concerns of older people firmly onto the policy agenda. Working in four communities, in three provinces, Kwa-Zulu Natal, Southern and Gauteng Provinces from February to June 1999, a team of researchers drew on a range of visual and qualitative methods to listen to older people's views on their situations. As part of the research process, a policy workshop brought together older people, NGOs and CBOs and representatives from Departments of Health and Social Welfare in the provinces together to explore strategies to improve the delivery of services.

Older people at this workshop commented: 'we have a hope that people are beginning to listen to understand how older people are suffering'. Underlining the importance of state pensions to the survival of poor black households, the study highlighted bureaucratic hurdles that create significant barriers to accessing these and other benefits. Older people spoke of multiple forms of abuse, extending beyond the home to interactions with service providers. Their suggestions for change included the role retired professionals could play in the community in both health and welfare service delivery.

A significant outcome of the research was the commitments made at the policy workshop to measures to improve the lot of poorer older people. These included: increasing co-ordination between government departments and CSOs working with older persons, through mechanisms such as inter-departmental databases and booklets on resources, services and contacts; raising awareness of issues facing older people through educational initiatives, such as on the rights of older people; audits of health and welfare services at district level to identify shortcomings in relation to older people; information provision on services for older people with chronic disease, access to medicines unavailable in clinics or hospitals and access to legal advice.

Rather than relying on self-provisioning through civil society, this approach acknowledges the importance of the state in service delivery, but equally insists on the role of citizens in demanding and negotiating directly with government for greater performance and accountability. Through such participation, users of services can potentially shape social policy not only as beneficiaries or consumers in pre-determined programmes, but as citizens exercising rights of agency, voice and participation. One important example of the more direct engagement of citizens in processes of governance is participatory budgeting in Brazil. This has enabled citizens to engage directly in improving transparency in municipal fiscal planning, through an elaborate consultation and negotiation process (De Sousa Santos 1998). Other examples of citizen involvement in monitoring and evaluation government policies and programmes illustrate the potential that these processes offer for the more active engagement of citizens in shaping social policy (see Box 5).

Box 5 Accountability through citizen monitoring and evaluation

(excerpted from Gaventa and Blauert 1999)

Citizens are becoming increasingly sophisticated in using monitoring and evaluation frameworks to develop indicators of good performance, and to use them to monitor policies and programmes. Participatory monitoring and evaluation attempts to change these more traditional understandings by means of a process that seeks to share control amongst various stakeholders – albeit not always equally. In so doing, PM&E attempts to reverse the traditional processes of top-down monitoring and one-way accountability: not 'accountability of the community but accountability to the community' (IIRR 1998: 32). A number of case studies illustrate ways in which the lens is being shifted:

- In the Philippines participatory monitoring and evaluation is being used by the Education for Life Foundation (ELF) to explore community indicators of democracy, within families, peoples' organisations, and local government. In other work in the Philippines, the Barangay Training Management Project (BATMAN), a coalition of 39 NGOs, including ELF, is using PM&E to develop citizens' indicators of participation, leadership and local governance. These indicators will be used by citizens and other civil society actors to examine the broader political institutions that affect their communities (Abes 1999).
- In Colombia, the Association of Indigenous Councils of Southern Cauca (ACIN), a community-based organisation spanning over 13 municipalities and 90,000 members, has developed a monitoring and evaluation system as part of the local and regional planning and development process, in which member communities define indicators based on their indigenous world views and cultural practices. In the process, the 'communities assess the work of their own institutions which are held liable in terms of fulfilling their commitments and responsibilities' (Espinosa-Alzate 1999).
- In the United States, Citizen Learning Teams were formed to monitor the community impact of a national government programme, known as the Empowerment Zone Program, and to convey results to program leaders at the local and federal level (Rutherford 1999).
- Similarly, in Ecuador, an NGO known as COMUNIDEC has developed a planning and PM&E process known as SISDEL (Sistema de Desarrollo Local, or Local Development System) which seeks to contribute to building alliances and coalitions amongst civil society organisations, the private sector and local municipalities. Among those items monitored are the extent to which inter-institutional agreements are themselves working, as well as the larger issues related to the policies and cultures of citizenship, management and collaboration (Torres 1999).

New forms of citizen monitoring and accountability such as those illustrated above provide opportunities for citizens to seek to secure the accountability of elected officials and government agencies. In some situations, citizen-led initiatives have been able to use rights issues as an entry point for demanding greater accountability. In Rajasthan, for instance, the right-to-information movement has demanded a minimal level of transparency by local governments, especially in the use of local funds (Goetz and Jenkins 1999). Other more professional advocacy organisations, such as the Public Affairs Centre in Bangalore, have developed 'report cards' to monitor service delivery by local governments. In both Bolivia and India, legislation allows for local 'vigilance committees' to serve a monitoring and watchdog role. So far there is

little evidence that these have developed the capacity and independence to do their job, but there may be great potential.

What is evident from these newer forms of participation in processes of governance is the potential that they offer for extending the boundaries of citizen engagement towards a more active engagement in making and shaping social policy. Whether through the entry point of rights-based citizen-led initiatives or through engagement in forms of consultation and deliberation on policy that are opened up 'from above', these forms of participation offer the prospect of greater citizen involvement in determining the policies and programmes that affect their lives. Challenges to realising this potential remain, however, as we go on to explore.

5 New challenges and new directions

The previous sections have explored ways in which participation is used in the design and delivery of social policies and social provisioning, in the south as well as in the north. In general we have argued that that the more functional concepts of participation, through which beneficiaries participate as users or consumers of pre-determined public services, are of limited utility. Not only do they fail to include people in broader aspects of the policy process, but they also ignore their contribution to self-provisioning outside formal government arenas. Most importantly, they fail to recognise or realise the potential of more active citizen engagement in making and shaping social policy and with it opportunities for enhanced service responsiveness, transparency and accountability.

In this essay we have attempted to go beyond the 'users and choosers' model to consider a more actor-oriented approach, in which those affected by social policies act as citizens on their own behalf. In particular we have argued that the concept of 'social citizenship', that has often underpinned considerations of social welfare, should be expanded to include not only concepts of social rights, but also of social responsibilities exercised through self-action, and of social accountability achieved through direct forms of democratic governance. We recognise that any appeal to concepts of citizenship risks the danger of failing to recognise difference, and of excluding some in the name of inclusion of others. However, re-positioning participation to encompass the multiple dimensions of citizenship – including rights of equivalence, a focus on agency based on self-action and self-identity, as well as demands for accountability amongst actors – may provide a way to move out of the impasse.

In the absence of universal, state-centred policies, self-provisioning and self-organisation, especially through local associations and institutions, are proving a necessary and important path of social citizenship in many southern contexts. In certain situations, we have suggested, approaches to social provisioning developed outside the state can provide spaces for the development of models, consciousness and alliances which in turn have an affect on state-based social policy. More research is needed to understand the role of popular organisation in social provisioning, and the ways and the conditions through which models based on local action and identities can be scaled-up and supported through broader policy mechanisms.

In this context, we can no longer equate – if ever we could – citizen action and NGO action. Indeed in some contexts, the focus on NGOs as mechanisms for social provisioning has resulted in the 'projectisation' of social policy, and perhaps in the weakening of direct state accountability to its citizens. A far more nuanced understanding is needed – one which recognises NGOs as one of a number of actors *within* civil society rather than an actor *for* civil society, and which explores the role that NGOs play as intermediaries for strengthening more participatory and inclusive forms of social policy formation and provisioning.

The growing recognition of the role and capacity of civil society, as well as increasing pressures for democratisation across the world, are also giving rise to new forms of citizen – state interaction, which seek to hold the state more accountable through direct forms of citizen participation. Some of the new mechanisms for citizen involvement that we consider in this paper seek to engage citizens with the state not only as 'users', but as actors in broader processes of policy formulation and effective and equitable implementation. A number of these mechanisms derive directly from supra-national institutions, particularly the World Bank. These range from consultative mechanisms such as Participatory Poverty Assessments to Social Investment Funds, which attempt to balance the responsibilities of the state for provision of universal safety nets with the capacities of local groups for self-action. While both offer new spaces for citizen action, they may also carry all the risks of co-optation, misuse, and legitimation of social exclusion that were seen in earlier attempts at user involvement in social service delivery. More research is needed to understand the extent to which these new more structured mechanisms for democratic governance and accountability can blend the strengths of both state and local action, of universal and particular needs, and citizenship rights and citizenship responsibilities.

Re-positioning participation also requires a re-examination of the rapidly changing contexts and arenas in which social policy processes take place. To what extent do these changes, including globalisation, decentralisation, changing demographics and fiscal crises provide new spaces and entry points for citizen action, and for articulating newer understandings of social citizenship? Again, the research agenda is a large one. However, we see three potential arenas – or entry points – in which struggles over the identities and practices of citizenship may be particularly important in relationship to social policy.

One arena for citizen action is at the personal or family level. Growing from the disability rights movement in the United States, and using what is known as 'person centred planning' models, this approach extends concepts of choice in disability services to include the power and authority over resources to make choices and preferences real. The approach starts with personal planning for support systems, in which the individuals create their preferred system of care drawing on family members, friends and others whom they trust, rather than depending on government programmes. These programmes are then supported through state funds which are re-directed from state-run programmes to individual planning accounts. The policy recognises the person as actor in self-provisioning, and as accountable for spending public funds responsibly. In so doing, the approach attempts to move from user involvement to user control, in a way which allows a deeper understanding of particular needs, while still providing critical

support from the state. Such approaches to person-centred care may have potential in the South, with, for instance, the increasing populations of older people or of those affected by HIV/AIDs. However, whether and how such approaches can be used on a large scale, or in poorer countries than the US, is yet to be seen (Smull 1995; Nerney and Shumway 1996).

A second critical arena grows from the trends for decentralisation of the state at all levels. On the one hand such decentralisation offers the potential for new arenas for citizen voice and participation in service delivery. Social Investment Funds would seem, in principle, to offer the potential to link concerns arising out of grassroots social welfare needs much more directly with the social policy arenas of national and supranational agencies. On the other hand, there are many obstacles to such participation, and decentralisation of responsibility often does not include decentralisation of resources as well. Further research is needed to understand whether and under what conditions democratic forms of decentralisation can offer a significant arena for citizen participation in social policy, and whether such social policies can be delivered equitably and viably (for more discussion see Gaventa and Valderrama 1999). It is perhaps in this arena that the experiments for new forms of accountability will be seen most strongly.

Finally, and perhaps most interestingly, we must also consider whether the move towards globalisation around social policy issues offers new arenas for more global forms of citizen action and social movements (Wilson and Whitmore 1998; Deacon *et al.* 1997). While global social movements and advocacy work have thus far had attention in the areas of environment or on human rights, there are some emerging examples of their success in social policy arenas – such as in the work of SPARC and the International Slum Dwellers Federation on gaining recognition of social housing (Bolnick, Mitlin and Patel 1999) or the impact of the baby milk campaign on the World Health Organisation (Bernard 1999), the various campaigns around child labour in the corporate arena, and the indirect impact that the Jubilee Campaign will have through reducing debts, and thus possibly allowing renewed expenditures in social areas. If, as Mishra (1998) suggests, globalisation will move debates from social rights to social standards, then critical and complex questions are also raised about who sets these standards. As we move into a more global era, the challenge for citizen participation will be how to articulate and organise around new identities of global citizenship, in each of the dimensions articulated in this paper, while also recognising the continued and critical importance of citizenship in social policy in the personal and local spheres.

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