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Introduction: The Problem Is Representation! Towards an Analytical Framework

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The point of departure in this book is that the current stagnation of democracy in the postcolonial world is due to the depoliticisation of important public issues and interests. Major public concerns have become matters of technocratic governance or privatised to the market as well as communal, patronage, and privileged citizens' networks. The introductory chapter argues that the root-cause is flawed representation: flawed representation emanating from both elitist institution building *and* fragmented citizen participation. Hence, a case is made for the need to rethink popular representation and develop methods that are more democratic. An analytical framework is outlined to that end. This framework draws on the insights from the subsequent chapters, in the context of the wider discourse. These chapters in turn focus on critical theoretical issues and empirical experiences in comparative perspective.[1]

Depoliticisation and the Primacy of Representation

The state of democracy in the Global South is marked by a striking paradox: although liberal democracy has attained an ideologically hegemonic position through several so-called waves of democracy,[2] the qualities of such democracies are increasingly called into question. The few 'old' democracies in the Global South, like India and Sri Lanka, are weakened.[3] They emerged in the struggle for state sovereignty and citizenship against colonialism and feudal-like subordination of people. The basic

argument was about the need for social, economic, and political modernisation toward democracy. This called for structural change, however: some said the expansion of market-based capitalism; others said socialist road maps. One debate was about what classes and groups would be interested in and able to propel strategies and reforms such as redistribution of land. Another debate was whether and how democracy was a realistic political project given the deficit of structural preconditions. In any case, democracy deficits are now apparent within constitutional and institutional arrangements as well as in political practices.

In addition, the second wave of democracy in the South (or, globally speaking, the third wave) seems to be over. This path was associated with the countries and peoples that did not make it in the first round or that backslide into authoritarian or even dictatorial rule. The subsequent crisis of these regimes, the generally felt need among dissidents to foster basic human rights, the rare ability of popularly rooted forces to present a strong alternative (with the major exception of South Africa), and the strong interest among international actors in promoting global liberalisation, generated transitions that were more about elitist designing of minimum democratic institutions than more substantive institutions, popular capacities, and policies to promote the structural conditions and relations of power that had hitherto been deemed crucial for genuine democratic development. Typically, the incumbents among the powerful elites gave up authoritarianism as long as they could privatise and legalise decades of accumulation of capital through political monopolies and coercive instruments of power, so-called primitive accumulation of capital. In return, the dissidents agreed to constrain popular participation and radical change, as long as there was agreement (at least on paper) on basic liberties, human rights, and certain elements of democracy. The common scholarly and political argument was that once the right institutions were in place with regard to justice, basic rights, elections, 'good governance', freedom of media, and civil society participation, democracy would flourish. It would also prevent and help resolve social, ethnic, and regional conflicts.

The 'new' democracies have fostered freedoms, elections, and decentralisation but continue to suffer from poor governance,[4] representation, and participation despite positive experiments such as participatory budgeting in parts of Latin America. Vulnerable people are frustrated by the lack of actual influence and sustained elitism. Politicians winning elections often need to foster ethnic and religious loyalties, populism, clientelism, and the abuse of public resources. Powerful groups and middle classes with limited ability to win elections tend to opt for privatisation and return partially to authoritarian governance.[5] Hence, critical questions are asked about the general feasibility of democracy in developing country contexts.

Three main explanations have been offered for the democratic deficits. First, the suggestion is that it is not a failure of the model of democratisation as such but of its implementation.[6] For example, inadequate resources have been applied to get liberal politics up and running both before and after elections. Currently, there is a special interest in better crafting of party systems so that they become functional in accordance with classic elite-led parliamentary principles – while popular political representation based on ideology and interests is deemed idealistic.[7] Critics argue, however, that this is not enough to foster the development of movements and parties that are needed to bring crucial popular issues and interests on the agenda. In this respect, moreover, there are few indications that even the new local politics based on crafting civil society and interpersonal trust (social capital) have developed more comprehensive democracy. Rather, the occasional democratic advances with civil society participation seem to have rested with successful political initiation and mediation.[8]

The second and radically different explanation is that the problem is less about design than insufficient conditions for liberal democracies, narrowly defined in terms of freedoms and fair elections. Currently, one core argument is that the freedoms and elections tend to be abused. This may even generate more corruption and violent conflicts.[9] Hence, it is argued that democracy needs to be sequenced. That is, popular control should be held back until unspecified elites have created the necessary conditions.[10] Such conditions include a liberal state based on the rule of law, good governance, and civil societies. Although leftist theses about the need for revolutions have largely faded away, suitable elements of the classic argument among modernisation theorists about the need for economic growth to gain more public resources and middle classes is also added and generalised far beyond Western Europe. The only alternative in this respect seems to be the experiences from the authoritarian developmental states and China to somehow foster progressive growth coalitions.[11] In many ways, the law and governance aspects of these arguments resembles, moreover, Samuel Huntington's old thesis from the cold war about the need for 'politics of order' to enforce and institutionalise middle class rule – a thesis that paved the way for decades of authoritarianism.[12]

There are convincing arguments however, that the sequencing thesis is both empirically and theoretically mistaken. *Empirically*, there are no attractive blueprints. In Europe, it took hundreds of years of violent conflicts to create the right preconditions.[13] In the new industrialising states such as South Korea and China, the pre-democracy sequence is marked by harsh repression. Furthermore, most parts of the postcolonial world are short of the social, economic, and political dynamics and actors that resemble those that finally generated the various brands of the liberal central

and west European *rechtsstaat* and thus economic development ahead of democracy. The relative absence of these dynamics in most of the Global South seems to call instead for even more repression and authoritarian solutions than in Europe and East Asia,[14] at times with nondemocratic religious and ethnic communalism involved too.[15] *Theoretically*, moreover, all proper institutions should ideally of course be in place when people gain control of public matters. However, if necessary elements of democracy (such as strong legal and administrative institutions) are not included in the definition of democratic process but deemed external preconditions, there are by definition nothing but nondemocratic enlightened ways to generate them (such as in Singapore and China).

The third explanation and the point of departure for this book is based on the argument in our previous volume about the new local politics of democratisation: that is, the development of democracy has been depoliticised.[16] This is not to suggest that democracy used to be constructively politicised in the Global South or to celebrate uncritically even the idealised attempts at popular politicisation in places such as Kerala.[17] But it is a major problem that the proponents of the dominant two arguments agree on a narrow definition of (liberal) democracy in terms of freedoms and fair elections and then either neglect a number of basic dimensions or say that they have to be created beforehand by other means. The result is that both paradigms exclude by definition approaches that focus less on democratic rules of the game in themselves and more on how these institutions may be used and expanded in favour of improved social, economic, and other basic conditions. Given that such social democratic paths have been quite important, especially in the transition of the previously poor Scandinavian countries, and that adapted versions are gaining ground in cases such as Brazil, there is an obvious need to widen the perspective.[18]

In addition, it is a fundamental problem that the growth of new democracies has been rooted primarily in pact making and institution building among elites. The views and interests of the majority of the population are thereby excluded from the formal political arena. In the absence of effective popular control over public affairs, economic and political power in many countries of the Global South rests primarily with actors related to the combination of state and private businesses. The leverage of these dominant actors has increased with the hollowing out of the public resources and relatively autonomous capacity that were vested with the state. In this context, relations between state and people are increasingly mediated on the one hand by communal-, patronage-, and network-based groups and on the other by market institutions, neither of which are subject to democratic control. The reduction of the public space in favour of, for example, religious and ethnic communities is not incompatible with neoliberal

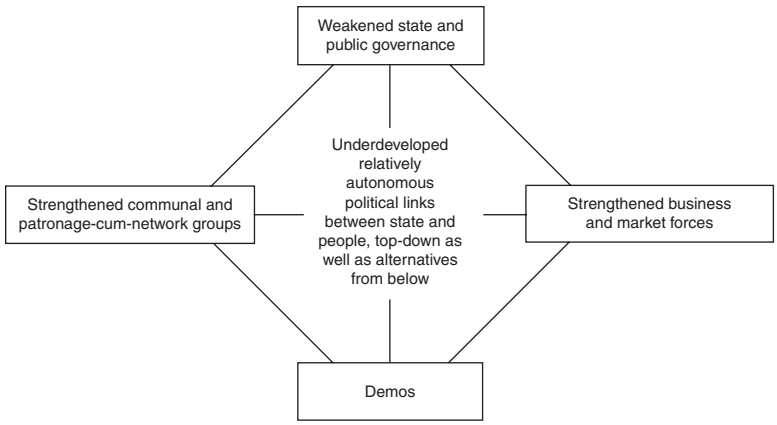

Figure 1.1 The challenges of democratic popular control of public affairs.

perspectives. Rather, the communal perspectives are quite in line with the privatisation of public resources. (The reduction of public social security and education, for instance, generates both more communitarian charity and schools for the poor and profitable private hospitals and schools for the rich.) Meanwhile, those excluded by basic social and economic cleavages are poorly represented by movements, organisations, political parties, and civil organisations.[19] Civil society in terms of associational life among rights-bearing citizens is often confined to middle-class activism and self-management.[20]

Thus, the core of this argument of depoliticisation of democracy is that relatively autonomous *political* relations between state and people are underdeveloped (Figure 1.1). Hence, there is a need to counter the problems of democracy by way of more, not less, popular influence to alter the structure of power and open up for alternative processes and agents of change. The roots of the democratic deficit are not the new and positive civil and political freedoms, but rather that the defunct instruments and popular capacities to exercise control over public matters have made it difficult to use the freedoms and new institutions to alter the relations of power and thus improve law, policies, and governance. This calls for analyses of the politics of representation.

Rethinking Democratic Popular Representation

If flawed representation is the root cause of democratic deficits in the Global South, what would be the best framework for understanding and

analysing the problems and options? The contribution below situates the insights from the subsequent chapters (and the projects that they draw on) in the context of the wider discourse on democratic representation.

Representation is a complex and contentious concept. As outlined by Pitkin, representation presupposes a representative, the represented, something that is being represented, and a political context.[21] Although there are several types of representation (including within law, business, and oligarchic systems), our focus is on the problems of democracy. The essence of democratic representation is authorisation and accountability based on political equality, which presuppose transparency and responsiveness. That which is represented may be substantive, descriptive, and/or symbolic. *Substantive* representation is when the representative acts for the represented, for instance, a leader advancing the interests of workers. *Descriptive* representation is when an actor stands for the represented by being objectively similar. For instance, a woman represents women and a resident in a village represents the other villagers. *Symbolic* representation is when an actor is perceived by the represented to once again stand for them but now, for instance, in terms of shared culture and identities. In addition, symbolic representation may also be understood in the wider sense of constructing the demos, the groups, and the interests that are being represented and claiming to be a legitimate authority as a representative.[22] This, of course, is particularly important in the aftermath of the nation building against colonialism, with the increasingly widespread identity politics and the continuous attempts by various movements and actors (from above as well as from below) to constitute 'the people' and establish their own authority as legitimate representatives.

There are two universally valid, major approaches to democratic representation with related recommendations. The first focuses on *the chain of popular sovereignty* from the people, via various intermediaries such as democratic organisations expressing collective interests and ideas, to elected political parties and politicians, supposedly aggregating these views, taking decisions, making laws, and delegating the executive powers and overseeing impartial administrative and legal implementation. This is inspired by the principal-agent perspective and typically adhered to by students of formally regulated politics, government, and public administration. The second stresses the importance of *direct participation of the immediately concerned people* through not only formal but also informal arrangements, popular movements, and lobby groups as well as civil action in, for instance, neighbourhoods and associations for self-management.

The chain of popular sovereignty has two related tendencies toward deteriorated representation. One is that public matters and resources have

been reduced and fragmented under neoliberalism and globalisation by way of privatisation, subcontracting, and delegation beyond democratic control. The other tendency is that the demos is fragmented and almost all the links in the chain itself are tarnished. The latter is especially true with regard to the intermediary representative institutions from citizen associations to political parties. Mass-based interest organisations (rooted in the industrialisation in the North and anticolonialism in the South) have been radically weakened, most severely those based on class. Although public resources and capacities are shrinking, politicians and political parties lose firm and independent roots among people. The privatisation, informalisation, depoliticisation, and weakening of the intermediary political institutions generate further distrust in the authorisation of representatives and their mandates, and people act more like individuals on a market than as citizens in a public sphere. Particularly in the Global South but also in the North,[23] representative politics is often looked on as a particularly dirty business characterised by money and personality-oriented politics, non-programmatic organisational machines, and crooked politicians.[24] This in turn has generated alternative routes. But the various supplementary forms of democracy – by taking matters to court and to institutions in civil society for self-financed self-management and direct participation, pressure, and informal contacts – tend to focus on single issues and immediate benefits and are largely detached from the political chain of popular sovereignty. Also, they are made best use of by the educated middle classes, which in mainstream theory are looked on as the pillars of democracy, and the civil organisations and activists themselves are rarely subject to basic principles of democratic representation, authorisation, and accountability. Moreover, communal ethnic and religious organisations as well as families and clans cater to an increasing number of popular worries and needs, typically among the weaker sections of the population with insufficient capacities to make use of civil rights.[25] When not claiming equal civil, political, and socioeconomic rights for all but specific communal privileges, these organisations and solidarities tend to fragment the demos and undermine democracy – at times, by way of identity politics.[26]

The advantage of the chain-of-popular-sovereignty approach is precision and conceptual consistency in relation to democratic theory. However, a cross-examination of Norwegian and Indonesian results shows clearly that contextual differences of capacity and class are often neglected. One example is the gap between the exit from organised politics to private solutions by the majority of resourceful citizens in the Global North, but only a critical minority in the Global South, and the marginalisation from active organised politics of vulnerable majorities in the Global South, but only poor immigrants in the Global North.[27] Even more important: practices

outside the formally recognised chain tend to be set aside. These practices include attempts at participatory governance and democratic struggles over the extensive public affairs that have been privatised and informalised.

Unfortunately, however, the approach focusing on *direct participation by the immediately concerned people* does not provide a good alternative but rather stresses the other side of the coin by setting aside the formalised chain of popular sovereignty. Interestingly, this is done from two directions. The first is market oriented, supported by organisations such as the World Bank[28] and in favour of user and consumer participation rather than citizenship and popular sovereignty. The other is advocated by poststructuralists, including Escobar and Alvarez.[29] who turn against the modern agents of change like state, parties, and class-based movements in favour of culturally rooted and pluralistic grassroots movements, partly along similar lines as the later postcolonial generation of the originally Indian subaltern school, and Chalmers *et al.,* who add associative networks.[30] In addition, the critics of globalisation like Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri argue that state and power has been so dispersed and localised that there is no decisive unit left to fight and that increasingly many producers are regulating social relations themselves, so that strong parties and representative democracy are unnecessary and even irrelevant.[31]

Yet the basics of both the market and poststructural positions are remarkably similar to that of Robert Putnam and others in emphasising that the 'real' demos develops organically from below among self-managing, cooperating, and associating citizens (thus developing social capital), not in relation to ideologies, institutions, and political engagement.[32] Consequently, representation becomes redundant because according to Putnam and others people act directly through the same personal contacts and associations that have constituted the collectively acting people in the first place. Given that almost any civil organisation thus becomes part of and almost embodies the demos itself, activists who are critical of Marxist-Leninist analyses of 'people's objective interests' as a legitimate basis for 'enlightened leadership' actually apply similar but more emphatic expressions such as 'we represent the victims' or we provide alternative support to bypass 'rotten politicians'. This way, moreover, there is no need to analyse with, for example, Mamdani,[33] Chatterjee,[34] and Harriss[35] differences between organisations of 'rights-bearing citizens' and 'subjects' (or 'populations' or 'denizens') who are short of such rights, lack sufficient capacity to use them, and at best use organisations and numbers to improve their position. Similarly, one does not have to consider the possible importance of intermediary variables such as politics and ideology. Hence, it is difficult to explain the rise and importance of different forms of associational life.[36] It is conveniently forgotten that Scandinavian democracy, welfare

states, and the current social trust – as well as contemporary participatory budgeting and planning in Porto Alegre and Kerala, for instance – have all been politically facilitated and sustained, but also undermined due to insufficient political defence.[37]

On the other hand, many civil society activists are now more anxious than before to legitimate their work in terms of whom they try to speak and act for.[38] In addition, the new institutions for direct participation such as participatory planning are attempts to initiate a new layer of representation between electoral chains of popular sovereignty and associational life and populism, just like previous Scandinavian experiences of combining liberal political democracy and interest-based representation and cooperation between government and associations.[39] Yet, a number of questions remain to be answered. One is the lack of appreciation for the difference between associations that reflect private life, special interests, and specific issues and those that relate such interests and issues to matters and perspectives of public concern and thus legitimate them by arguing convincingly for why they are vital for many, not just for a group. Another problem is how to guarantee authorisation and accountability. A third and even more difficult task is how to identify and agree on what parts of the demos should control what sections of the more or less extensive public affairs on the basis of political equality. For instance, should the poor decide in their neighbourhoods and the rich take care of themselves in good democratic order behind guarded fences, or should the boundaries of the society and the common affairs be defined more widely at the level where the differences have appeared, so that they can be tackled democratically?

An Integrated Framework

In brief, although the strength of the chain-of-popular-sovereignty approach is the conceptual clarity in relation to democratic theory, the major weakness is contextual insensitivity and neglect of attempts at democratisation in relation to practices outside the formally recognised democratic polity. However, the approach focusing on direct participation by the immediately concerned people is no alternative because it tends to set aside the links to formalised politics and ignore the core issues of power and democratic representation. The obvious option is instead to find a way of combining the benefits of each approach. Given the primacy of *democratic* and not just any form of popular representation, the point of departure must be the chain of popular sovereignty. However, it should be applied not only to the established polity but also to efforts at representation beyond the formal public institutions.

This calls for analyses of democracy that are inclusive of such practices. A generally accepted definition of the aim of democracy is popular control of public affairs on the basis of political equality.[40] Hence, there are three basic pillars: (1) the people (demos), (2) the public matters, and (3) the intermediary ways to exercise popular control of policy making and implementation.[41] The mediation in turn calls for representation on the basis of political equality. What are the intrinsic instruments to this end, especially among marginalised people? As already emphasised, political equality and popular control may not require advanced conditions such as economic prosperity and social equality. But there must be reasonably well-performing, well-spread, and substantive institutions to promote and sustain civil, judicial, political, and basic socioeconomic rights, free and fair elections, representation, responsive and accountable governance, and civil participation. Moreover, all people, and not just the elite, need to have sufficient capacity to promote and use these institutions.[42] Within this framework, democratic representation in turn calls for authorisation with mandate and accountability with transparency and responsiveness.

In other words, the main focus of analysis should be the development of these dimensions of the chain of popular sovereignty in relation to all vital forms of governance, not just official forms, of important matters that all people, not just dominant groups, deem to be of public concern given their engagement.

An integrated framework for the study of popular democratic representation is presented in Figure 1.2. Actors and their policies may be more or less democratic. Informal leaders are not democratically institutionalised but relate to democratic institutions such as elections. Popular representation that bypasses the political legislatures and the additional more or less democratically oriented institutions for participation (such as arrangements for corporate systems or participatory planning) is included as non-democratic but crucial to consider.

First, let us consider the people. The definition of the demos cannot be taken for granted. The constitution of national projects and communities against indirect rule and imperialism was replaced by postcolonial conflicts over limited resources, identity politics, and authorisation of representation.[43] Globalisation and the hollowing out of the state (on central but also local level) have contributed to disintegration and the production of overlapping demos in relation to various issues, spheres, and territories. Higher mobility, migration, continued subordination of women, less unified workplaces, and increasing separation of workplaces and residences add to the picture, as do identity politics. Who are citizens with actual rights and who are instead virtually subjects?[44] Who has the right to vote and a say in other ways, and who has not? Who has the right to control

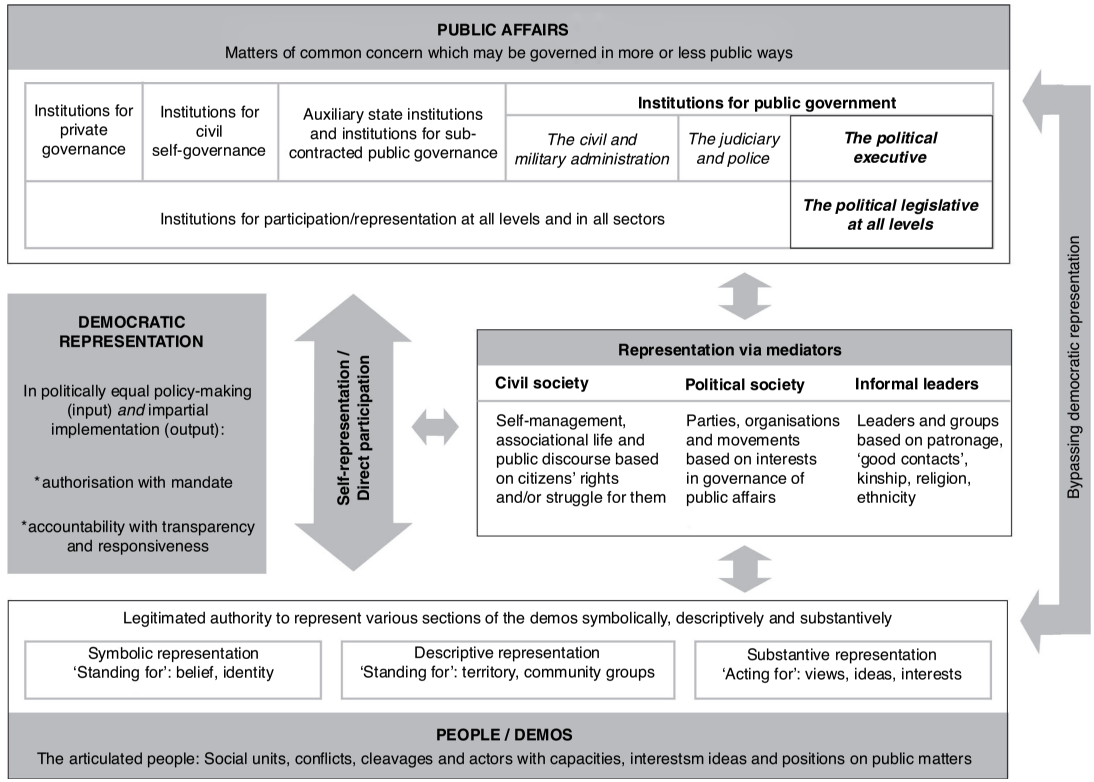

Figure 1.2 Integrated framework for the study of popular democratic representation.

certain aspects of the public matters but not others? What is the capacity of various sections of people to voice their views and interests and act accordingly – individually or collectively?

Second, let us consider the public affairs that people are supposed to control, which also should not be taken for granted. The minimum consists of the factors that are intrinsic to develop and sustain democracy. During the third wave, limited democracy has proved possible even under harsh conditions and reduced public affairs. But as we know, the limitations *are* severe, and it is clear that increased public and popular capacity to promote and use the conventional instruments is also necessary: necessary to make political democracy substantial enough to serve as a framework for additional aspirations such as rights-based peace and sustainable development. Hence, although it may be obvious that the core institutions for public government include the legislative and its executive, the civil and military administration, the judiciary and the police, it remains a matter of dispute as to whether, for instance, domestic violence or work environment are part of public government. It is particularly important in the Global South to include both formal and informal institutions and to ask about their capacities in terms of performance as well as their geographical and substantive scope.[45]

Similarly, it is vital to consider institutions for self-governance such as cooperatives as well as different combinations of private, civil society and public governance, and government in the form of joint ventures, auxiliary bodies, and subcontracting or delegation, which have become increasingly common with the tendency toward less public and more polycentric governance. A particularly crucial issue here concerns the prospects for democratic regulation of the more or less privatised institutions rather than reclaiming them, which may not be feasible. Along the top row in Figure 1.2, privatised collective transportation, schools, or health services, for instance, could thus be subject to democratically decided rules and regulations.[46]

Another basic question is whether or not the combination of citizen rights and democratic governance would be conducive to fight corruption and promote environmentally and socially responsible economic growth. This might be a democratic alternative to the resurgence of the previously discussed thesis (based on theories of modernisation and 'politics of order') that there is a need to promote firm institutions, rule of law, and economic development ahead of popular sovereignty to prevent chaos and more corruption and conflicts. A current example of both the possibilities and problems is the successful social-democratic-oriented peace in Aceh and the risk that it can not be sustained through further reforms but is being derailed by clientelism and special favours.[47] In Figure 1.2, such

measures to improve responsiveness and accountability – such as those attempted in Brazil[48] and historically in Scandinavia[49] – would be by more democratic arrangements for interest-based representation and participation that are attached to the various institutions for governance (especially the executive ones) by democracy-oriented citizen and popular organisations and direct participation by relevant sections of the population. This is also where the renewed interest in learning from old Scandinavian social pacts[50] may be indicated in terms of triangular relations and agreements (about the exchange between state-guaranteed economic growth and collective wage agreements and universal-unemployment and social-welfare schemes) between productive sections of capital within the context of private governance, relevant sections of the institutions for public government, and well-organised trade unions and related movements.

Third, the various forms of mediation between the demos and public affairs should be considered. The mediation relates both to the input and output side of democracy, that is, to the politically equal generation of policies and to the impartial implementation (the latter of which seems to be positively related to the more universal as opposed to means-tested measures that are applied).[51] Arrangements for participation and representation that are related to the different institutions for governance of public matters are in the upper part of the model. This includes the elected legislative assemblies and their executives on the central and local levels. But as already indicated, there may also be institutions for consultation and participation in relation to a number of administrative boards and commissions, workers' participation in company management, the meetings of a neighbourhood organisation, or academic self-rule. Most of the introductions of these institutionalised forms of representation may well have been enforced from below through pilot cases and demands on politicians. However, the very implementation tends to be a product of top-down measures and decentralisation, in Scandinavia and Kerala, for instance, on the basis of strong state apparatuses or state-building projects and the legacies of free farmer communities and land reforms, respectively.[52]

For good and for bad, moreover, these roots and measures in turn have then formed much of the system of representation, including parties, movements, and even the constitution of the demos.[53] Far down in the model, this is indicated by the different formations and expressions of the demos and the struggle over legitimate and authoritative representation of various sections of the demos symbolically, descriptively, and substantively. The democratic means include the actors' authorisation, responsiveness, and accountability, as well as their capacity to voice interests and ideas and act accordingly, ideally on the basis of political equality.

On the left side of the model are the forms of self-representation and direct participation. Logically, there is no pure direct democracy beyond participation by each individual.[54] On the right side is the representation via mediators. A basic distinction may be made between three types of mediation. The first is via civil society with self-management (including professional nongovernmental organisations [NGOs]), associational life (from citizen's neighbourhood or sports organisations to action, lobby, and pressure groups), and public discourse (such as in media, academia, and cultural life) that are based on civil/human rights and their development. Similarly, the first type of mediation may also be via the many trade unions and other popular movements with people who do not have much actual civil and socioeconomic rights but fight for them. The second type is through political society with parties, movements, and organisations (including pressure and lobby groups) that are based on joint interests in the governance of public affairs beyond the rights of the citizens. Hence, there are often close relations between civil and political society: less in the liberal tradition where civil associations should be independent critics of politics and the state and more in the social democratic tradition where civil and popular organisations have opted for democratisation of the state and thus political implementation of many of their demands. The third kind of meditation is through informal leaders and groups that are based on and sustain patronage, good contacts, kinship, religion, and ethnicity but also relate to democratic institutions such as elections and parliaments. Again, of course, there are several cases of overlap between this and the previous channels of mediation.

One related question concerns the fate of democracies dominated by clientelism through informal leaders and privileged political connections and other resources.[55] Another dilemma involves the weak and generally problematic links between civil society associations (that are often rather small and confined to middle-class residents or activists) and the more mass-based and popular-oriented movements.[56] The same applies for the crucial problems of scaling up such links and cooperations on various levels and making an impact within the organised politics that tend to be dominated by powerful elites.[57]

The Strategic Connections

A major contemporary tendency at each level in the model of democratic representation seems to be what Peter Houtzager has dubbed *polycentrism* or more generally fragmentation: fragmentation of the demos, the governance of public matters, and their poor links by way of representation.[58]

The major challenge is therefore to apply the chain-of-popular-sovereignty approach within not only the remaining formal structures of command but also in the wider and fragmented landscape of actual governance and popular engagement and to focus on the strategic connections.

Viewed thus, the major problem of popular control of public matters summarised in Figure 1.1 translates into three strategic dilemmas in the model of representation shown in Figure 1.2: first, in relation to the model as a whole, the conceptualisation of representation and the authority and legitimacy of substantive, descriptive, and symbolic representation; second, with prime reference to the upper parts of the model, the links between political representation and governance; and third, with regard to the middle and lower sections in the model, the construction, organisation, and dynamics of direct and mediated representation. This forms the basis for the organisation of the present volume.

The Conceptualisation of Representation

The second part of the book is thus is about the development and dynamics of different forms of representation. What people and what views and interests are being articulated and represented? How is this done in relation to organised politics and administration? Our aim is to problematise representation in the context of how the demos is being constructed and how representation is legitimised and authorised given the relations of power and conflicts. The book includes three prominent efforts in these directions. Neera Chandhoke offers a close analysis of both the meaning and the pros and cons of *democratic* representation. Although she does not shy away from the fact that established forms of representation have been undermined and that much of the most crucial current issues have been brought to the fore by alternative and not always accountable civil society groups, she nonetheless concludes that equal political participation is a democratic root right that calls for elected representation. Hence, although the conflict between representation and direct participation is only natural given the deterioration of the former, civil society groups for direct participation cannot replace representation but should instead focus on improving and supplementing it.

Is this possible? Peter P. Houtzager and Adrian Gurza Lavalle address the paradox of civil society representation: although elected representation and its technocratic and corrupt administration suffer from distrust, the innovative civil-society-driven alternatives have weaker claims to democratic legitimacy. Based on interviews with leaders of community associations, advocacy NGOs, coordinating groups, and nonprofit service organisations

in São Paulo, Brazil, the authors explore the actual and symbolic construction of associational representation. Few NGOs claim representation, but many community groups do. The main focus is on representation in different locations and on special issues related to the executive branch of government. Interestingly, the leaders rarely legitimate their representation in terms of elections, wide membership, or descriptive identity (such as gender or ethnic origin), but primarily by serving as trustworthy mediators, being close and committed to the causes of their publics, and providing crucial services. According to Houtzager and Lavalle, the mediation argument is particularly promising because it adds new forms of representation of voiceless groups and interests to regular representative government.

What, then, is the most fruitful way of probing the different old and new forms of representation? Kristian Stokke and Elin Selboe support Houtzager and Lavalle by challenging Pitkin's identification of symbolic, descriptive, and substantive representation of given constituencies. Based on the importance of culture, Stokke and Selboe argue instead that both the constituencies (demos) and the different forms of representation need to be analysed in terms of how actors claim to be authoritative and legitimate representatives of specific groups and issues. Such studies, they add, may best be shaped by drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's understanding of social practice and symbolic power, despite his limited attention to the political field. Case studies of Sri Lanka and Senegal lend support to this argument, but also to the importance of combining analysis of the discourse and the political economy.

Political Representation, Government, and Governance

Turning from the conceptual issues to key problems related to the upper parts of the model of representation, the second strategic connection is between representation governance. We cover three generations of popular-oriented attempts, one from Asia based on the 'old' generation of widely based radical parties and social movements; another from Africa on efforts by modern-oriented liberation movements having come to power and then trying to introduce reforms from above; a third from Latin America where elected progressive executives have responded to popular aspirations by institutionalising participatory governance supported by civil society organisations and social movements. Common themes include the capacities of the poor to engage and the institutional constraints, but also the politics that drive and may alter the constrictions.

Neil Webster draws on his three decades of studies of the leftist efforts in West Bengal, India, to promote ordinary people's lives by combining

parliamentary and extraparliamentary struggle. By the midseventies, the struggle took a more reformist turn through the promotion of local governance. The question is, has this fostered democratic representation or cooption? Webster's critical case is the issue of education. Although there is a strong desire among parents to provide good education for their children, the Left Front Governments (LFGs) have not given prime importance to schooling. However, as in other sectors to which the LFGs have previously given priority, participatory and representative practices have supplemented each other in a system of checks and balances that, in spite of imperfections, have often increased the capacity of the poor to pursue their aspirations. There are cases of corrupt and party-partisan practices, but these cases do not amount to antidemocratic governance. Even within the weak sector of education, there are now signs of relatively consistent policy implementation in favour of more pro-poor, equitable, and accountable provision of schooling.

Lars Buur analyses the ambiguous character of popular participation and decentralised governance in Mozambique. The general argument is that what started as a clear attempt at party-state capture (due to worries about the 'uneducated' electorate) has over the years been partially altered within the framework of state-society relationships by constant reforms, local state functionaries' search for their roles, and unintended consequences of various measures. Hence, there is a need to focus more on state and party officials' attempts to design and appropriate participatory mechanisms for representation and consultation in the context of international aid and expanding markets than on new and celebrated forms of more or less independent civil society activism.

How shall one best understand then the world-renowned attempts at participatory reforms in Brazil within the analytical framework of democracy-oriented representation? Gianpaolo Baiocchi and Patrick Heller point to three factors. First, the reforms expand the access of the demos to public matters such as budgets, in the contexts of seemingly overwhelming corruption, clientelism, and elite dominance. Second, the introduction and institutionalisation of the measures call for effective politics including a programmatic and ideologically committed leftist party. Third, the new institutions are not limited to the ideas of new civil society politics but are instead designed to foster representation by excluded groups in between the chain-of-sovereignty approach and the direct-democracy approach. Moreover, based on a comparative study of the effect of different institutional arrangements under similar conditions, Baiocchi and Heller argue that although reforms 'from above' can make crucial impact, this rests with the political backing beyond parties alone. In fact, it is the interaction between political and a strong civil societies that is crucial and

prevents elite from dominating the new institutions and thus retain their control. Hence, it is crucial that the institutional design is not to provide ready-made rules and regulations (in accordance with the new 'sequencing of democracy thinking') but to enable wider popular participation to both alter the relations of power in a democratic way *and* gradually introduce new constitutions.

Challenges of Popular Political Representation

These conclusions take us to the third strategic connection in the middle and lower parts of the model on representation. The focus is on links between civil society and more popularised engagements on the one hand and organised politics on the other. This is essentially about democratisation by strengthening from below the weak autonomous connections between state and people at the expense of the dominant mediation (previously outlined in Figure 1.1) between the undermined state and the subordinated people through communal-, patronage-, and network-based informal leaders and the business and market. The third part of the book contains four studies of these challenges of popular representation.

Although most of the established democracies have grown out of modern development and thus rooted classes, movements, and parties, and although democratisation ahead of such transformations has generally given rise to clientelism and elite dominance, the recent experiences from Brazil, for instance, show that it is not impossible to improve popular representation. Yet, the problems *are* abundant. This calls for close understanding of the challenges of what Gerry van Klinken calls patronage democracy. Drawing on survey results on the state and dynamics of Indonesia's democracy[59] and a number of case studies of local politics under his own direction, van Klinken analyses the political economy of the relative advances and stability. It is true that politics is dominated by elites. Yet many of them are more broadly based, more localised, and less militarised than under Suharto. Moreover, just as in India, a majority do adjust to and, by contrast to the cosmopolitan middle classes, benefit extensively from the new rules of the game by drawing on their unique ability to mobilise voters through control of the local state apparatuses and longtime cooperation with communal and business actors. This cooperation is partly to make up for the insufficiently financed government and executive. Although patronage thus sustains elements of democracy, it is also responsible for much of the democratic deficit.

Further engagement calls for specific knowledge of the dynamics of civil and political inclusion and exclusion. John Harriss's chapter is based

on a collaborative comparative project on rights, representation, and the poor in India, Brazil, and Mexico. As opposed to researchers pointing to the supposedly remarkable access of slum dwellers in Delhi to politicians and government officials, Harriss stresses that most people are denizens (inhabitants without actual citizen rights) and that contacts with the state are brokered by patron-politicians and 'big-men'. In São Paulo, by contrast, ordinary people are capable of turning directly to more democratic state institutions; and in Mexico City, they can at least opt for more self-provisioning. This does not mean that Indian 'politics is a dirty river that has to be dammed up or diverted', as many civil society activists would have it. Most of the supposedly alternative civil society organisations are middle-class oriented, and few address the problems of ordinary people in a nonpaternalistic way. The experiences from Kerala and West Bengal point instead to the importance of combining leadership and popular participation. It is true that there must also be committed civil society organisations of people themselves to foster more independent popular agency through equal citizenship, but the unfortunate relative weakness of such groups calls for political engagement and alliances.

Are trade unions a spent force in bridging the disjuncture between parliamentary politics and civil society fostered by liberal and neoliberal theory? Björn Beckman recalls the historical experiences from Europe, arguing that it was not at first the numerical strength of the labour movement but its strategic position in terms of both popular aspirations toward modernity and industrial growth orientation that made it so crucial. This called for social and political regulations in which the organised labour was vital to productive entrepreneurs and middle classes too. Case studies of the role of trade unions in Nigeria and South Africa point to the sustained importance of similar logic. Although Nigerian unions have been oriented toward alliance building in civil society and have failed to foster a labour party, their South African counterparts have been more able to combine extraparliamentary and parliamentary struggles and do not engage in a civil society alliance against the state. Yet unions in both contexts have gained from engaging in alliances and social pacts. Moreover, they constitute the basis for civil and political rights, their workplace activities serve as a laboratory for democratic self-education, and they are crucial in promoting national development against global neoliberalism.

In Asia, the postcolonial aspirations to popular representation were particularly dynamic in Indonesia, the Indian state of Kerala, and the Philippines. By the eighties, a number of setbacks and new challenges spurred many groups and movements in favour of new democratic struggle against stateism, clientelism, and coercive means to accumulate capital. It proved difficult, however, to foster cooperation between citizen- and

popular-based organisations, to aggregate specific issues, and to make an impact at the level of parties, elections, and government. The year 1996 was the starting point of three innovative projects to tackle these problems: the building of a new citizen action party (*Akbayan*) in the Philippines, the launching of a huge people's decentralised planning campaign in Kerala, and the increasing politicisation of the civil-society-based democracy movement against Suharto in Indonesia. In the final substantive chapter, Nathan Quimper, Michael Thracian (with Joss Chathukulam), and Olle Törnquist, who have followed the movements for several decades, summarise experiences and lessons. Akbayan faces the challenge of expanding its local popular organisation and alternative governance beyond the temporary opening on the national level thanks to a party-list system and extraparliamentary actions. The Kerala activists try still to summarise and handle the political setbacks of the planning campaign as well as the associated problems of promoting production. The Indonesian campaigners were marginalised in civil society while the moderate opposition, especially in the provinces, and pragmatic sections of the incumbents captured the heights of the new democracy. This calls for a new framework to combine citizen and interest organisations with wider popular political work. Politicisation of the civil society work is thus inevitable, but the question is how will it come about and be organised. Although the space for advances is local, the need to scale up seems to call for broad alliances on the intermediary levels between polycentrism on the local level and top-down elitism.

Conclusion

In the closing chapter, Neil Webster, Kristian Stokke, and Olle Törnquist discuss the policy implications of rethinking democratic representation for civil society and political activists as well as donors who wish to support rights-based democracy and sustainable development. It is true that the book points to severe problems in the promotion of democracy in the late-developing Global South. Yet advances have proved possible, and a major problem is that the policies and approaches of governments, donors, and many pro-democrats on the ground have not been so effective and need serious reconsideration. A democracy that provides a meaningful framework for ordinary people to improve their lives cannot be built only by 'getting the institutions right'. Typically, these minimal-rights institutions remain embedded in utterly unfavourable distribution of resources and relations of power. This does not mean that designing institutions and fighting for them is a lost cause, but there is a major need

to redirect attention to special promotion of such institutions that can counter the structural and other impediments. Three such areas stand out: first, capacity building to enable people to be active citizens; second, facilitation of popular organisation building; third, government provision of nodes for ordinary citizens' representation beyond elections only, from the provision of institutional channels through which democratic organisations can mediate with the state to fair arrangements for direct participation in planning and budgeting.

Notes

1. In addition to the crucial collective work with participants in our workshops and the joint efforts of the editors on the previous volume (*Politicising Democracy*, 2004) as well as the present anthology, several of the distinctions in this chapter have been inspired by the public discourse of the Norwegian research program on power and democracy (cf. Østerud 2003, 2005), the working papers by Houtzager *et al.* (2005) and Castiglione *et al.* (2005), the investigation in co-operation with the Indonesian Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies (Demos) to discover if and how the analytical framework and concepts would make sense in our national survey on democracy, comments from Lars Svaasand and other participants in the 2009 Norwegian Political Science workshop on politics and development, and continuous discussions with Lars Rudebeck and Kristian Stokke.
2. For a broader review and references, see, e.g., Törnquist (2004).
3. Cf. CSDS 2007.
4. The term *governance* includes wider forms of government in society than those that refer to the organised systems of government. Hence, *good governance* does not presume democracy by way of a constitutional chain of popular command but is open to other systems of *public management* and focuses especially on problems of corruption, accountability, effectiveness, and efficiency.
5. See, e.g., Abrahamsen 2000, Grugel 2002, Ottaway 2003, Carothers 2004, Carothers *et al.* 2007, Priyono *et al.* 2007, Samadhi *et al.* 2008.
6. World Bank 1997, UNDP 2002.
7. See, e.g., IDEA 2007.
8. Harriss *et al.* 2004, Hickey *et al.* 2004, Houtzager 2005.
9. See, e.g., World Bank 1997, Mansfield *et al.* 2005.
10. Cf. Carothers 2007.
11. Cf. Khan, 2005.
12. 1965.
13. Berman 2007, Fukuyama 2007.
14. Törnquist 2004.
15. See, e.g., Corbridge *et al.* 2000, Blom-Hansen 1999.

16. Harriss *et al.* 2004.
17. Cf. Tharakan 2004, Törnquist 2004.
18. Cf. Houtzager 2005.
19. See, e.g., Harriss *et al.* 2004, Priyono *et al.* 2007, Samadhi *et al.* 2008, Harriss-White 2003, Nordholt *et al.* 2007.
20. Harriss 2006 and in this volume, Lavalle *et al.* 2005, Houtzager *et al.* 2007, Törnquist 2003, 2009.
21. 1967.
22. With authors like Bourdieu (Wacquant 2005a), Anderson (1983) and Stokke and Selboe (this volume).
23. Cf. Østerud 2004, 2007.
24. See, e.g., Carothers 2006.
25. See, e.g., Chandhoke 2005 and this volume, Harriss 2006 and this volume, Harriss *et al.* 2006, Houtzager 2005, Selle and Transvik 2004, Törnquist 2003, 2009.
26. Cf. van Klinken 2007 and this volume.
27. Törnquist 2006.
28. 1997.
29. 1992.
30. 1997a.
31. 2000.
32. 1993.
33. 1996.
34. 2004.
35. This volume.
36. See, e.g., Rudolph 2004.
37. Cf. Rothstein 2005, Kumlin *et al.* 2005, Tendler 1997, Abers 2000, Baiocchi 2003, Florisbelo *et al.* 2004, Isaac *et al.* 2000, Törnquist 1996, 2004.
38. Houtzager *et al.* 2007, Lavalle and Houtzager (this volume).
39. Cf. Avritzer 2002, Baioc 2005, Baiocci and Heller (this volume), Esping-Andersen 1985, Berman 2006.
40. Beetham 1999.
41. The actual content of what is thus being decided and implemented is due to the will of the demos but must be supportive of the principles of democracy and the necessary means to develop and apply them.
42. For specifications of what has been conceptualised as 49 intrinsic aspects of democracy in the development and application of a framework for analysing the state and dynamics of democracy 'from below,' see Priyono *et al.* (2007) and Samadhi *et al.* (2008).
43. Cf. Stokke and Selboe this volume.
44. Cf. Harriss this volume.
45. Cf. Helmke *et al.* 2004.
46. This is a long-established practice of social democratic governance, but it has also been tried in scattered local settings in, for instance, the Philippines (e.g., Rocamora 2004, Quimpo 2004) and in cases such as Brazil, South Africa, and the Indian state of Kerala and West Bengal (e.g., Avritzer 2002, Baiocchi

2003, 2005, Fung *et al.* 2003, Heller 2001, Isaac *et al.* 2000, Tharakan 2004, Jones and Stokke 2005, Buhlungu 2006, Ballard *et al.* 2006, Webster 1992, Rogaly *et al.* 1999).

47. Törnquist *et al.* 2009.
48. See, e.g., Baiocchi 2005, Baiocchi and Heller this volume, Webster this volume.
49. See, e.g., Esping-Andersen 1985, Berman 2006, Selle *et al.* 2006, Trägårdh 2007.
50. Cf. Moene *et al.* 2006, Beckman *et al.* 2000, 2004, and this volume.
51. Cf. Rothstein *et al.* 2005.
52. See, e.g., Esping-Andersen 1985, Berman 2006, Trägårdh 2007, Tharakan 2004, Törnquist 2004.
53. Cf. Chatterjee 2004.
54. Even the romanticised Greek democracy was not all that 'direct.' It operated largely by representatives selected through lotteries among those males (not women and slaves) who had enough time, money, and status (Manin 1997).
55. Cf. van Klinken and Buur this volume.
56. Cf. Harriss this volume.
57. Cf. Törnquist, Tharakan, and Quimpo, this volume.
58. 2005.
59. Priyono *et al.* 2007.

2

What Is the Relationship Between Participation and Representation?

Neera Chandhoke

> The question of representation, one of the crucial and most troublesome issues of modern politics ever since the [eighteenth century] revolutions, actually implies no less than a decision on the very dignity, of the political realm itself[1]

Introduction

This essay attempts to address some of the rather significant issues raised by Törnquist in the introductory chapter to this volume. He suggests that the best way to study and evaluate democracy is to disaggregate the concept and the set of practices associated with the concept. Such disarticulation is a necessary precondition for any reasoned and meaningful analysis of the essential dimensions and processes at work. Conventional understandings of democracy that tend to take democracy as more or less a given concentrate on either institutional designs for the successful functioning of democracy or on the external preconditions for democracy.[2] Törnquist, on the other hand, suggests that democracy is best comprehended through an analysis of public control over democratic institutions and practices or the lack thereof. Correspondingly, because the issue of public control over democratic practices is intrinsically related to that of representation, any discussion of democracy should focus on practices of representation. The argument seems to suggest that the degree and the extent of democracy in a given society depend largely on the establishment of institutions through

which citizens can monitor processes of government. This conception of democracy, I think, represents a distinct advance over other such conceptions, simply because it foregrounds the significance of the popular will as the prime determinant of democracy.

But representation needs to be problematised. Although Törnquist suggests that the relationship between the representative and the represented tends to revolve around authorisation and accountability, representation is a plural concept. The act of representation may be symbolic (standing in for the represented), descriptive (when like represents alike), or substantive (when the representative acts for the represented).[3] More importantly, representation itself requires at least the establishment of two preconditions: appropriate institutions and citizen control over elected representatives.

Taking my theoretical cue from precisely these insights, in this essay, I wish to (1) map out the problems that have been identified with the concept of representation in recent debates, (2) see whether civil society organisations that have come to substitute for citizen action can resolve the malaise of democracy, and (3) offer some suggestions on what can be done about the tension between the project of participative democracy and that of representation. But before I proceed, it might be useful to clarify the status of representation in democracy. Because democracy is a protean concept, we should also know which particular conception of democracy forms the vantage point of such an investigation.

Democracy, Participation, and Representation

It is not very easy to define democracy, for the moment we try to do so, we tend to get submerged in a mass of tediously divergent interpretations. We do not have to stretch our imaginations too far in order to figure out why this is so. Most of the time even committed democrats tend to defend democracy for instrumental reasons or because the institution provides reasonable ways of solving ineluctable political dilemmas. We can, for instance, be committed to democracy because

1. Democracy assures citizens that they are in control of the system and therefore breeds contentment in the body.
2. Democracy is cost-effective as compared to undemocratic governments that might well need to invest heavily in quelling discontent.
3. Given the general enthusiasm and acclaim that surrounds democracy since the fall of existing socialist societies at the turn of the 1990s, this form of government has proved to be self-legitimising.

4. Democracy enables the peaceful transfer of power from one set of elites to another.
5. Democracy results in development.

For one or another of these reasons, people find democracy appealing. Even if some people might agree with Plato that democracy is 'a state in which the poor, gaining the upper hand, kill some and banish others, and then divide the offices equally among the remaining citizens, usually by lot', they would hesitate in condemning democracy as wanting.

Notably, most of the reasons for preferring democracy fall into the category of instrumental reasoning. In other words, democracy is considered to be a political good because it leads to the achievement of certain results that we think are good. The problem is that democracy might not lead to these results at all. It is of course desirable that some results, for example, that of development or delivery of social goods, are achieved through the institutionalisation of democracy, but we cannot dismiss democracy on the ground that it has *not* produced these consequences. Indeed, it is highly risky to pin democracy's worth onto instrumental reasoning, because democracy is intrinsically valuable. It is of value because it presumes that human beings possess equal moral status in a given polity. Status refers to a particular moral conception of the kind of place that individuals occupy or should occupy in the social and political world. Moral status, in the words of Thomas Nagel, is formally analogous to legal status, as conferred by legal law, except that it is not contingent upon social practices. 'It is a universal normative condition, consisting of what is permitted to be done to persons, what persons are permitted to do, what sorts of justifications are required for preventing them from doing what they want, and so forth'.[4]

The assumption of equal moral status is most obviously manifested in the principle of universal adult franchise. The notion of universal adult franchise serves as shorthand for a significant political postulate: individuals have an equal right to participate in the making of all decisions that affect them as individuals and as members of a collective.[5] No person can cast more than one vote on the ground that he or she occupies a privileged social position. And no person can be denied the right to one vote, or her vote count for less than one, simply because he or she is disadvantaged in that society. In other words, no person can be either discriminated against or favoured on the basis of class, caste, gender, race, or other such considerations. Such considerations are morally irrelevant.

The right to vote thus embodies the basic value of democracy: equal moral status. But the right is also a specific manifestation of a general right: the right of political participation. The right of political participation is simply the right to participate in institutions that make public decisions

or in deliberations on and around these decisions. Therefore, the right of political participation can be considered a root right. First, it validates the equal moral status of each person. That is, each person has the equal right to put forth an opinion and the right to be heard with respect when she does so. This does not mean that each person's voice will be represented in the decision that is finally taken. What is important is that each person has been given a fair chance to participate equally and fairly in the decision-making processes. Second, the right of political participation contributes to the making of informed public opinion and thus to the constitution of democratically aware citizens. Third, meaningful exercise of the right of political participation serves to limit the power of the state and to hold it accountable. Fourth, the right is significant because it empowers citizens to demand that the state realise their right to social and economic goods. Although rights presuppose each other, the right of political participation paves the way for the struggle for and the grant of other rights. For these reasons, the *right can be considered a root right.*

However, it is precisely at this point of the argument that we run into a particular type of predicament. Political relationships in a modern state cannot involve only the citizen and the state for the following reasons: (1) most societies are too large and too complex to permit direct forms of democracy, (2) the practices of everyday life engage citizens to such an extent that they just do not find the time or even the inclination for political involvement, (3) because most demands/perspectives/interests are plural as well as conflicting, some agent needs to sift through these demands before *re*-presenting them in forums that decide public policy, and (4) the specialised and the highly inscrutable nature of modern legislation and administration proscribes the participation of ordinary people in the process of making laws. Therefore, a third agent comes onto the political scene: the representative. In history, practices of representation chronologically predate democracy, but ever since its inception, modern democracy has come to be identified with representative democracy.

The Autonomy of Representatives

Representatives who mediate between the two basic protagonists of our democratic text – the citizen and decision-making processes – are charged with the twin tasks of representing popular demands, interests, and public opinion in forums of decision making and being accountable to their constituencies This seems straightforward because if P cannot be represented in S for justifiable reasons, then P should be represented by someone who is in a position to do so. Yet the concept of representation has been dodged

by controversy and a fair degree of anxiety since the establishment of representative democracy. These anxieties that are articulated as three main critiques of representation centre on the following themes. First, because the representative acquires a great deal of autonomy from that which is represented or is being represented, the process of representation is detached from the popular will. Second, representatives cannot possibly represent constituencies and people who are not like them, and who are for that reason left out. Third, representatives constitute the political will of the constituents rather than representing a preformed will, and thus they diminish the political competence of the citizens. These three perspectives on what the representative should be doing when he or she sets out to represent constituencies may be distinct from each other in terms of presuppositions and arguments, but they seem to lead to each other. Therefore, they should be taken together, because in tandem they shed some light on the act of representation.

The first critique of representation focuses on the *how* of interest representation. What exactly is the role of the representative? Does the representative proxy for her or his constituency in forums of decision making? Does the representative have some discretion and, therefore, autonomy when it comes to representation? Or, as Urbinati has argued, does the representative interpret her or his task as that of advocating the interests of her or his constituents in the way she or he thinks best?[6] Logically, if representation is supervened onto the concept of participation, then representatives should act as *proxies* for their constituencies in decision-making forums. That is, they should be acting in the way his or her constituents would act *if* they were present in these forums.

However, a number of mediating factors influence the processes of representation. Because a given constituency will necessarily contain plural and oft conflicting opinions, perspectives, needs, and interests of various citizens (for the sake of brevity let us collapse all of these into the notion of interest), agents will have to, as a matter of course, filter through the mélange of interests, privilege some, downgrade others, articulate some, and leave others by the wayside. This alone gives to the representative a large degree of autonomy, because she or he has the power to decide which interest to represent and which not to, which set of interests to highlight and which to downgrade. Articulation of multiple agendas does logically call for a fair amount of discretion.

Far from representing faithfully an already-formed political will, the representative might consider it more important that he or she should exercise her discretion or moral judgment on various matters. Edmund Burke, for instance, suggested that 'it ought to be the happiness and glory of a Representative, to live in the strictest union, the closest correspondence,

and the most unreserved communication with his constituents. But his unbiased opinion, his mature judgement, his enlightened conscience, he ought not to sacrifice to you; to any man, or to any set of men living. These he does not derive from your pleasure; no, nor from the Law and the Constitution. They are a trust from Providence, for the abuse of which he is deeply answerable. Your representative owes you not his industry only, but his judgement; and he betrays instead of serving you, if he sacrifices it to your opinion'.[7]

The tasks of government and legislation, Burke argued, are matters for reason and judgment and not of inclination. Therefore, there cannot be a division between those who deliberate and those who decide. Representatives should rejoice that their constituents hold opinions, for this is the right of the constituents. But constituents cannot give authoritative instructions or mandates that a member is bound blindly to obey and argue for *if* it is contrary to his convictions, his concerns, and his judgments. Parliament, concluded Burke, is not a congress of ambassadors who must maintain the interests of those they represent; it is a deliberative body of one nation and one interest.[8] The implication is that the representative's discretion and judgment is more important than merely standing in for his or her constituents and mirroring their interests.

If the agent is a member of a political party, matters become even more complicated. For which interest is represented and which is left out will largely depend on the ideology and the worldview of the political party of which the representative is a member. We would do well to recollect that political parties are in the business of garnering political power through the provision of agendas that tend to privilege one political perspective over another on matters that include nationalism, secularism, local self-government, foreign policy, nuclear power, development, and notions of social justice. These platforms may well be for the good of the majority of the citizens, however, that is not the issue at stake. At stake is the following issue: What is the moral status of those citizens whose interests fall out of the ideological framework of the representative? Are their interests fated to be excluded from the entire process of representation?

The answer to these questions might not prove to be too optimistic for democracy. Theoretically, each citizen should have an equal opportunity to put forth her point of view and be heard with respect, heeded, and engaged with. Even if she is outvoted in a particular context, we can reasonably assume that her voice may well count in another instance, *provided* that participative institutions embody fair procedures. But when representatives filter through the plurality of interests and privilege only some simply because these interests fit well with the ideology and the commitments of the representative/political party, then those voices that do not fit into this

perspective are neither articulated nor heard. And this by itself compromises the precept of equal moral status, which constitutes the rationale for democracy.

If this aspect arouses some concern, further consideration of the matter (and this constitutes the subject matter of the second critique of classical modes of representation) generates much more unease. Can the oppressed and marginal sections of society possibly find *voice* in various forums? We can hardly abstract the process of representation from background social inequalities. We can hardly expect that the interests of those who are marginal to the social order will be represented in decision-making forums quite in the manner that they would like these interests to be represented. But even if groups are not socially marginal, their interests may not find voice. It is difficult to imagine that in a patriarchal society men will be able to represent the interests or the opinions of women, just as in a capitalist society the owner of capital cannot even begin to imagine what the worker needs and aspires toward.

The remedies that critics provide for nonrepresentation or inadequate representation are in the main two: group representation or reservations for disadvantaged groups in institutions, and the mirror theory of representation. According to the mirror theory of representation, distinct groups should be represented in direct proportion to their numerical presence in society. Notably, the composition of the legislature should mirror the social composition of the population *irrespective* of whether the said groups are or are not marginalised. Anne Philips, for example, argues that representatives will prove better advocates of the interests of their constituents, *if* they share the social characteristics of their disadvantaged constituents. They will be able to comprehend the problems of their constituents, expand the political agenda by bringing these interests onto political platforms, and contribute to the formation of political coalitions around specific concerns. Thus, voices that otherwise may not be heard at all can be 'made present'.[9] Iris Young famously argued that 'systems of political representation cannot make individuals present in their individuality, but rather should represent aspects of a person's life experience, identity, beliefs, or activity where she or he has affinity with others… Within a particular political context a person may be represented in several ways within each of these modes'.[10] Toward that end, the political representative will have to represent interests, represent opinions, and represent the plural *perspectives* of their constituents. This can be best done by people who belong to the particular worldview of the constituents or because they share the same experiences. Only in this way can the interests of the worse off in society be brought to bear upon processes of policy making.

That the representative acquires a considerable degree of autonomy from the constituency, and that he or she cannot, perhaps congenitally, represent the interests and the opinions of people not like them, leads to even more uncomfortable conclusions. The representative might be engaged in the process of constructing such a will. The questions that then arise are the following: Do representatives do what the constituents tell them they should be doing? Or do the represented do what their representative tell them should be done – which set of interests should be given priority, through which perspective should these interests be sieved, what *should* be prioritised, and what *can* be prioritised? The progression of the sequence is not very clear. Representatives, suggests Laclau, far from representing a political will are engaged in shaping this will. 'No pure relation of representation', suggests Laclau, 'is obtainable because it is of the essence of the process of representation that the representative has to contribute to the identity of what is represented'.[11] Analysts of representation are confronted by a peculiarly intractable dilemma here inasmuch as citizens are not only *constituted* by processes of representation but, without representation, they also cannot participate in the political process on their own terms at all.

In sum, modes of representation cannot be classified only as symbolic, descriptive, or substantive as Törnquist suggests, they can be *constitutive* and *partial* as well. The problems with representation may be more serious than envisaged at first glance, because our representative, far from representing the interests of constituents in some mechanical manner, exercises a great deal of power and autonomy when he or she sets out to represent a constituency. Yet neither representation nor representatives can be done away with, because that would mean demolishing democracy. Democracy without representation is simply a nonoption in modern and complex societies. Therefore, we have to settle for representation. That is why the indispensability of representation per se is not an issue in democracies, despite all reservations on the issue.

This is mainly because practices of formal representation possess one virtue: if representatives acquire their considerable power through authorisation via elections, they are also accountable to the constituencies via the same elections. Representation may be a poor substitute for direct or face-to-face democracy, but perfect representation or a flawless one-to-one relationship between representatives and the interests that citizens hold by virtue of their status as citizens is simply not feasible. What is euphemistically termed the popular will is far too pluralised and divided to permit of representation. We also have to accept the unpalatable fact that representatives once in power do exercise considerable autonomy from the popular will. All we can hope is that these representatives act according to public

opinion, sound moral reasoning, political judgment, and constitutional principles. All we can hope is that citizens are sufficiently aware of how far the latitude exercised by representatives can extend. If representatives deviate too much from the mandate, citizens should be able to exercise their own judgment in and through elections.

What then is to be done? Törnquist suggests that processes of authorisation and accountability should be strengthened through the establishment of appropriate institutions and modalities of citizen control over elected representatives. What tasks the representative should perform, what he or she should be representing, whether representation should be based on territory or group identities, and whether the representative should be representing the interests of that section of the constituency that did not vote for him or her are significant questions in themselves, but not, as suggested above, intractable. What we need to do is to constantly fine-tune procedures, so that representatives are *compelled* to represent interests of their constituents, howsoever we interpret constituents, and be sensitive to public opinion.

Let me now suggest that citizens can exercise some degree of control over the representative when *two* further preconditions are met. The first precondition is the presence of a vibrant and aware civil society. Although the institutionalisation of representative democracy has been accompanied by the rise of political parties as prime agents of representation, parties do not exhaust the repertoire of representation. Citizens can engage in direct collective action, and civil society groups, which claim to represent *this* or *that* constituency (professional associations such as trade unions or chambers of commerce, film clubs, reading groups, civic associations, and social movements) all raise issues that are relevant to collective life or at least to a particular section of collective life. Other groupings come and go, propelled by issues of immediate concern.

The space in which these modes of collective action arise and are consolidated is civil society. The agents of civil society are movements, campaigns, civic action groups, citizen associations of various kinds, and a free media. Political practices in civil society are protected by the rule of law, the institutionalisation of civil and political rights and an impartial judiciary. The task that civil society has to set for itself has been ably summed up by the eminent Irish orator, wit, legal luminary, and Member of the British Parliament John Curran (1750–1817). In 1790, he had suggested insightfully that the condition on which God hath given liberty to man is eternal vigilance.

Second, civil society groups have to connect institutionally with established modes of representation. At some point, public opinion has to feed into policy, and policy must be rendered accountable in and through the

establishment of consultative forums. This really means bringing the sphere of participative and democratic politics closer to the domain of policy making via the representative. To put the point in stark terms, the only guarantee that the representative will heed the voices of those who are represented is the setting up of strong participatory institutions in civil society, as well as the establishment of institutional links between civil and political society.

The Changed Context

Doubts about the adequacy or the satisfactoriness of different modes of representation or how to control the representative, however, pale into insignificance when we consider that the *political context* of representation has been dramatically transformed in recent decades. Somewhat oddly, theories of representation that revolve around formal procedures of authorisation and accountability have hardly kept pace with domestic and international transformations. In the late 1970s, civil society was both rediscovered and reinvented. Subsequently, the sphere came to be seen as practically a substitute for the power-hungry state and the competition-driven political society peopled with political parties. The reasons for this development are well known by now: tremendous disenchantment with the overreach of the state in the advanced capitalist, the erstwhile socialist, and the developing world. The revolution from above in the shape of the interventionist state – whether Keynesian, welfare, developmental, or socialist – had lapsed into concern with the status quo and the unabashed pursuit of power.

It was around this moment that the civil society argument was propelled onto the centre stage of political imaginations, strategies, and energies. Forged initially in the context of Stalinist states in eastern and central Europe, the argument promised no great ruptures in the lives of people. What it did suggest was that a limited and accountable state, a rule of law, constitutionalism, political and civil liberties, a free media, uncoerced associational life, and a vigilant civil society formed essential prerequisites of democracy and citizenship rights. Given the success of the Velvet Revolutions against authoritarian state power in erstwhile socialist societies, the concepts as well as the practices of civil society were to attract considerable attention, as well as a fair amount of enthusiasm among democratic theorists and activists. The presence of a number of groups in civil society, that pursue agendas independent of political parties is generally considered a welcome development because it deepens democracy and expands the political agenda through the raising of new issues.

Today, a number of civil society actors, such as international human rights nongovernmental organisations (NGOS), humanitarian organisations, and environmental groups, have come to play a large role in domestic and global politics. Internally, it is simply no longer enough to concentrate on elected representatives and the problems that accrue on representation, for nongovernmental agents stand in for citizens, speak for them, engage in the politics of advocacy, and often make and unmake policy, *without ever having fought an election*. And they are not likely to do so, because representation is simply not their job. This really means that while civil society organisations may be in the business of democracy, they are not in the business of being representative or accountable to the people for their acts of omission and commission.

Therefore, even though civil society organisations have deepened democracy, theorists of representation and democracy are confounded by niggling doubts: Civil society groups may be democratic, but these groups are not representative of the popular will. Although democracy may be deepened as a result of civil society activism, what happens to representation? And when representation comes into question, can democracy be deepened?

Let me explicate this point. For much of the twentieth century, it was assumed that the government is accountable to the citizens for the policies it makes and does not make. Now that civil society organisations stand in for citizens, who are these agents accountable to: their clients, the government, multilateral funding agencies, or the northern NGOs that fund many of them? The leadership of some civil society groups may well be authorised and accountable to the members via elections. But group membership is necessarily restricted. Nor are such procedures public in the way elections are public. Because a great many of these organisations are beyond the reach of representation, the idea that a definable system of authority is even *notionally* answerable to the democratic will has been seriously compromised. All evidence suggests on the other hand that organisations are not internally democratic or weakly so, that they promote conformity, and that they are indifferent to notions of democratic citizenship.[12]

In essence, the *paradox* of modern politics consists in the following: whereas representatives may be less democratic because they are somewhat autonomous of their constituencies, democratic organisations may not be representative of the popular will. Notably these divisions have been propelled to the forefront of the political agenda by the inadequacies of systems of representation and by the incapacity of representatives to represent the popular will. On the other hand, around the world, civil society activists have raised the rights of alternative sexualities and ethnic minorities and foregrounded struggles for justice. These achievements

cannot be dismissed simply because the organisations do not represent the democratic will or are not accountable to it. But representative democracy cannot be compromised, because unless citizen aspirations are articulated through representatives, policies can be imposed on citizens without even a nod to representation or to accountability. The only way out is to strengthen the context of representation so that it may be made more effective and democratic.

The central issue, point out the editors of this volume, is the following: 'The major challenge is therefore to apply the chain-of-popular-sovereignty approach within not only the remaining formal structures of command but also in the wider and fragmented landscape of actual governance and popular engagement and to focus on the strategic connections.'[13] In response, it can be suggested that, at some point, civil society groups have to connect with established modes of representation. At some point, public opinion has to feed into policy and policy be rendered accountable. This really means bringing the sphere of participative and democratic politics closer to the domain of policy making via the representative. For despite all the frailties of political parties, these organisations possess two advantages. First, representatives are authorised in and through procedures of elections. Second, representatives are held accountable to constituencies through elections. The representative still stands squarely at the centre of democracy. For this reason, the links between civil society actors and representatives need to be strengthened through the following means.[14]

- Civil society groups should ensure a multiplicity of candidates and multiplicity of political agendas because this enables the voter to *choose* among competing formulations.
- Other civil society groups should monitor free and fair elections.
- Governments and civil society organisations should work to create and reproduce conditions that produce an informed and a politically aware citizenry and a free media.
- Civil society organisations should ensure fair rates of electoral participation through campaigns that focus on the need for citizens to exercise their rights to voice in public decisions.
- Governments and NGOs should jealously safeguard civil and political rights.
- Governments should institute consultative mechanisms between political parties and civil society groups and also institute procedures of accountability to civil society groups and to citizens.

If these necessary procedures are institutionalised, a representative will find it difficult to stray too far from his or her mandate, provided that

citizens associated in civil society groups exercise constant vigilance and provided that public opinion crystallises around crucial issues in a sphere of participation outside that of formal politics.

Conclusion

The establishment of representatives that serve to stand in for their constituencies provides both the rationale as well as the justification for modern democracy. These institutions should seek as faithfully as possible to capture the intent and nature of the popular will through a variety of means: consultation, authorisation, and accountability. That is why anxious concerns about the adequacy of representation are almost always about the fundamental question of how democracy can be deepened. The late 1970s witnessed the emergence of civil society as a dominant sphere of collective life and heralded an overriding preoccupation with the deepening of democracy. The irony is that these concerns might have nothing to do with anxieties about participation and representation. This essay has tried to negotiate the disjuncture between participation, representation, and democratic projects of civil society agents and suggest that the division can be transformed into conjuncture. It is only then that the objective of deepening democracy can be realised.

Notes

1. Arendt 1965: 239.
2. Törnquist, this volume.
3. Ibid.
4. Nagel 1995: 85.
5. Chandhoke 1999.
6. Urbinati 2000, see also Pitkin 1967, Mansbridge 2003.
7. Burke 2000: 150, 152.
8. Ibid.
9. Philips 1995.
10. Young 2000: 133.
11. Laclau 1996: 87.
12. Hudock 1999.
13. Törnquist, this volume.
14. Chandhoke 2009.

3

The Paradox of Civil Society Representation: Constructing New Forms of Democratic Legitimacy in Brazil

Peter P. Houtzager and Adrian Gurza Lavalle

Democratic reforms that strengthen direct citizen participation have been advanced and defended on the terms that they increase the responsiveness and legitimacy of state action. Civil society organisations have in this context become significant de facto, and in many cases de jure, political representatives of the publics on whose behalf they work. Advocacy is an old practice among civil society organisations. What we are seeing today is something new: an increasing importance of these actors as representatives in policy processes that are recognised and on occasion legally authorised by public authorities and/or promoted by bi- and multilateral international agencies. The result is a paradox of civil society representation: distrust and declining legitimacy of the elected representative institutions and the state's techno-scientific administration have led to democratic reforms in which novel forms of civil-society-driven political representation have emerged that, in general, have weaker claims to democratic legitimacy than elected representative institutions themselves. Unlike political parties and trade unions, most civil organisations lack any clear standard or obligatory mechanisms by which their publics can authorise representation or ensure actors' accountability and responsiveness.[1]

In this paper, we examine the civil society component of this paradox. We explore if and to what extent the novel roles played by civil organisations in current democratic reforms are producing changes in the *symbolic*

construction of democratic legitimacy. As these actors publicly justify their status as representatives of particular publics – that is, of segments of the population or of particular identities or values – they must make implicit or explicit claims about the civil organisations' *representativeness*. We identify these claims of representativeness and explore their consequences for democracy.

More specifically, we explore the notions of representation and the claims of democratic legitimacy that are emerging as a consequence of civil organisations' new roles in one of the world's largest metropolises: the city of São Paulo, Brazil. Democratic reforms to enhance participation appear to have gone furthest in less affluent and younger democracies, where doubts are strongest about the capacity and willingness of elected representatives to hold to account state apparatuses with long-standing authoritarian legacies. Brazil in particular is widely considered a continental-sized laboratory of participatory innovations, and the city of São Paulo has a highly organised civil society. Our analysis of the city's civil organisations is based on interviews conducted in 2002 with leaders of 229 organisations. This sample was produced using criteria that favoured organisations that actively work with, or on the behalf of, the urban poor.

There are no widely accepted historical or theoretical models of political representation that fit the type of political representation in which civil society actors are today engaged.[2] In fact, the logic of political representation by civil organisations is distinct from both individual or direct citizen participation assumed in participatory democracy approaches and the representation offered by political parties and trade unions.

We believe political representation by civil organisations should be explored on its own terms, and then its consequences for democracy need to be assessed. We identify six notions of representation and argue that one related to mediation suggests that civil organisations may play a novel role in contemporary polities and contribute to an important change in the symbolic construction of democratic legitimacy. In the case of Brazil, this new role seems to be related to the specific trajectory of democratisation and political and administrative reform of the state.

In the next section, we briefly discuss our case selection and sampling technique. The following two sections introduce the universe of actors. Section four tests the consistency between discursive claims and concrete practices. Subsequently, we analyse the different *notions of representation* that civil organisation make publicly and its related claims to legitimacy.

The Case of São Paulo, Brazil, and Methods

The city of São Paulo is a most likely case for finding emerging notions of representation within civil society and may reflect what lies on democracy's horizon. The city is the largest and politically most diverse in Brazil, a country that has, since its democratic transition in 1985, become a democratic laboratory of enormous dimensions.[3] The city has a long tradition of left political parties and community activism, a powerful progressive Catholic Church, and a range of local participatory experiments. São Paulo has a tradition of participatory councils linked to left wing actors, and the municipal government has experimented with a number of participatory institutions, including a participatory budget. The city is the historical heart of the country's labour movement and has a long-standing presence of societal actors linked to popular sectors, such as the housing and health movements. Civil organisations in São Paulo have, furthermore, achieved notable influence in various areas of public policy since the end of the military dictatorship in 1985 and particularly since the adoption of the 1988 constitution.

The data come from a single city and from a sample of organisations that is representative of a particular segment of a larger universe, but not of the universe of civil organisations as a whole. Although there is no intention here to present our findings as generalisable beyond the universe of actors we interviewed, they do suggest important empirical trends, and the chapter analyses these trends to highlight what may lie on the horizon of the symbolic construction of democracy.

The survey of civil organisations in São Paulo was conducted through interviews with the organisations' leaders or board members. We drew a sample using a snowball technique, which relies on chain referrals to build up a sample that is purposefully targeted.[4] A detailed description of the research design, including sampling, questionnaire, and testing for bias is available elsewhere.[5]

A New Universe of Representatives

The sample of 229 civil organisations in São Paulo is highly heterogeneous. We distinguish organisations by type of activities they undertake (e.g., service delivery to individual clients or defining problems as public issues) and by the nature of their relation to their public, that is, their self-identified beneficiaries or constituency/members.[6] The typology is *not*, therefore, derived inductively from the data, nor does it reflect actors'

self-definition, but rather it reflects our analytic criteria. Although we used saturation criteria for sampling, the distribution of the types of organisations is not representative of their distribution in the universe, which remains unknowable.

A majority of organisations work with or for publics that do not have formal membership ties, and their publics therefore do not have the 'right to exit' that provides a mechanism that fosters accountability or responsiveness. In addition, internal elections are as scarce in São Paulo's civil organisations as formal membership. We therefore include information about the organisations' degree of public participation in the planning and executing of activities to provide a sense of the type of relationship that exists. This has one important shortcoming: organisations may overstate the true level of participation because participation is an important basis of legitimacy. However, we found interesting variation between types of civil organisations.

Community associations make up a variety of local and territorially based actors, such as neighbourhood associations, that normally work on behalf of a territorially defined 'imagined community'. Unlike in some of the richest democracies, and the United States in particular, the number of organisations that have formal membership is relatively small. Instead, a large number of neighbourhood associations in the sample define themselves as working for 'the community'. The publics of these organisations do participate in the planning and implementation of activities and at a higher rate than for the general sample: 60 percent stated community members participate 'almost always' in planning of activities and 52 percent stated they did so in the execution.

An *advocacy nongovernmental organisation* (*NGO*) is a specification of the concept NGO. These organisations seek to transform social problems into public issues and campaign around those issues to influence public policy or private behaviour. The relationship of advocacy NGOs such as *Ação Educativa* (Education Action) or *Geledes* (a black women's rights organisation) to their publics is that of a 'target population'. There is often direct contact and 40 percent of advocacy NGOs claimed that members of their target populations 'almost always' participated in their planning activities and 66 percent in execution of activities. Nonetheless, there is no formal membership and its accompanying exit option. Brazilian advocacy NGOs are different from those in rich countries, where organisations such as Greenpeace have a large pool of formal membership (although membership is often limited to sporadic monetary contributions).

Coordinators are organisations created specifically to link civil organisations to each other, facilitate debate and collective action, and mediate

relationships with the state. The coordinated organisations are often formally members of the entity. They include organisations such as the Union of Housing Movements (UMM), which coordinates a citywide network of housing movements and the Network of Brazilian Philanthropic Service Entities (REBRAF) and the Brazilian Association of NGOs (ABONG), which coordinate national networks of service providers and advocacy NGOs, respectively. The definition used here covers the types of federated national organisations discussed by Skocpol in the context of the nineteenth-century United States.[7] In contrast to the United States, however, most coordinators in São Paulo have been created by local or regional associations and are organised in a more horizontal manner.[8] Coordinators claimed that 63 percent of their members 'almost always' participated in its planning activities and 76 percent do so in the execution of activities.

Service nonprofits have as their primary mission service provision to individual clients. Service provision can be undertaken as charity or as part of an empowerment strategy, but their beneficiaries are individuals. Service nonprofits include actors who provide professional training or employment counselling, food for the homeless, medical care, and shelter for battered women. Many in São Paulo have religious roots and deliver services under contract from the state. The share of service nonprofits that stated that their clients participated 'almost always' in planning activities is lower than for community associations, as one might expect (40 percent). For execution of activities, participation drops to 31 percent.

Other organisations include very different actors that could not be classified in the categories above. These organisations make up only 11 percent of the sample and include philanthropic foundations, pastoral organisations of the Catholic Church, and such classic civil society actors as the Lions and Rotary clubs.

Table 3.1 summarises the distribution of the types of civil organisations in the sample. Our snowball sampling criteria, adopted to look for representation and scaling up of local claims or demands, has produced an overrepresentation of coordinators, which are relatively few, and underrepresentation of community associations, which are numerous.

Religious organisations such as churches, temples, or mosques are not included in our sample, and we do not distinguish civil organisations that have strong ties to religious groups. Such ties go across our typology and are heavily present in three different types of civil organisations: service nonprofits, advocacy NGOs, and community associations. Taking into account religious ties would require a split in each type, thereby introducing too much variation with no cognitive gains.[9]

Table 3.1 Distribution of types of civil organisations in the São Paulo study, 2002

Type	*Frequency*	*Percent*
Community associations	62	62
Advocacy NGOs	62	62
Coordinators	45	45
Service non-profits	35	35
Others	25	25
Total	229	229

Bridging Representation and Civil Society

The contemporary shifts in political representation involve changes in and rearrangements of the workings of the traditional institutions of representative government and an expansion of the locus and the functions of political representation.[10] Contemporary democracies are in fact experiencing a significant pluralisation of political representation, moving from the traditional institutions of representative government to a broader set of institutional loci, political actors, and functions of representation.[11]

If the privileged locus of representation was the legislature, its actors elected (professional) politicians, and its primary functions the production of law and control of presidents, prime ministers, and governments actions, the current pluralisation points to the *institutionalisation* of representation within the executive branch and its bureaucracies, exercised by a diverse set of actors, to influence the formulation and administration of public policy, as well as to exercise social control over its execution by public bureaucracy. Therefore, not all political representation occurs in traditional representative institutions understood as 'institutionalised arrangements involving many people and groups, and operating in the complex ways of large-scale social arrangements' for acting in the interest of the represented.[12] A rash of institutional innovations has led political representation, in Brazil and elsewhere, to expand beyond elections and legislatures as the locus of representation to group representation and societal accountability in the functioning of the executive branch.[13]

Central to this pluralisation of political representation is a set of collective actors that mediate relations between citizens and government.[14] Their role is different from that undertaken by political parties and labour unions.

It is in this context that the paradox of civil society representation presents itself. The novel forms of political representation through civil

society organisations suffer from exactly the lack of democratic legitimacy that these actors and other proponents of reform point to as a weakness of traditional representative institutions. The paradox of civil society is not a rhetorical resource we use for presenting our arguments, it is a political and historical challenge faced by the societal actors engaged in the democratic reforms that move democratic representation and participation toward a more complex and diversified set of loci and functions. In the long run, if these actors are not able to dispute and institutionally crystallise new notions of democratic legitimacy to support their representation, the democratising current of which they are such an important part may not last. Part of this challenge should be faced in the symbolic realm of our understanding of democratic legitimacy.[15]

In our analysis of how civil organisations are seeking to establish their representativeness, we take the following approach. Because there are no satisfactory criteria by which to assess whether civil organisations are effectively representative or not, we rely on the actors' own definitions of whether they are representatives as the starting point of our analysis. That is, we begin with the organisations' explicit and public commitment to representing the communities, beneficiaries, members, target populations, or other publics with which or for whom they claim to work.

Although we are concerned with what we tentatively call 'assumed representation'[16] throughout this paper, we control such unilateral claiming by actual practices of representation. We also take into account the participation of civil organisations' publics in the planning and execution of the organisations' activities. Finally, we tackle the otherwise unanswerable question of whether representativeness is likely to take place in civil organisations' political representation by examining different notions of representation sustained by real civil organisations and the implicit or explicit claims of legitimacy underpinning those notions. This approach allows us to make empirical progress *without* assuming a normative model of representation or actual representativeness.

Assumed Representation by Civil Organisations

We start our analysis by identifying which civil society actors claim to be representatives. Of the 229 organisations surveyed, 166 or 73 percent claimed to represent their public. More importantly, some types of actors are far more likely to claim to be representatives than others (see Figure 3.1). Advocacy NGOs are found to be the least likely (about 50 percent) of civil society actors to assume political representation of their publics.

In contrast, virtually all community organisations (95 percent), such as neighbourhood associations and local social movements, claim they are representatives. Three-fourths of coordinators assume representation of the organisations that constitute their public, reflecting in part the common practice of formal membership. Finally, and perhaps surprisingly, three-fourths of service nonprofits claim to represent the publics with whom they work.

Only 17 percent of all the organisations state that they have membership relations with their publics. The large majority of organisations state that the public they represent is 'the community' (30 percent) or a 'target population' (44 percent).[17]

There is a clear relationship between defining oneself as a representative and the exercise of activities in which political representation is actually involved. We constructed a simple index of four types of activities in which political representation is likely to occur, based on the reasonable premise that the breadth of representation activities vis-à-vis the state is indicative of the extent to which an actor takes on the role of political representation. The four categories of activities are: (1) participation in new arenas of representation within the executive branch, for instance, sectoral policy councils such as those on health and education and the municipal level participatory budget; (2) mediating demands to government agencies or departments; (3) support political candidates; and (4) political advocacy by claim-making on the legislature.

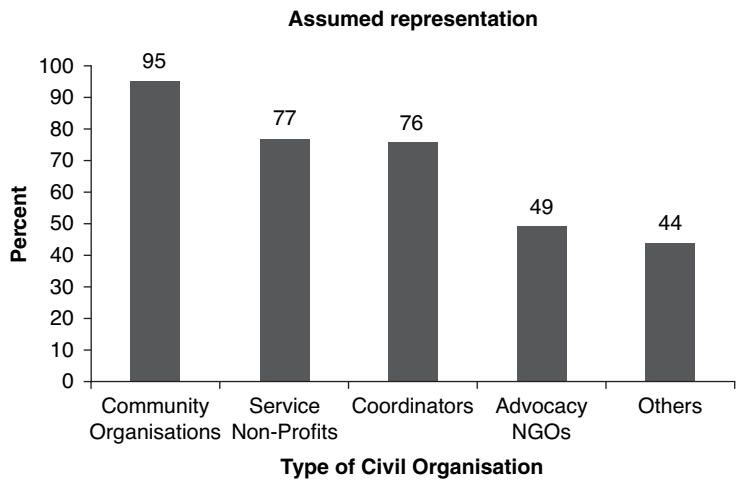

Figure 3.1 Assumed representation by type of civil organisation.

Our data show that actors who engage in these four activities are far more likely to assume representation. In fact, 77 percent of those that declared themselves representatives undertook two or more of these roles of representation, whereas 66 percent of the civil organisations that stated they did not represent their publics performed none or only one of these activities.

Competing Notions of Representation and Accountability

Six distinct notions of representation can be identified in the public justifications civil organisations provide for the legitimacy of their assumed representation (see Figure 3.2). These notions we call electoral, membership, identity, proximity, mediation, and services. The distribution of these arguments across the organisations reveals that the overwhelming majority of these actors use only one of the arguments to justify their representation publicly. The fact that the overwhelming majority of organisations who assume representation (94 percent) resorts to only one argument for legitimising their representativeness suggests that these arguments are specific formulations that have become relatively stabilised. A similar analysis of civil organisations in Mexico City, for example, shows that 20 percent of actors used more than one argument and more than 10 percent used three arguments or more.[18] In São Paulo, only 1 percent of the sample used three arguments.

Each notion of representation is made up of the same three components: *those represented*, people whose will is bound together in a way that is to a greater or lesser degree direct and concrete (vote, demand, petition) or in a way necessarily indirect and abstract (nation, tradition, common good); *the representative*, mediator and guardian of interests of those represented, whose role lies in diverse levels of institutionalisation, authorisation, and duty to those represented; and *the locus,* which is simultaneously the jurisdiction where representation is exercised and the interlocutors to whom it is exercised. The latter is most notably public authority, although it is not exclusively so, because it can also be other societal actors or even 'the polity'.

Electoral

Civil organisations are using a widely accepted authorisation mechanism that makes it possible for them to ensure, as *reasons of fact*, the legitimacy of their representation by means of a formal procedural argument, that is, carrying out of elections. In other words, selection processes are

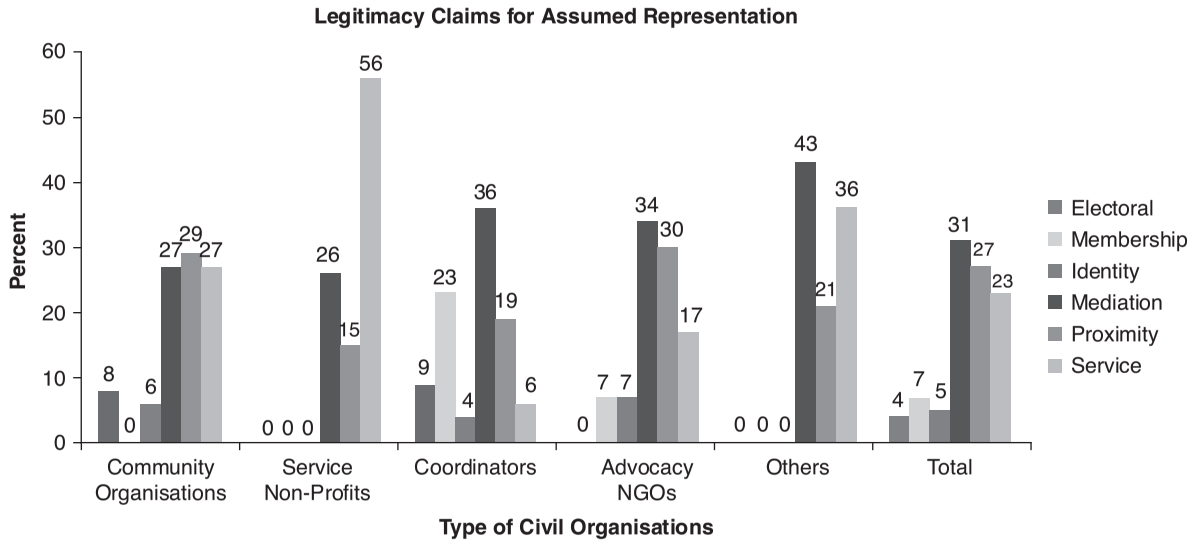

Figure 3.2 Legitimacy claims for assumed representation, by type of civil organisations.

used that are accepted by and synonymous with democracy itself. Even so, in a number of cases, voting is cited together with the commitment of the organisations to the participation of their public through campaigns, assemblies, minimal restrictions on voting, rendering of accounts, and so forth. The argument has an implicit locus, where the elected will carry out their representation.

A very small share of civil organisations in São Paulo, only 4 percent, argues that the existence of electoral mechanisms for selecting leaders or directors is evidence of their representativeness. None of the six types of actor makes this argument recurrently.

The vote is the best-known and studied mechanism for authorising representation and ensuring accountability. Notwithstanding the fact that elections within civil organisations lack public scrutiny and the formalisation proper to electoral processes for political office, they follow the same formula and criteria for establishing their legitimacy. Although few in number, civil organisations that are subjected to electoral controls by their beneficiaries could revitalise political representation if they are brought into the processes of designing and implementing public policy or simply in the channelling of demands through the electoral system.

Membership

The claim of representativeness in the membership notion is based on the argument that the creation of an organisation simultaneously establishes the interests to be represented (member's interest). The represented and the representative are produced by the same process. Here again, the appeal is to reasons of *fact* and, in this respect, the similarity to the electoral argument is not coincidental. It has a close relationship to the model of corporate representation that emerged in the twentieth century and that formed the basis for interest representation rooted in the world of work. This use of a de facto representation is viable because it is based on socially accepted and legitimised principles, and it can be supported without having to make its content explicit. The locus is an indispensable component of the argument because the creation of an actor with representative intentions only makes sense in the presence of predefined interlocutors and institutions that, in the majority of cases although not exclusively, are the public authorities.

The membership argument is made by only 7 percent of civil organisations, but it is common among coordinators. Around a quarter of these actors claim their representativeness is based on a membership relationship with their public. In contrast, no community organisations, such as

neighbourhood associations, make this argument. In the case of coordinators, formal membership is in fact common, and the surprise is that the argument is not made more frequently. Instead, as we describe below, a larger share of coordinators employ the mediation argument.

Dues or other levies, participation in the selection of the leadership, and other forms of sanction and control associated with membership – notably the right to exit or withdrawing contributions or volunteer work – are well-known mechanisms that establish and maintain some degree of accountability in the relationship between an organisation and its members. Civil organisations that engage in forms of representation as a function of their membership, even if these organisations are few in number, could contribute to the reinvigoration of political representation when linked to political parties in electoral cycles or when it is part of policy design and supervision processes.

Identity

The identity argument rests on the resemblance of existential or substantive attributes of the representative and represented as the basis of representativeness. Civil organisations that make this argument appeal to substantive likeness between representatives and those being represented. The representative mirrors the will of those represented by virtue of existential qualities that are usually impossible to renounce such as gender, race, and ethnic origin.[19] Thus, representativeness is identity based and supposes that, by means of that identity – women represent women, blacks represent blacks, and so forth – differences between the represented and the representative are eliminated. The locus is vaguely implicit.

The identity argument is rare, made by less than 5 percent of civil organisations. There is little relationship between the type of actor and this particular argument. The small share of organisations that make the identity argument is surprising in light of the considerable attention the so-called politics of difference has acquired in political theory.[20] Identity issues seem hardly or not at all to influence the dynamics of representation among civil organisations in São Paulo, although in other southern contexts, ethno-nationalist identities play a central role in the contest over national political representation.[21]

The identity argument in principle does away with accountability mechanisms. The existential resemblance encompasses all that the representative should be in order to act in accordance with the wishes of the represented. Even though, as argued by Young, identity claims are plausible in a loose form, that is, with no straightforward relation to

interests (i.e. clear preferences about specific outcomes), neither to opinions (i.e. broad preferences about values), but connected to minority perspectives understood as existential frames developed through experience that allows to see no obvious problems for those who do not share the minority perspective.[22] In this sense, even with a minute presence, civil organisations based on an identity logic could contribute to correcting for systematic exclusion in political representation or in the design and management of public policy.

Proximity

Civil organisations emphasise the intimacy of the relationship to their public, citing links characterised by closeness and horizontality as a demonstration of their genuine interest and role as representatives. In contrast to the electoral argument, which is centred on the single electoral element, proximity between representative and those represented is constructed from diverse elements and from their multiple possible combinations: emancipation, or the commitment to enhancing the ability of members of its public to organise themselves, hence encouraging their agency; empathy, or a profound commitment to the beneficiary by affinity, solidarity, and real identification with their problems and needs; and openness, or the disposition to garner and stimulate direct participation and the opinions of their public in the planning and direction of the work of the organisation. Finally, the last component is recognition, which makes the organisation say it acts as a representative, not because it believes it is a representative per se but because it deduces this status from the fact that its public frequently seeks it out and praises its work. Although there is not a locus specified or suggested, there is an implicit locus in the logic of this argument because favouring the importance, demand-making, and problem-solving capacity of the beneficiary points to an assumed interlocutor.

At the centre of the proximity argument is a criticism of the distortions created by institutional structures that mediate between representatives and the represented and their inability to transmit the voice and concerns of the population accurately. It juxtaposes this institutional failure to a genuine or authentic commitment and a set of practices that aim to enable people to act and speak for themselves or to represent their authentic interests. It therefore emphasises proximity or horizontalness of the relationship between representatives and represented.

Proximity is the second most common argument, after the mediation argument, made by slightly over a quarter of the civil organisations

surveyed. Community organisations and advocacy NGOs in particular make this argument, almost as often as they make the mediation argument. Although most coordinators make mediation or membership arguments, a significant share (almost 20 percent) makes the proximity argument.

Participation and physical proximity constitute, in principle, favourable conditions for reinforcing relationships of accountability between represented and the represented. Civil organisations that are close to their publics and open to participation are, without doubt, more conducive to the reinvigoration of political representation than those that are distant and hermetic. However, the argument raises old dilemmas of direct democracy: extreme emphasis on participation ultimately nullifying representation itself.[23]

Mediation

Of the six notions, this one is exceptional in that civil organisations base their representativeness not on the relationship with the beneficiary but with the locus of representation. Indeed, representation normally assumes using means of mediation, but this is not the same as making mediation itself the fundamental basis for authenticating the legitimacy of the role carried out by the representative. Nonetheless, this is precisely where the emphasis of this notion lies. The mediation role played by the organisation opens up access to public decision-making institutions (locus) that otherwise would remain inaccessible. Two components come together in the development of the argument. First, the de facto carrying out of the mediation activity, that is to say, the actor normally plays a mediating role with the public authority and for some reason these roles are not legitimated at a discursive level by elections or membership – in this sense, they probably are not derived from a vote or an authorisation by members. Second, the mediating capacity of the actor with different public institutions is used in a legitimate manner – from the point of view of the actors' argument – to make claims in the interest of its public and not for bargaining for gifts or favours.

The mediation argument is the one civil organisations use most often to legitimise their assumed representation. It is an argument that coordinators and advocacy NGOs are most likely to make, more than any other argument. But the mediation argument is also the most widely distributed one among the six types of civil organisations. Around a quarter of community organisations and service nonprofits also invoke their role in providing people access to the state as the basis of their representativeness.

In contrast to the previous arguments, the actor's relationship to its public, the represented is left unclear or unspecified, hence, *no* accountability mechanisms are attached to this notion. Nonetheless, the argument seeks to make the political actors and institutions of representative government responsive. The criticism implicit in the argument is not directed at those representative institutions per se for any inherent distortions they supposedly produce in the interests of the represented, as is implicit in the proximity notion of representation. However, the argument points to a deficit in the institutions ability to 'hear' interests and respond to the right claims of 'politically excluded' segments of the population. It defines for itself the role of connecting these excluded segments to the state and the political-electoral arena. As we will see in the next section, in historical terms, this is the newest argument.

Service

As in all notions but mediation, the emphasis in this argument also falls on the relationship between the civil organisation that assumes the role of representative and those it represents, although in a very peculiar sense. In this case, the organisation's representativeness is based on its actions in the improvement of the lives of others by providing services to its public from diverse medical treatments to distribution of staple foods and including skills training, scholarships, moral support, and other various forms of assistance. In other words, the reasons cited point to the direct action of the civil organisation in giving benefits to its public. At the centre of this notion lies an implicit criticism of the ineffectiveness of traditional representation to make a real difference in the lives of those who are represented. Therefore, civil organisations' representativeness rests on the capacity to produce or distribute benefits, which is given as evidence of an authentic or at least effective commitment to their public's interests. If in the majority of the notions the locus is somewhat hazy, here it is omitted entirely and is not even hinted at.

The service argument is one of the three most common ways to justify representation, following the mediation and proximity arguments, and it is made by almost a quarter of the actors. It is clearly the primary argument service nonprofits make, as one might expect. Nonetheless, more than a quarter of community associations make a service argument, likely reflecting the historic role neighbourhood associations have played in delivery services on behalf of the state, and in particular those of social assistance programs. A small but important share of advocacy NGOs also make the service argument.

Although service nonprofits channel resources from government and other organisations to their public, the locus of representation is entirely omitted in this notion; hence, there are no mechanisms of accountability. More precisely, because intermediation remains hidden in this argument, there is no room to even think about how to introduce accountability; the mediating function is cancelled out as is the locus. In fact, the absence of mediation and of the locus eliminates the essence of representation itself.[24] There are therefore no elements in the argument compatible with minimum normative democratic principles. The argument's projection into the political arena is, from the vantage point of democratising democracy, clearly not desirable.

Historical Construction of the Mediation *Notion of Representation*

The Dominant model of political representation through competitive elections, that of representative government, was once a disputed notion of representation that emerged from the medieval practices of representing the interests of private landlord before the monarch. Notions of representation are historically related to distinct phases of democracy and to local context. The three least common notions we identify above have deep historical roots: the electoral argument is rooted in the political representation of nineteenth century, the membership argument draws on the labour-based representation that became prominent in the twentieth century, while the identity argument first appeared in the debates between those in favour of majoritarian or proportional representation in parliament, and then reappeared in the 1960s as part of the politics of difference.[25]

Other arguments, however, are clearly related to local context. The most frequently made argument, the mediation argument, has its roots in the last quarter of the twentieth century. It refers to acting in someone's name, but it does not refer to a substantive concept of representation defined in terms of any particular activity or specific ideas or interests. Rather, the argument is focused on the importance of the political representation of poorly represented sectors of the population on its own terms. That is, the mediation argument explicitly recognises the importance of mediating interests with the state in opening up channels through which claims can be made that normally do not have a channel through which they can be expressed to public authorities. The argument's point of departure is the need to remedy an inequality that is not directly related to income, but of access to the state.

It presupposes that organisations that make the argument, first, occupy a privileged position in this unequal distribution of access to the state

without feeling guilty about using such position for advocacy, and second, have a normative commitment to use their privileged position to help those who lack such access to acquire some form of access to the state. There is no evidence in the argument of any mechanisms that could strengthen the relationship between representative and represented – the organisations and their publics – and this brings to the fore the dilemmas of representation of interests by civil organisations.

However, if we remember that during Brazil's military dictatorship and period of democratic transition many, if not most, civil organisations took a strong oppositional stance against the state alongside their stalwart commitment to working at the grassroots, then the mediation argument appears fresh and novel. A decade and a half after the military left power, the *most used* justification by civil organisations in São Paulo for assumed representation focuses on the capacity to mediate relations with the state. Although the proximity notion was relevant to the dominant logic of societal actors during authoritarian rule, the mediation notion seems to reflect both the institutional innovations of recent years and the medium-term dynamics of the reconfiguration of representation and the changes set in motion within civil society actors in response to reforms of the state. That is to say, the mediation argument expresses both the consequences of social actors' struggles for opening news spaces for participation (institutionalised in the 1988 constitution) and of the decentralisation and pluralisation of the state that has come with the political reforms of the last twenty years.

The mediation claim of representativeness is specifically a political one: mediating relationships with the state for voiceless interests outside of but not opposed to the traditional channels of electoral representation. As shown in Gurza Lavalle, Houtzager and Castello(2006a), the variable that best predicts the chances of any organisation to assume representation of its publics is supporting political candidates.[26] At the same time, associations with higher likelihood of participating in councils and participatory budgeting representing their publics are those institutionally embedded amid traditional political institutions as political parties and municipality agencies.[27] Assuming publicly the exercise of political representation could not have been predicted a few years ago, either by the literature or by the civil organisations themselves. The emergence of this notion shows how the new roles of civil society in representation are paralleled and backed by the symbolic enlargement of democratic legitimacy.

Although used more often by NGOs and coordinators, precisely the two most recent types of civil organisations, mediation is an argument used by *all* the actors in the sample. The mediation argument is in fact the only argument that all types of organisations make relatively frequently, and they do so despite the existence of a general relationship between particular

types of arguments and activities. This lends credence to the idea that the argument's importance comes from a wider institutional reordering of the state and of the politics of political representation. The mediation argument embodies within it the processes that are reconfiguring political representation – that is, enlarging the function and locus of representation to include the executive branch of government and its bureaucracy for the purpose of designing and supervising public policies – and those that are producing a redefinition of the profile of civil organisations in the context of the current wave of democratic reforms.

The proximity argument, the second most common argument, is clearly related to grassroots organising by left-wing activists and Catholic Church clergy and laity inspired by liberation theology during the military dictatorship in Brazil of the 1960s and 1970s. More precisely, this argument in São Paulo reflects the lasting impact of the extraordinarily influential role of the Catholic Church on the symbolic and material construction of civil society actors, as well as the intense participation of activists of the left who sought refuge in grassroots community activism from the rarefied political arena under the military regime.[28] What the liberation-theology-inspired church saw as the correct form of social intervention is still clearly visible: renouncing one's own importance, empathy (compassion), and silent work alongside the oppressed. In the case of the leftist activists, the focus was on emancipation, guided by a strong belief in the ability and need to identify the real interests of the vulnerable social sectors.

The service notion has old historical roots as well, although more clearly related to the particular evolution of social rights and state policies toward the poor in Brazil. Charities and philanthropic institutions were the principal institutions responsible for social assistance to the victims of the growing urban misery in the nineteenth century. Notwithstanding the historical construction of social rights from the 1930s onward, social assistance organisations have up until today preserved the ample public benefits they receive in exchange for the services delivered to vulnerable segments of the population.

Final comment

Among the notions of representation reconcilable with democratic principles, the *mediation* argument appears the most promising, and it is made by roughly a third of the actors. The logic of that argument does not imply criticism of representative government as the proximity argument does because supposed *unavoidable* distortions of people will and concerns. Neither does it claim that the representation exercised by civil

organisations is an alternative to that of traditional institutions of political representation, but rather it poses itself as way of speaking aloud on behalf of voiceless interests, that is, as an additional form of mediation that connects segments of the population that are otherwise poorly represented or underrepresented in the state and in electoral politics. Actors who make the mediation argument overwhelmingly engage in political activities in which actual representation is likely to occur. The organisations that most often invoke the mediation argument are NGOs, community associations, and coordinators. Of course, the representativeness (quality) of the new practices of representation is a thorny question, and the mediation argument is not an exception. Actually, the ongoing debate in the literature addresses the accountability of civil organisations as a conceptual frame for exploring sources of legitimacy that do not depend on authorisation.[29]

Notwithstanding the growing participation of societal actors in the design and monitoring of public policies, and despite the awareness among a significant share of the organisations surveyed that they are not an alternative to traditional representative institutions but a new layer of institutional mediation that can link the needs and demands of particular segments of the population to public decision-making centres, no criteria have been established to strengthen the legitimacy of the new actors involved in tasks of political representation. The most common notions of representation analysed here, furthermore, do not come with clear mechanisms of accountability, leading to the aforementioned paradox of civil society. This situation is necessarily permanent, however, and a process has been set in motion to define these new criteria of democratic legitimacy and recast a part of the symbolic universe of democracy. The current absence of a consensus on such criteria should not be accepted as a basis for dismissing or ignoring the forms of political representation that civil organisations undertake, as occurs in some of the literature analysed in this paper. It seems wiser to assume that the construction of these legitimacy criteria, independently of whether it is successful or not, is and will be the object of political dispute in the medium term.

Notes

1. Gurza Lavalle, Acharya, and Houtzager 2005, Gurza Lavalle, Houtzager, and Castello 2005, 2006a, 2006b, Harriss 2005, 2004.
2. Gurza Lavalle, Houtzager, and Castello 2006a.
3. For discussion of Brazilian democratic innovations, see Avritzer 2003, Fung and Wright 2003, Heller 2001, and Santos 1998, 2002.
4. Goodman 1961, Atkinson and Flint 2003.

5. Houtzager, Gurza Lavalle, and Acharya 2003.
6. In the case of relationships to publics, we distinguish between membership of individuals or of other organisations, the community, target population, or other.
7. Skocpol 1992, 1999, see also Crowley and Skocpol 2001.
8. Gurza Lavalle, Houtzager, and Castello 2005.
9. Ibid.
10. Dalton, Scarrow, and Cain 2003, Manin 1997, Novaro 2000, Warren 2003.
11. Gurza Lavalle, Houtzager, and Castello 2006a, 2006b.
12. Pitkin 1967: 221, 213, Manin, Przeworski, and Stokes 1999: 2.
13. Peruzzoti and Smulovitz 2002, 2006, Cunill 1997, Isunza 2006.
14. Gurza Lavalle, Houtzager, and Castello 2006a, 2006b.
15. For a different formulation of this paradox, see Chandhoke, this volume.
16. The idea of "assumed representation" is somehow similar to what Edmund Burke (1792) called "virtual representation." However, the term coined by Burke presupposes an objective definition of interests that is not plausible today.
17. The 9 percent of organisations left over work with or for "other organisations" (6 percent) or the residual category "other" (3 percent).
18. Gurza Lavalle, Houtzager, and Castello 2005.
19. The claims of identity have not been the monopoly of societal perspectives or actors, that is, models of descriptive representation have historically also marked the debates about the due composition of legislatures, being characteristic of the arguments made by those committed to proportional representation (Pitkin 1967, Urbinati 1999).
20. Assessments and critiques of this debate are available in Kymlicka and Norman 1997, Young 2002, and Gurza Lavalle 2003.
21. Stokke and Selboe, this volume.
22. Young 2002.
23. Pitkin 1967, Sartori 1962.
24. Perhaps not surprisingly then, organisations that made this argument scored the worst on activities in which representation is likely to occur; 40 percent did not carry out any or only one activity in which representation is likely to occur.
25. Gurza Lavalle, Houtzager, and Castello 2006a, 2006b.
26. Gurza Lavalle, Houtzager, and Castello 2006a.
27. Gurza Lavalle, Acharya, and Houtzager 2005, Houtzager, Gurza Lavalle, and Acharya 2004.
28. Sader 1988, Doimo 1995, Landim 1998, Houtzager 2004.
29. For an overview, see Gurza Lavalle and Isunza Ernesto, forthcoming.

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4

Symbolic Representation as Political Practice

Kristian Stokke and Elin Selboe

Symbolic representation is a key dimension of political representation and deserves critical attention when the agenda is to rethink popular representation. In his outline of a framework for analysing political representation, Törnquist[1] highlights the lasting influence of Pitkin's classic study of *The Concept of Representation*.[2] Pitkin famously distinguishes between representation as 'standing for' and representation as 'acting for' another, that is, a distinction between what a representative is and what she does. Within this classification scheme, symbolic representation is presented as one way of standing for a social group. Although descriptive representation means that a representative body reflects the composition of the people that are being represented, symbolic representation implies that a representative symbolises a constituency, for example, the way a king is a symbolic figure for the nation. Symbols might be arbitrary or natural, but this is of little relevance because the connection between a symbol and its referent is about feelings rather than likeness, in contrast to descriptive representation. What matters for symbolic representation is the extent to which people believe in a symbol.

Although Pitkin draws attention to the centrality of symbolism in political representation, her approach to symbolic representation is static and forecloses analytical attention to practices of symbolisation. Pitkin's discussion rests on an essentialist and society-centric view of social groups where the identities and interests that are being represented are objectively defined prior to political representation. This position is no longer tenable, following the cultural turn in social sciences and the associated understanding of cultural representation as signifying practices.[3] As much as

identities were conceptualised in essentialist terms at the time of Pitkin's study, they are now conceived as socially constructed 'imagined communities' that are closely linked to identity politics centred on the state.[4] This means that political representation is both a product and a producer of discursively constructed identities and interests. Symbolic representation is not simply a way of standing for a predefined constituency, but is better understood as practices of constructing social groups and claiming legitimacy as a representative of such constructed identities and interests.

This attention to constructivism brings up critical questions about the relationship between discourse and political economy and between structure and agency. Debates within discourse theory are marked by a divide between those seeing the social world as preceding and overdetermining discursive practices and those arguing that the social world is constituted through discourse.[5] Whereas the critical discourse analyses of Fairclough[6] may illustrate the former position, the poststructuralist discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe[7] is often taken to represent the latter approach. Within studies of postcolonial politics, this distinction is reflected, for example, in the debate between modernist and postmodernist approaches to nations and nationalism[8] and in the opposed understandings of populism that emanate from Marxist political economy and poststructuralism.[9] We find both approaches insufficient for our stated objective of examining practices of symbolic representation, simply because it makes intuitive sense to see discourse and political economy as mutually constitutive rather than to subsume one under the other. Moreover, we also find it problematic that both approaches give scant attention to agency, tending to derive social practice from either a political economic or a discursive structural logic.[10] Our call is hence for a *practice-theoretical approach to symbolic representation* that simultaneously situates social practices within the context of political economy and power relations.

This sets the agenda for the present chapter, namely, to explore symbolic representation as political practice. On the conceptual side, we examine Pierre Bourdieu's approach to social practice.[11] This choice of theoretical foundation is motivated both by the centrality of symbolisation in Bourdieu's approach to social practice as well as his location of social practice within power relations in social space. This approach is illustrated and extended through two brief contextualised case studies analysing the rise to hegemony of ethnonationalist symbolic representation in Sri Lanka and the constitution of legitimate authority within network politics in Senegal. The Sri Lankan case highlights the elitist incorporation of people through ethnonationalist identities combined with a programme of state capitalism and welfareism. This elitist incorporation institutionalised a mode of symbolic representation that has structured subsequent popular mobilisation

within both the Sinhalese majority and the Tamil minority. Although the case study cannot deal with the complexity of Sri Lanka's postcolonial political history, it supports our general argument about the centrality of symbolisation in political mobilisation and the close links between symbolic representation and power relations. The Senegalese case moves beyond this general analysis to a more specific focus on symbolic recognition and contestation of political representatives in a political system characterised by network relations. In the context of persistent livelihood crises and the lasting influence of a national social contract between political authorities, religious leaders, and the population, diverse actors in local politics strategically and habitually build and nurture personal relationships to secure both economic and symbolic capital. The argument that runs through our conceptual discussion and the two case stories is that symbolisation is an integral part of practices of political representation, but also that symbolic representation is inseparable from power relations.

Social Practice, Power, and Symbolic Representation

Bourdieu is rarely seen as a political theorist.[12] Although there are important reflections on the political field in *Language and Symbolic Politics* and on the bureaucratic field in *The State Nobility,*[13] these do not amount to any comprehensive political theory. To the extent that Bourdieu makes politics an object of analysis, this is done by extending his sociological analysis of practice into the political field.[14] Bourdieu argues that social practices can be understood neither as a matter of individual consciousness nor as a product of social structures, and he proposes the notion of *habitus* as a mediating link between these two principles of determination.[15] Habitus is conceived as a system of embodied dispositions for knowing and acting that incline actors to act in certain ways. It is a *structuring structure* in the sense that it yields habitual practices without the actors necessarily reflecting on what they are doing. But the habitus is also a *structured structure* because the embodied dispositions are themselves rooted in social conditions and generated through contextual habituation. It is this dual character of habitus – as both a producer of habits and a product of habituation – that makes it a mediating link between structures and agency.

Bourdieu puts power and its legitimation at the core of social practice where 'habitus' involves an unconscious calculation of what is possible, impossible and probable for individuals in their specific locations in a stratified social order'.[16] The entry point to power is his conception of forms of capital, especially *economic capital* (material assets in the form

of money and property), *social capital* (durable social networks based on mutual acquaintance and recognition), and *cultural capital* (embodied cultural competence, objectified cultural assets, and educational credentials). These different kinds of capital are forms of *power.* The efficacy of capital – what counts as legitimate power – will vary between different fields. For instance, economic capital is not enough to gain status in academia, but it may be used to acquire the educational basis for recognition within the field. The foremost conversion of capital is thus to *symbolic capital*, which means that possession of capital yields recognition as a legitimate authority in a field.[17] This is especially important in the political field, where political representation is based on recognition and grants power to define the 'official version of the social world'.[18]

When individuals act, they do so in specific contexts that allow some to operate with power and ease while others find themselves disempowered and out of place. Bourdieu conceives of the social world as comprising of relatively autonomous but homologous fields: interrelated social systems with competition for accumulation and monopolisation of field-specific forms of symbolic capital.[19] Fields vary in terms of their relative autonomy in regard to other fields, that is, the degree to which a field follows its own rules. Fields with a high degree of autonomy have high barriers of entry for newcomers. Bourdieu argues, for example, that politics in modern societies has developed into an increasingly autonomous field where entry into political life requires that new actors know and accept the rules of the game in order to gain access to positions of power.[20] In this situation, political parties become important as holders of institutionalised political capital and the power to consecrate delegates. Bourdieu also emphasises the homology between fields in the sense that there is a broad correspondence between power constellations and practices in different fields. For instance, there is a general homology across fields where those who are in a dominant position ('the field of power') in one field also tend to be so in other fields. There are also homologies in symbolic distinctions in the sense that binary opposites such as high/low, light/heavy, or refined/vulgar separate what is distinguished and what is not. The basis for such distinctions stems from the constellations of positions in social space and the associated dispositions in habitus. This means that symbolic distinctions are closely linked to power and are integral to social practice.[21]

Symbolic Instruments and Power

A defining feature of Bourdieu's approach is the centrality he assigns to symbolic power. Domination, he argues, requires justification to be

sustained. The exercise of power therefore takes a symbolic form that conceals underlying power relations: 'For in the routine flow of day-to-day life, power is seldom exercised as overt physical force: instead, it is transmuted into a symbolic form, and thereby endowed with a kind of *legitimacy* that it would not otherwise have'.[22] Domination through legitimation rests on the ability to impose meaning and to do so in a way that appears natural and is taken for granted. Symbolic power means that the arbitrariness of power relations, the unequal distribution of capital, is misrecognised as natural, giving legitimacy to domination and reproducing existing power relations.

This mode of reasoning is spelled out most clearly in Bourdieu's analysis of different symbolic instruments.[23] In the lecture *On Symbolic Power*, he identifies three key and interrelated functions of symbolic systems: cognition, communication, and domination, giving prime attention to the last one. First, symbolic systems (such as language, art, myth, and science) are structuring structures in the sense that they are means for constructing and knowing the world, that is, of cognition. Second, such symbolic instruments are also structured structures in the sense that they are based on and reflect intersubjective meaning. This means that symbolic systems can function as instruments of communication and that they contain cultural codes. Third, symbolic systems are also instruments of domination in the sense that they reflect and legitimise structures of domination: 'Dominant symbolic systems provide integration for dominant groups, distinctions and hierarchies for ranking groups, and legitimation of social ranking by encouraging the dominated to accept the existing hierarchical social distinction'.[24] This role of symbolic systems in legitimising and reproducing domination amounts to *symbolic violence* against dominated groups.

Having identified the three functions of symbolic systems, Bourdieu proceeds to a two-step synthesis, arguing first that symbolic instruments, as tools for cognition and communication, constitute means for constructing reality, that is, of establishing consensus (doxa)[25] about the social world. This construction of reality through symbolic forms is at the core of semiotic or semiological analyses inspired by Saussure.[26] Bourdieu borrows from linguistic structuralism to argue that symbolic systems are based on a binary logic of inclusion and exclusion that divides items into dichotomous categories (e.g., rare/common, good/bad, high/low, inside/outside, dominant/dominated, male/female).[27] Such binary oppositions are central to cognition and communication, but they are also used to enhance and reproduce power relations. Although linguistic structuralism provides useful insights into the internal constitution of symbolic systems, they fail to grasp these social and political conditions for language formation and use.[28] In contrast, Bourdieu's second synthesis asserts that

cognition and communication must be placed within the context of power relations, emphasising how language provides means for symbolic violence and gives legitimacy to structures of domination. This raises questions about the social origin of symbolic systems. Bourdieu argues that binary opposites in language are linked to the fundamental opposition in social space between dominant and dominated positions, but he does not claim that language formation can be reduced to power relations.[29] In fact, he accepts the Saussurean view that symbolic distinctions are arbitrary in nature. However, this does not mean that signs or binary opposites are arbitrary in their social and political consequences. The logic of binary distinctions creates cognitive frames for classification that support hierarchical differentiation. Such frames for apprehension of the world also lend themselves to instrumental use for political ends.

Symbolic Representation in the Political Field

Bourdieu's view on symbolic instruments and power is central to his understanding of the political field. The final section of *Language and Symbolic Power* identifies the principal stake in the political field as the power of representation.[30] Political capital, as the field-specific form of symbolic capital, grants the owner (professionals) the legitimate right to speak on behalf of others (nonprofessionals):

> The political field is thus the site of a competition for power which is carried out by means of a competition for the control of non-professionals or, more precisely, for the monopoly of the right to speak and act in the name of some or all of the non-professionals. The spokesperson appropriates not only the words of the group of non-professionals, that is, most of the time, its silence, but also the very power of that group, which he helps to produce by lending it a voice recognised as legitimate in the political field.[31]

To the extent that Bourdieu studies the political field, his analysis revolves around two main themes: first, the relative autonomy of the political field and the associated monopolisation of political capital by political parties and professional representatives; and second, the practice of symbolic representation.

Bourdieu characterises the sphere of formal politics as a field with a high degree of autonomy in regard to other fields, meaning that the field largely follows its own logic and has relatively high barriers for new entrants.[32] Aspiring professionals must invest labour in the inculcation of the appropriate habitus as well as in the institutions that possess and delegate objectified political capital. Successful political representation requires specific

kinds of knowledge about political programmes, arguments, and traditions as well as practical skills as a popular orator and debater to handle relationships with nonprofessionals and fellow professionals. All this is acquired through initiation processes that instil a practical sense and mastery of the field.

This need for investment and belief in the field means that, for most of the time, the politically effective and legitimate forms of representation are the monopoly of professionals and parties, with ordinary citizens largely reduced to consumers choosing between different political products. As politics becomes increasingly professionalised, the competition between different professionals for the right to represent nonprofessionals will increasingly revolve around control over the party. Although political capital can be the personal assets and competences of an individual, it more commonly exists as objectified capital within parties, accumulated through previous struggles and institutionalised in political positions and instruments for mobilisation: 'It is the party which, through the action of its officers and its militants, has, in the course of history, accumulated a symbolic capital of *recognition* and *loyalties* and which has given itself, for and through political struggle, a permanent organisation of party officials (*permanents*) capable of mobilising militants, supporters and sympathisers, and of organising the work of propaganda necessary to obtain votes and thus jobs'.[33]

Transfer of political capital between the party and the professional revolves around the logic of investment: the party invests its political capital in those who have invested in the institution. This creates a situation where the professional depends as much on the party as the electoral constituency, the latter being in her 'possession' due to the representative's position within the party and that will be lost if the professional breaks away from the party. At this point, Bourdieu goes against Pitkin's society-centred understanding of political representation, which sees the composition of a constituency as the determining cause behind representation. This understanding conceals, according to him, the centrality of institutionalised political capital and the competitive relationships among the representatives.

The second theme in Bourdieu's work on the political field regards the symbolic construction and representation of social groups. The defining practice of political representatives is that of constituting the social world by symbolic means, which amounts to symbolic violence in regard to dominated groups. The core of Bourdieu's analysis here is that he sees the relationship between representatives and those being represented as a 'symbolic relation between a signifier and a signified'.[34] This relationship is structured by the competitive relationships between political professionals.

Therefore, symbolic representation is doubly determined: by the relationship between representatives and represented and between competing representatives.

Different political actors are involved in symbolic struggles – directly or through professionals – to impose and normalise representations of the world that suit their own interest. The power of the ideas proposed by spokespersons is not measured by their value as truth, but rather by their ability to produce and mobilise a group of people, which means that they must to a certain extent resonate with the habitus of those they intend to mobilise: 'A mere current of ideas becomes a political movement only when the ideas being put forward are recognised outside the circle of professionals'.[35] This understanding can be illustrated by his understanding of political mobilisation of social classes. Bourdieu makes a critical distinction between classes on paper and classes in reality or, in other words, between the social scientist's construction of classes and the making of real classes through symbolic labour.[36] In an essay on *Identity and Representation*, he argues that this distinction applies more broadly to all identities, including those based on ethnicity or region.[37] Although there is an understandable desire to search for objective defining criteria of a certain social group, these are always symbolic representations that may be used strategically to further the interests of specific actors. Thus, the making of social units is not about some kind of realisation or awakening of a predefined group delimited by objective criteria, but rather about symbolic construction and contestation. Group making is about struggles over meaning, that is, 'struggles over classification, struggles over the monopoly of the power to make people see and believe, to get them to know and recognise, to impose the legitimate definition of the divisions of the social world and, thereby, to *make and unmake groups*'.[38]

Having outlined Bourdieu's signature concepts regarding social practice and symbolic representation, we may now turn to a brief discussion of their relevance as 'thinking tools' for concrete research. We will do so by way of two brief vignettes. The first case examines the elitist incorporation of people through symbolic representation of ethnonationalist identities in Sri Lanka, ensuring both political inclusion of popular masses and continuation of the relations of domination. The second case analyses the construction and contestation of symbolic capital in network politics in Senegal. The overarching argument that runs through these two vignettes is the need to examine practices of symbolic representation and to place these within power relations. However, it is also emphasised that these power relations are not static structures but may undergo substantive transformations and that dominated class actors also possess political agency in regard to symbolic representation. This argument stands

in partial contradistinction to Bourdieu's tendency to downplay popular forces, leading him toward an emphasis on class reproduction rather than political change through mass mobilisation.

Symbolic Representation of Class and Ethnicity in Sri Lanka

Bourdieu argues that group identities are constructed through symbolic instruments and are embedded in power relations.[39] Ethnicity, class, and nation are not given substances or entities, but should rather be understood as what Brubaker describes as 'practical categories, situated actions, cultural idioms, cognitive schemas, discursive frames, organisational routines, institutional forms, political projects, and contingent events'.[40] Symbolic distinctions create and maintain social categories and are imbued with power in the sense that they yield systematic inclusion/exclusion and hierarchical rankings amounting to symbolic violence against dominated groups. Such distinctions and categories may also be used instrumentally to gain, maintain, or contest positions of authority in the political field. This makes symbolic representation a matter of making and utilising social categories, practices that are both structured by and structuring the habitus of political representatives and those being represented.

This relationship between social categories and political representation is well illustrated by the postcolonial practices of symbolic representation in Sri Lanka. In broad outline, these political practices can be summarised through a threefold periodisation, based on the dominant mode of popular mobilisation. These are: (1) polarised class mobilisation in the context of a colonial accumulation regime at the end of the colonial period and in the first decade after independence in 1948, (2) elitist incorporation of people through politicisation of Sinhalese and Tamil ethnonationalist identities combined with state capitalism and welfareism in the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s, and (3) popular appropriation and radicalisation of this ethnonationalist and state-centred frame for mobilising people in the context of state retrenchment and political exclusion from the early 1970s.[41] These changing forms and strategic uses of symbolic distinctions draw attention to the complex and dynamic relationships between political representatives and those that are being represented, while also emphasising the decisive role of the competition for legitimate authority among political professionals.

Sri Lanka's transition to independence and the first decade as a sovereign state were characterised by political discourse and mobilisation that constructed social groups in terms of class rather than ethnicity. British

colonialism brought discourses on identities as fixed and stable entities, institutionalised social categories through diverse technologies of rule, and linked groups belonging to political rights and communal representation.[42] The colonial accumulation regime, making Sri Lanka relatively prosperous but highly dependent on international markets, had produced a multi-ethnic dominant class of plantation owners, landowners, merchants, bureaucrats, and professionals. This dominant class was subordinated to British capital but was also far removed from the domestic popular classes.[43] It was internally divided according to its composition of capital as well as by caste, family, and ethnicity, while also being assimilated through various political and social institutions, including elite schools and marriage alliances. Intra-elite divides and rivalries were intensified in the decades preceding independence. Revolving around questions about the institutional arrangements for political representation, communal divides became more prominent and led to the formation of ethnic parties. Nevertheless, communal tensions were largely confined to the political elite and even there it was superseded by multi-ethnic collaboration in practical politics.[44] The political project that was pursued by the dominant segment of the elite was one of conservative modernisation, which meant a continuation of the colonial accumulation regime under minimalist state intervention.[45] This dominant class project was contested by leftist parties and trade unions, which were led by Western-educated radical intellectuals and emphasised the unity and interests of the urban working class. Thus, the principal conflict at the time was between elite-led projects that represented their constituencies in terms of class categories and advocated diametrically opposed political projects of conservative modernisation and social revolution.[46]

The social classes that were numerically dominant on paper but relatively absent in the predominant form of class-based political representation were the rural middle and lower middle strata, including peasants, small traders, public sector employees, and organic intellectuals of the rural classes (monks and ayurvedic physicians). Within a decade after independence and the granting of universal franchise, a breakaway section from the conservative political elite in the United National Party (UNP) formed the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) and embarked on a new strategy of political mobilisation within these intermediate classes, emphasising the unity and interests of the Sinhalese Buddhist majority and their twofold adversary in the anglicised comprador elite within the UNP and the class politics of the leftist parties. This symbolic representation of 'the people' in ethnonational terms was coupled with a social democratic programme of state-led economic development and comprehensive welfare programme. The political effectiveness of this merger of intermediate class interests and

ethnic identities was strikingly visible in the landmark electoral victory of SLFP in the 1956 elections. Although this new social democratic project remained largely elitist, it resonated so well with the class and communal habitus of the targeted constituencies that it became a hegemonic mode of symbolic representation in the decades that followed. And although the relative shift from class to ethnic identities laid the foundation for Sinhalese majoritarianism, the rivalry and balance of force between SLFP and UNP in Sinhalese politics provided a certain political space and leverage for leftist and minority parties in government coalitions and political negotiations. This ensured a degree of political inclusion and redistribution, even amid continued elite domination and emerging ethnonational majoritarianism. Thus, social democracy in Sri Lanka constituted an ethnonational project that incorporated popular classes under the leadership of a segment of the elite, well endowed in economic capital but also in terms of academic and cultural capital.

These changes in the dominant form of symbolic representation within the Sinhalese majority were paralleled by transformations within Tamil minority politics. The political project that was favoured by the Tamil elite at the time of independence grew out of the economic interests of the multi-ethnic dominant class and entailed close collaboration with the Sinhalese elite. However, a section broke away from the All Ceylon Tamil Congress (ACTC) and formed the Tamil Federal Party soon after independence, mobilising popular support for Tamil minority nationalism.[47] Thus, the transition to independence and democracy was marked by the rise of two parallel ethnonational political projects, emerging from colonial identity categories and technologies of rule and formulated in opposition to class politics as much as the ethnonational 'other'. With the rise of Sinhalese majoritarianism, and especially as Sinhala became the only official language, frustration grew rapidly among Tamil elites that relied on education for employment and social mobility and saw their class interests threatened, making minority ethnonationalism a successful mobilising frame for the Federal Party.

Whereas ethnonationalism, state capitalism, and welfareism became a hegemonic framework for political incorporation, it was also a project that contained its own seeds of destruction. The economic basis for social democracy in Sri Lanka was constrained by declining relative prices for agricultural export products as well as domestic market saturation and lack of international competitiveness for domestic industries. Hence, the late 1960s and the early 1970s were marked by a deepening economic crisis, most visibly manifested as high levels of youth unemployment. This economic crisis provided a basis for legitimation crises, first for Sinhalese majority ethnonationalism but later also for Tamil minority

ethnonationalism. The political elites, on either side, were especially challenged by educated unemployed youth from the intermediate classes, who were socialised into expecting social mobility through education but instead experienced social and political exclusion due to economic retrenchment and narrowly defined political clientelism. As the excluded youth became politically organised, they appropriated the existing frames of ethnonationalism and statist development in their opposition to the established Sinhalese and Tamil elites. A revolt in 1971 of Sinhalese middle and lower middle class youth, organised by Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), triggered the government to respond with a combination of increased state intervention in the economy, material and symbolic concessions to specific client groups, and use of coercion against the insurgents and the political opposition. Among Tamils, this was experienced as deepened political and social exclusion, given that the resources of the state were insufficient to meet the demands from the electorate while the government had a sufficient electoral majority without any support from Tamil representatives. This situation radicalised the Tamil elite and yielded increasingly militant resistance among Tamil youth from intermediate classes against Sinhalese majoritarianism and against the Tamil elite. Both militant Tamil separatists and the second JVP insurgency in the 1980s relied heavily on the ethnonational form of symbolic representations that had been institutionalised earlier by the political elite for the purpose of popular mobilisation. In this manner, the ethnonational symbolic representation went from being a basis for an elite-led project of state capitalism, social welfare, and political incorporation to becoming a frame for nonelite militant resistance in the context of multifaceted social and political exclusion. What had become a hegemonic mode of symbolic representation, deriving from the competition for state power in the context of statist development and liberal democracy, was appropriated and radicalised by popular forces in the context of state retrenchment and political exclusion.[48]

Relational Practices and Negotiations for Symbolic Representation in Senegal

Practices of symbolic representation are formed by the logic of the actual political field. In Senegal, the struggle for legitimate authority of representation involves competition among politicians mainly through a factionalism that has long characterised the political field.[49] It also involves reciprocal relations and negotiations between politicians and the population over delegation of the symbolic power of representation, habitually through an exchange of material and symbolic resources. Practices of

symbolic representation take place in a multitude of arenas within various fields in society, such as the religious and economic fields, and also involve informal arrangements within the private sphere. Such negotiations and exchanges in multiple arenas characterise the relational practices of symbolic representation between individual politicians and inhabitants in local settings and also constitute the logic behind the Senegalese social contract and its renegotiation in the context of socioeconomic and political legitimacy crises.

The (Re)Negotiations of the Social Contract

The Senegalese social contract is based on a triangular relationship of reciprocal interaction and mutual dependence between the population, political authorities, and the marabouts.[50] *Marabouts*, as leaders of religious Sufi orders, have served as intermediaries between state and society since colonial times.[51] Just as the French colonial administration used indirect rule through religious leaders and institutions to develop the agricultural economy and control the Senegalese population and territories, the lack of required ability and legitimacy to mobilise and directly represent constituencies continued also in the postcolonial period.[52]

The basis of the social contract is the close relationship between the marabouts and their followers, granting the religious leaders symbolic power as legitimate authorities in the religious field. As the followers accepted their guidance also in economic, social, and political affairs, the marabouts had the power and position to negotiate with Senegalese authorities. The professionals of the ruling *Partie Socialiste* (PS) needed the marabouts to deliver the loyalty of their followers to secure votes and political legitimacy.[53] In return, the Sufi orders were granted symbolic recognition and economic resources by the secular state. Some resources were distributed down the religious hierarchy to the followers, providing incentives for participation in political and religious network relations.[54] The negotiated exchange of symbolic and economic capital led to the continued reproduction of the system as long as it benefited all three parties.

Due to a range of changes in society, the social contract came under severe strain. The Senegalese population experienced aggravated living conditions as an economic crisis emerged in the 1970s and was reinforced by the short-term survival strategies of the ruling party.[55] The result was a crisis of legitimacy for the PS regime, which had held state power uninterruptedly since independence in 1960. These political and economic crises made state-held economic capital crucial for professionals in their efforts to stay in power, as remuneration of clients for electoral support

and symbolic recognition became imperative. However, it was not sufficient to retain political legitimacy or silence protest in the long run.[56] The population increasingly expressed its frustration with its socioeconomic marginalisation and the deficient political reforms.[57]

This society-induced pressure for alteration resulted in renegotiations of the social contract and a gradual process of democratisation.[58] Discursive changes within the political and religious fields made the Senegalese population increasingly distinguish between political and religious identities and to question the legitimacy of political orders (*ndigels*) of marabouts.[59] The doxic truths of these practices were confronted with alternative discourses on *ndigel* as a recommendation rather than a command. Thus, the loyalty of the follower to religious leaders is conditional, and both political and religious authority needs legitimation to be upheld.[60] Supporting the delegitimised PS regime, the marabouts risked losing their great symbolic power. As a result, they withdrew from the public and formal political field and abstained from issuing voting commands before elections.[61] By at least apparently reverting to the religious field, the marabouts were able to maintain their symbolic capital and legitimacy as guides and representatives.[62] Being the basis of the social contract, the changing relations and practices of marabouts and followers had far-reaching implications. It involved a step toward separation of the religious and political fields, which in turn made it possible for the population to vote according to political conviction. Thus, the Senegalese population refined its position not only as religious followers, but also as citizens when the renegotiations of the social contract finally led to the fall of the PS regime and the *Partie Democratie Senegalaise* (PDS) came to dominate national and local politics after the political transition following the presidential elections of 2000 and the subsequent parliamentary and local elections.[63] These political transformations gave the Senegalese population hopes and expectations of fair, transparent, and accountable politics and a solution to the socioeconomic crisis.

Relational Practices and Negotiations in Local Network Politics

The logic of negotiated relationships and exchange of resources between representatives and represented characterising the struggle for legitimate authority is evident also in the individual practices of elite and popular actors in Senegalese local politics. A study of the neighbourhood of Colobane in Dakar highlights the importance of network politics and the relational practices of inhabitants and aspiring or actual political representatives.[64] Horizontal and vertical network relationships serve as arenas

for both politicians and inhabitants to nurture a wide range of contacts in various societal fields to promote their interests and accumulate political, economic, social, and symbolic capital. Here, local politicians labour to obtain the recognition of the represented by negotiating exchange of material and symbolic resources with individual inhabitants or community associations.

Local politicians have several sources and strategies for gaining legitimate representation. For instance, it is vital to demonstrate genuine and symbolic belonging to and engagement with the neighbourhood and its inhabitants. Because representation always requires justification to be perceived as legitimate, the representative has to act in ways that resonate with the habitus of those he or she intends to mobilise. In this neighbourhood characterised by material scarcity and poverty, addressing the life conditions of inhabitants by responding to the lack of communal physical and social infrastructure will boost the symbolic power of a politician. They also achieve recognition by assisting individual inhabitants with money and material assets to secure basic needs and everyday expenses related to food, water, gas, or health care. Thus, the economic capital and effort of the politician is provided in return for political capital: the symbolic recognition, political allegiance, and votes of the inhabitants.

The relationships and exchanges between politicians and inhabitants, either individually or through associations, have often been depicted as clientelist or patrimonial, holding a fixed logic where the dominating patron/professional defines and dictates the dominated client/nonprofessional. Although there are obvious inequalities of power between them, relationships between representatives and represented are often more complex and dynamic than they appear. Both local politicians and inhabitants strategically use established patrimonial systems to promote their own interests.[65] Hence, the inhabitants of the neighbourhood also tactically try to establish themselves as clients to obtain crucial material resources through the responsibilities that are placed on the patron. This involves both building and nurturing relationships with local politicians and accepting their approaches for negotiations over the exchange of resources. Thus, Beck observes that patron-client relationships are marked by reciprocity as well as inequality and may provide inclusion, political access, and influence for actors holding client positions.[66]

As in national politics, exemplified by the (re)negotiations of the social contract, the practices and logic of local politics also demonstrate that economic capital is an additional stake in the Senegalese political field. Due to the overall context of material scarcity, the political competition is for not only political, but also economic capital. Achieving a position within a political party or state structure not only provides political power, but also

access to economic and material resources that are valuable in the quest for legitimate authority.[67] The politicians of the neighbourhood of Colobane try to accentuate their close relationships with inhabitants and their wish to assist them to gain recognition as political representatives. Those holding strong positions in the local branch of the PDS or vital contacts within the central party or state structures have access to resources that may be distributed to political supporters and inhabitants. This may in turn generate public praise and accounts providing the politician with a reputation as a legitimate representative, but also obligating her or him to keep up the flow of resources. Hence, financial resources from the institutions of the formal political field are distributed through local networks and used in the negotiations for symbolic representation by individual politicians. The institutional economic capital is converted into individual symbolic and political capital through the legitimacy granted by the inhabitants receiving material assistance.

In local network politics, personal contacts and informal networks are of crucial importance, particularly for the professionals labouring for legitimate authority. Social capital is a major catalyst for symbolic and thus political capital. Therefore, the building and cultivation of relationships are not restricted to individual exchanges, but they also hold an exceptionally large potential with regard to neighbourhood associations. Youth organisations, women's groups, and religious associations all play important roles in the everyday lives of the population as means of social interaction and addressing material needs through mutual help and solidarity. However, they also function as arenas for the recruitment and mobilisation of political supporters, either by local politicians building and maintaining a political clientele or through the significant potential political capital of their leaders as recognised and legitimate representatives of the members. Because they already hold the symbolic authority that is critical and partly deficient among political professionals, local political parties have been active in integrating associational leaders into their ranks. Several politically engaged leaders of local women's associations have succeeded in securing supporters and votes for the party among the members of their association and/or by acquiring funding for the association or at least small benefits for the women they are accountable to. Still, some associational leaders have withdrawn from the local political field, because they considered it could harm their respect and position amid members.

As the optimism from the political transition is increasingly replaced by disillusionment regarding the lack of real changes in local political practices and a general feeling of deception in regard to promised solutions to socioeconomic problems, the crisis of legitimacy of politics and political representatives is resurfacing. The inhabitants of the neighbourhood

express perceptions of politics as a dirty and corrupt business of unkept promises, where politicians only engage for their own profit: to secure votes, obtain positions of power, and thus access and 'eat' communal resources. This challenges the habitual and strategic political clientelism managed through the exchanges of resources aimed at securing legitimate representation. The popular discontent and the discourses on fair distribution, transparency, and accountability within the state that questioned the doxic truth of the PS regime, which had become marked by inefficiency, corruption, and lack of transparency, have been reintroduced.[68]

In this context, political actors seem to be caught in a political paradox. The interest in a new form of politics is clear and articulated, but both professionals and popular actors seem to negotiate their interests in regard to two coexisting and overlapping systems: the established patronage systems of network politics and the potentially democratic new system articulated in new discourses and through the change of political authorities. Professionals struggling for symbolic representation find themselves caught between different demands and two competing practical logics. On the one hand, there is a pressure to relate to and act in accordance with the promises and expectations of a transparent and accountable form of local politics favouring democratic participation. Such practices might in time counter the negative attitudes toward politicians, party politics, and the state, and they hold the potential to ensure legitimate representation. On the other hand, local representatives are still expected to distribute resources acquired through their political positions to personal relations and political supporters. Because there are continuities in the underlying material realities of Senegalese patronage politics, it is difficult to transform established political practices.[69] Unintended consequences of individual strategies aimed at addressing the immediate material needs of inhabitants or securing short-term recognition and legitimacy for politicians through clientelist practices constrain the possibilities of substantive political change. Both professionals and inhabitants of the neighbourhood continue to reproduce the political system they wish to change through their relational practices and negotiations for symbolic representation based on exchange of material and symbolic resources in political networks.

Conclusion

Following Pitkin's classic investigation and in agreement with the agenda of rethinking representation, this chapter has drawn attention to the central role of symbolisation in political representation and the need to reconceptualise symbolic representation as 'acting for' rather than

'standing for' a constituency. This reconceptualisation makes Bourdieu's understanding of social practice and symbolic power highly relevant to studies of representation, despite his scant attention to the political field. Like Bourdieu, we advocate critical analyses of practices of symbolic representation and the manner in which these are embedded in power relations. Sri Lanka's postcolonial political history lends support to this general argument about the centrality of symbolic representation, while demonstrating that symbolic representation is structured by power relations among political professionals and between political representatives and dominated groups. The Senegalese case documents that symbolic representation is constituted through relational practices and negotiations between representatives and those being represented. Although both cases acknowledge the dominant power of political representatives, they also draw critical attention to the agency of popular forces in appropriating and contesting symbolic representation. Both cases also support the general argument that symbolic representation is both exerting power over those that are being represented as well as being embedded in power relations. Rethinking representation requires, therefore, critical attention to both practices of symbolisation and power in symbolic representation.

Notes

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1. This volume.
2. 1967.
3. Hall 1997.
4. Anderson 1983, Brubaker 2004.
5. Jørgensen and Phillips 2002.
6. 1995.
7. 1985.
8. Smith 1998.
9. Mouzelis 1998, Laclau 2005.
10. Sæther 2008.
11. Grenfell 2008.
12. Providing a counterpoint to this representation, Wacquant describes Bourdieu as an "intensely political person" (2005b: 1) that belonged to the political left and contributed actively to the public debate in France (Bourdieu 2008). Although Bourdieu was not a scholar of politics, he was sociologically

political in the sense that he developed sociological analyses with profound political implications and "doing social science was always for him an indirect way of doing politics" (Wacquant 2005c: 13).

13. Bourdieu 1991, 1996.
14. Wacquant 2005b.
15. Bourdieu 1977, 1990a, 1990b, 1998.
16. Swartz 1997: 106–107.
17. Bourdieu 1990a.
18. Harker, Mahar, and Wilkes 1990: 13.
19. Thompson 1991.
20. Bourdieu 1991.
21. Wacquant 2005b.
22. Thompson 1991: 23, emphasis in original.
23. Bourdieu 1991.
24. Swartz 1997: 83.
25. Doxa refers to the taken-for-granted common sense regarding the social world. This "universe of the undiscussed" is in contrast to the "universe of discourse" where doxic truths are confronted with alternative discourses that expose the arbitrariness of what is taken for granted, setting up a contestation between orthodox and heterodox opinions for the (re)instatement of old or new doxic truths.
26. Kress 2001.
27. Bourdieu 1991.
28. Goke-Pariola 2000.
29. Bourdieu 1991.
30. Bourdieu (1998b) argues that positions of power in the political field may also grant access to economic capital. This is first and foremost in the form of jobs. However, in certain circumstances, it can also be the basis for private appropriation of public goods. Such patrimonialisation of collective resources is especially important when other forms of economic accumulation are limited or controlled, making the possession of political capital the prime principle for social differentiation.
31. Bourdieu 1991: 190.
32. Bourdieu 1991.
33. Bourdieu 1991: 194–195, emphasis in original.
34. Bourdieu 1991: 182.
35. Bourdieu 1991: 188.
36. Bourdieu 1987, 1991.
37. Bourdieu 1991.
38. Bourdieu 1991: 221, emphasis in original.
39. Bourdieu 1991.
40. Brubaker 2004: 11.
41. Stokke 1997, 1998.
42. Wickramasinghe 2006.
43. Jayawardena 2003.
44. Wickramasinghe 2006.

45. Uyangoda 1992.
46. Jayawardena 1985.
47. Wilson 1994.
48. de Votta 2004.
49. Barker 1973, Beck 2008.
50. Cruise O'Brien 1992.
51. Coulon 1983, Cruise O'Brien, Diop, and Diouf 2002, Magassouba 1985, Villalon 1995.
52. Creevy 2006, Cruise O'Brien 2002.
53. Beck 1996, 2008.
54. Cruise O'Brien 2003.
55. Diop and Diouf 1990.
56. Cruise O'Brien 2003.
57. Creevy and Vengroff 1997.
58. Villalon 1999.
59. Beck 1996.
60. Cruise O'Brien 1992, Magassouba 1985.
61. Gellar 2005.
62. Beck 1996, 2008.
63. Selboe 2001.
64. Selboe 2008.
65. Selboe 2008.
66. Beck 2008.
67. Bayart 1993.
68. Beck 2008, Diop 2006, Diop, Diouf and Diaw 2000, Galvan 2001, Mbow 2008.
69. Cruise O'Brien 2003.

5

School Provision, the Capacity to Aspire, and the State of Popular Representation in West Bengal

Neil Webster

Introduction

The State of West Bengal in India has become a case study for an increasing number of researchers looking to study popular representation in action. The devolved system of local government has been assessed for its capacity to be more effective, more efficient, and, not least, more equitable in service delivery and promotion of economic development. Opinions vary and range from emphasising the pro-poor outcomes that have been achieved in the agrarian economy to the negative consequences of a new political party that dominates local society.[1] Among development agencies, the assessment is generally positive, with an increasing willingness to channel programs and resources through local representative government, the panchayati raj institutions (PRIs). However, have citizens retained political agency in this scenario of local governance or, to return to Pitkin's conceptualisation of representation, is it a case of authorisation without accountability?

Education is a key government service and one central to the aspirations of many households. If the parents in these households can influence decisions relating to education policy and its implementation, if their representatives are accountable to them, then it should be reflected in the education service provided by the state. Parents' aspirations should be reflected in

children's opportunities. The capacity to aspire derives its strength from expectations already met and thereby strengthens citizenship to a political system that is seen to deliver, in this case to poorer households. It increases commitment to the government in power, to the electoral process, to the authority of their representatives, and it is also inclusive in attracting new aspirants. Hence, to explore local service provision, in this instance school education, is a way to explore the state and status of representation in a given context.

The Political Background

Elected in 1977, the Left Front Government (LFG)[2] has won the six subsequent state assembly elections, although rarely with their percentage of the vote exceeding 50 percent (Table 5.1). Electoral turnouts have remained consistently high, however, suggesting that the LFG has been successful in countering the anti-incumbency factor. Results also support the LFG argument that it has had success in tackling the problems of West Bengal, not least the structural and institutional causes of poverty in rural areas.

At the local level, the LFG introduced direct elections to the Gram Panchayat (village), Panchayat Samiti (block), and Zila Parishads (district) in 1978. It has subsequently been elected to power in the majority of these on seven occasions. The last two elections illustrate clearly its domination and the electoral problems that it faces (Table 5.2).[3]

The 2008 results were seriously affected by the conflicts caused by government attempts to acquire agricultural land for industrial development. Six previous Panchayat elections seemingly demonstrated the dominance of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI[M]), in West Bengal yet

Table 5.1 The Left Front electoral performance in state assembly elections

Election year	*Left Front seats out of a total of 293*	*Electoral turnout (%)*	*Left Front share of the votes cast (%)*	*Congress share of votes cast (%)*	*Trinamul Congress share of votes cast (%)*
2006	233	n/a	49.4	12.0	28.9
2001	199	75.2	49.1	8.0	30.6
1996	203	82.9	49.4	39.5	
1991	245	76.8	48.9	35.1	
1987	251	76.5	52.9		
1982	237	79.9	52.0		
1977	230	56.1	45.0		

Table 5.2 West Bengal Panchayat election results in 2003 and 2008

AQ: Notecue deleted. Please confirm whether okay.

Year	*No. of Gram Sansads*	*No. of Gram Panchayaths*	*Percent controlled by LFG*	*No. of Panchayath Samithis*	*Percent controlled by LFG*	*No. of Zila Parishads contested*	*Percent controlled by LFG*
2003	45,245	3354	71	333	86	18	88
2008		3358	49	341	69	18	76

the scale and rapidity of the fall in electoral support in the 2008 elections suggests a vulnerability that needs some explanation.

The LFG is a government shaped by more than 50 years of political activism and social movements. It began in the struggles in Bengal against colonial rule,[4] and it continued in the post-Independence struggles against local zamindars[5] and other elites dominating local politics, usually under the banner of the Congress Party in West Bengal. Land reforms were passed, but apart from dispossessing the large zamindars, little else was implemented. Sharecropping continued on some 40 percent of cultivated land, and bonded labor based on tenancy controls and financial indebtedness remained common. The caste system, although not as rigidly enforced as in most parts of India, still excluded large sections of the population from access to clean drinking water, education, and health and reinforced their economic and political marginalisation.

Democracy in West Bengal in these times was neither participatory nor representative for the majority of the electorate. The organisation of elected and administrative government was centralised, and top-down and patronage systems rooted in land, caste, and ethnicity shaped the politics of inclusion and exclusion at the local level, a politics aided by the non-party political state of local elections that left the local 'borolok or big man' often unchallengeable.

When one opening is denied, another tends to flourish, and popular participation manifested itself through social movements demanding famine relief, against the payment of market fees and canal taxes, against oppressive tenancy practices, and much more. On some occasions, this was led by the early communist leadership that emerged in the 1920s and 1930s. On other occasions, it was more organic in its leadership and spontaneous in its mobilisation.[6] The leaders were generally middle class, often college educated, but strongly committed to challenging social and economic inequality and increasingly committed to a political agenda of fundamental reforms.[7] It was a leadership with strong roots in the emerging rural constituency of the left and possessed organisational skills later to be important for electoral success.[8]

The two brief United Front governments of 1966–1968 and 1967–1970 gave government power to a coalition of left parties in alliance with a Bengali centrist party, Bangla Congress. They now represented significant sections of the population that had never been represented or felt represented. For some in this population, the boundary between democracy based on direct action and that based on representation was blurred, and they saw no problem in giving active support to their representatives, not least when leaders such as Hare Krishna Konar, minister for land and land revenue and a member of the CPI(M)'s State Committee called on Kisan Sabha[9] members to identify the holders of *benami* land,[10] those hoarding paddy to sell on the black market, and those demanding *begar* (free labor). They seized and redistributed *benami* land, forcibly harvested landlords' lands, and attacked moneylenders, paddy hoarders, and black marketers. Indira Gandhi responded to the breakdown in law and order and imposed president's rule from the centre, and popular representative democracy was temporarily crushed between the infamous Congress regime of Siddhatha Shankar Ray and the radicalism of a Maoist-inspired Naxalite movement.[11]

The 1977 state elections brought the left parties back to power in West Bengal with a leadership very aware of the lessons from the United Front governments. Popular participation was to be restrained and democracy to be very much guided by the CPI(M)-led Left Front government. Class conflict remained in the rhetoric, but the practice was concerned with achieving electoral dominance. The new politics of elected representation in local government increasingly replaced the old politics of direct participation and social movements.[12]

The mid-1980s saw the new approach achieve broad acceptance as local government managed flood relief and improved service delivery, the land reform programs provided security and paved the way for increased food grain production, and signs came of a general economic improvement. Kohli argues this was CPI(M)'s shift to a reformist strategy.[13] It certainly demonstrated a commitment to democratic organisations and the centrality of representative politics. It also reflected CPI(M)'s sense that it had now secured political power on behalf of the poor: Operation Barga had seen the successful registration of many sharecroppers, minimum wages existed for agricultural labourers, the dominance of local moneylenders was ended, and in the administration, the perceived arrogance of officials towards much of the population was ended.

This set the stage for a new representative democratic system of governance that could bring the interests and aspirations of citizens into policy and its implementation, where government provision would meet popular demands, and where the electoral and political position of the LFG would be secured.

Schooling

Most villages in West Bengal possess a primary school in which the inclusion and exclusion of children from classrooms on the basis of caste, ethnicity, and economic condition have long been the norm, making it a site of deep and untold personal miseries and frustrations. Education was an area where it might be said that the LFG could only bring improvement in 1977.

Three dimensions are noted here concerning the subsequent progress. First, the improvement: more children from poor families are now accessing schooling and staying longer. Second, the politicisation: schools have become sites for local politics in which the teachers from the locality usually sustain local norms and values while actively engaging with political parties and party affiliated unions.[14] Third, the school as a government service: the physical condition of the school, the presence or absence of teachers in the classroom, and the provision and content of educational materials are manifestations of the state's perception of its duties to its citizens as parents and children.

At the national and state levels, policy lies in the commitment to education in the Millennium Development Goals,[15] in the Dakar agreement on Education for All,[16] and in recent measures directed at improving the quantity and quality of schooling. At the local level, the District Inspectorate of Primary and Secondary Education is responsible for general administration, monitoring, and supervising schools under the control of the Directorate of School Education. The syllabus and curriculum are the concern of separate boards under the guidance of the Department of School Education. The latter also has a District Primary School Council that handles certain financial aspects including teachers' salaries and benefits.

The elected Zila Parishad has considerable influence on education through its standing committee on education and through the education programs it administers on behalf of the Department of Panchayats and Rural Development. These are nevertheless complementary to the administrative provision rather than having a clear responsibility for it.

It is a complex situation, and to assert influence requires a diversity of approaches on the part of parents. Here what matters are personal networks and the capacity to lobby local politicians and political leaders and access benefits to help one's child. Parent-Teachers' Associations and School Management Committees are local forums where teachers can be formally approached. Ward committees and gram panchayats are also responsible for local education needs and administering minor programs. In this way, the school is a site for participatory politics, patronage practices, and individual negotiations. Some promote greater popular control

and an increased equity in outcomes; others tend to favor individual self-interest. Does popular representation have a strong future in this, or have 30 years of LFG domination contained popular participation and representation and replaced it with representatives in local government that co-opt the popular to local party needs?

This realist perspective on local politics recognises that representative politics is about political horse-trading where electoral victories are bought with policy commitments to sections of the electorate. A party's ability to wield patronage becomes the critical factor, and popular representative democracy is not actively encouraged because it can threaten a dominant party's local political hegemony. The term *crony democracy* has been applied to West Bengal in suggesting that the interests of CPI(M) party members have come to override more principled considerations of popular control, equity, and poverty reduction.[17]

However, a failure to meet the demand of emerging aspirations might also have another explanation. The absence of significant changes in service provision could be rooted in the way that citizens' needs are handled and incorporated into policy and its implementation. If this is done in a nonpolitical and essentially technical manner by national politicians fearful of letting go, aided by technocratic-minded administrators and experts, then this can lead to a loss of political agency because citizens' aspirations have no consequence for the decisions of government. The citizens do not gain the outputs they desire, and the LFG does not achieve the political outcomes it seeks, be that economic growth, poverty reduction, or just continuing electoral success.

Schooling in West Bengal: A Case of Organised Chaos

There is a significant degree of chaos in the provision of schooling in West Bengal, a situation that is not unique to West Bengal or something that the LFG can be held directly responsible for. Schooling in the state has strong roots in an Anglo-Saxon education system established under colonial rule and maintained by the postcolonial governments. The 10 + 2 system of classes 1 to 10 for primary and secondary schools and 11 to 12 for higher secondary has two public examinations: the Madhyamik Examination taken after class 10 and the Higher Secondary Examination taken after class 12. Implementing this system is a plethora of school categories based on classes taught, types of management, and sources of funding. These include pre-primary, primary, upper primary, junior high, lower secondary, secondary, and higher secondary, and thereafter state government schools, government-sponsored schools, Madrasah schools

(again of different class levels), Anglo-Indian schools, and a diverse range of private schools.

The recent international and national focus on education and human development has helped move toward developing a more coherent national policy for schooling in West Bengal. For example, the West Bengal Board of Madrasah Education has worked since 1995 to make Madrasah education compatible with the national education system.[18] But the sector remains very much a patchwork of projects and programs; some have a geographical focus, others a focus on content (for example, syllabus and textbooks), and yet others focus on specific target groups (for example, girls, Adivasis, and low castes). The West Bengal Annual Reports on School Education reveal the progressive expansion of initiatives and activities that has occurred. Each might have possessed a developmental and educational logic at the time of its conception and formulation, but collectively they lack policy coherence and make the work of those responsible for implementation very difficult at best. The problem is well illustrated by the two parallel systems of primary education, one administered through the Department of School Education (DSE), the other known as Shishu Shiksha Karmasuchi and implemented through the Panchayat and Rural Development Department. The latter schools, known as Shishu Shiksha Kendras (SSK), are placed in areas with poor DSE school provision due to remoteness or the high number of children. Described as 'covering the gaps' in the provision of DSE's schools, they are staffed by locally recruited 'teachers', often female, who receive a monthly salary of one thousand rupees as opposed to the ten thousand rupees or so paid to qualified primary teachers in the DSE schools. It is difficult to see how synergies can be generated between the two systems given their different management structures, staffing policies, and resources. It also raises questions concerning the difference in provision in the rural areas if this is anything more than a temporary measure and the unequal status this confers on households.

In the case of Pratibandhi Higher Secondary School (HSS) discussed below, it is apparent that the desire for education is taken as a given by the service providers who have little knowledge of the aspirations of those they see as school beneficiaries. Any suggestion that these beneficiaries might be agents in securing access to schooling or in the nature of the schooling provided is neither recognised nor acknowledged.

Pratibandhi HSS draws the majority of its pupils from neighborhoods in Ward 10 of Bardhaman Town with an additional few from neighboring villages southwest of the municipality.[19] A recent survey by Ward 10's Education and Health Committee places the population of the ward at an estimated 8,338,[20] of which 2,050 are children aged 18 years or under;

65 percent of the population is recorded as literate (that is, can sign their names), which is 20 percent below the equivalent figure for the whole municipality. The ward population includes 65 percent from general castes, 32 percent from scheduled castes, and 3 percent from scheduled tribes.

Moving through the streets of the ward, it is clear that the number of wealthier families is growing as the municipality's population expands and pressure on land increases. The price of land has increased from ten thousand rupees per katta[21] for grade 1 (residential) land in 1994–1995 to one hundred thousand rupees in 2005, and from fifty thousand rupees to two hundred thousand rupees for grade 2 land (close to the main Grand Trunk Road and therefore of commercial potential) placing it beyond the reach of most families today. However, a substantial number of poorer families still reside in housing without toilets, bathrooms, or running water. These are often simple brick constructions of one or two rooms, sharing a common public tube well and latrine. Electricity provision is minimal and not always legal, and small repair and manufacturing workshops are also present. There is also a significant group of temporary residents as individuals and groups move in and out according to employment cycles in the agrarian economy as well as in the municipality itself.[22]

Pratibandhi HSS is described as one for 'poorer pupils and pupils who don't get admission elsewhere'.[23] This view is found among mainly wealthier parents, some staff in the school, parents and staff at other schools, and quite a few officials in the District Education Office. These officials spoke of the teaching staff lacking skills and commitment, the pupils lacking interest and motivation, and a school lacking resources, collectively resulting in poor performance.

The facts of the performance might be correct, but the conclusions drawn are not held by a significant number of Pratibandhi HSS's teachers, its pupils, and many of the parents. For many of these people, the recent move from being a secondary to a high secondary school is a statement of its strength and success. Only 46 students might have passed in the first year of submissions to the Higher Secondary Examination (less than 50 percent of those registered), but this is seen as an indication of progress rather than of failure. In particular, the commitment of a majority of the registered students to complete class 10 and, if possible, class 12 and the focused way in which many poorer families explore and exploit means by which to keep their children in the school demonstrate a culture of aspiration rather than of failure. The local CPI(M) party members and supporters mirror a similar sentiment in which better access to a longer education for children from the poorer families in their ward is discussed in terms of being a fulfillment of their political and moral beliefs and a demonstration of their party's political and organisational strength.

The Capacity to Aspire

Arpan in class 7 is the only child in his general caste family. His father has a bachelor of arts degree and works in the police department. The family moved to Bardhaman with his posting, living in a three-room rented house provided by the department. His mother studied to School Final and looks after the home. Arpan wants to be a teacher. 'For that I will have to take basic teachers' training after completing my higher secondary here at the school. In Bardhaman we have all the facilities for that and I am a resident of Bardhaman. The people who belong to rich or middle class families are enjoying the facilities they need. They get because they have money. I can get as well because I belong to a middle class family, but the poor in my neighbourhood are leaving off from studying. It's due to shortage of money.'[24]

Debnath Hazra is also a single child attending class 7, but he is from a scheduled caste family. Both his parents work as casual laborers who have migrated to Bardhaman Town. They live in a single rented room, use a communal toilet, draw water from a public tube well, and have no television. Debnath wants to study more. 'For that I need books and money. I have eagerness, but don't have money because the economic condition of my father is very bad… Chotun, a boy in my neighbourhood, left studying because his father couldn't support him. His father is a cart puller… Boys and girls do not get the same opportunities to study in my neighbourhood either because the father does not or cannot earn much, that is why.'[25]

Bablu Das's family came from Bangladesh in 1947 at the time of partition. His father died when he was young, and he now lives in his father's house with his mother, sister, and three maternal uncles. One uncle works as an electrician, is married, and has a daughter; a second uncle sells lottery tickets; and the third has no employment. Bablu's mother earns a small income from sewing. The house has 2 main rooms, an inside water tap, and a toilet. Bablu, currently in class 7, hopes to complete his HS Final and go to college. The motivation is not his alone. 'I take fright of my maternal uncle most of all. I only get a chance to watch television when he is not at home. He attends the guardian meeting at the school and talks to teachers.' The mother has clear ideas about the school. 'Here in this school some teachers are less attentive to teach students… The school should also be more careful about publishing their book list so that we can buy books without wasting time. Now sometimes it takes one month or more, that creates problems to begin study in time.… Anyway, the performance of this school is now improving. We should also be responsible to develop this school.' Bablu reveals the other side. 'Rich people are getting advantage

because they have money. But I will not get [the same advantages] as we are unable to get even rice to feed ourselves properly.'[26]

Nandita Hazra is in the final year, class 12. 'I want to continue my study with honours [college] either in Bengali or Sanskrit, there is pressure to get a higher education if you want to succeed today…It is easier today, the education system is better with more primary and secondary schools; backward [SC & ST] students get government support; it helps good students. But there are problems: now the main problem is that there are only three universities nearby and in most cases only the best marks get admission. Many students do not get to study their chosen subject even if they have good marks, or else they have to travel a long way and it leaves little energy to study when the return home; it is a big problem.…Drop outs? Many boys and girls have stopped studying in my locality. Among them I know one who stopped despite having star [sic] marks and a strong desire to go to higher education. There were economic problems and problems in his family as well so they could not continue.'[27]

The above interviews involve children attending school. References made by these to children no longer attending school stress the constraints they faced rather than lack of motivation. They point to the economics of going to school as more significant than any norms or values promoting social exclusion. That is not to argue that perceptions of what is the norm for poor families with respect to school has fundamentally changed, but it does indicate change is happening. The opportunity for poor parents who now see schooling as a possibility opens up the field to new actors to play the game of local politicking with its rules and pathways: finding the economic and social resources necessary to secure the possibility of access to school, to teachers, and to an education. These parents quickly learn to navigate the educational field of play once the child is in school: finding private tuition, gaining the ear of teachers, attending and speaking at guardian meetings, and going to the ward committee to secure free meals and books.

The Cost of Aspiring

Managing the cost of schooling is not easy. There is considerable variation between what education officials believe pupils pay, the amounts that teachers state that the school charges, and the sums that parents actually pay. It varies according class level and subjects taken. The school states that 77 rupees are required of each child, a sum that includes a development fee, an examination fee, a library fee, a sport fee, a magazine fee, a Red Cross fee for first-aid services, and a Student Help Fund. There is also a session charge levied each May, which is currently 100 rupees.

There are a number of exemptions. The school can reduce the fees when several pupils come from the same family, and some 10 percent of families are exempted from the session charge for hardship reasons. Families officially recorded as being below the poverty line (BPL) on the recommendation of a local councillor are also exempted.

The other main expenditures required are for textbooks, uniforms, and transport. In classes 1 to 5 (primary school), textbooks are free; for classes 6 and 7 (lower secondary), the textbooks are subsidised; above this, they are full price. Uniforms are required, and transport costs cannot be avoided. Families recycle books and clothes, and where it is possible to walk, even several kilometers, then children are expected to do so if a family or neighbour's bicycle is not available. A cycle charge of 8 rupees per month is collected by the school, for which the pupil gets a secure place in the cycle stand.

Parents tend to register the cost of schooling in total expenditures. Most speak of a 200-rupee admission charge and then expenditures ranging from a few rupees up to 700 rupees for books, computer training, and other charges. Those who attend the computer classes are required to pay 25 rupees per month.[28]

'We are to pay to the school for the student Rs. 205 yearly and along with this Rs. 88 in one or two instalments to pay for the monthly school fees. . . . One private tutor teaches him [son] for seven days in a week and takes Rs.300 a month. The tutor is a teacher from a primary school.'[29]

The cost of private tuition greatly exceeds the cost of attending Pratibandhi HSS, yet the complaints are more often than not about the cost of the school. 'We felt that the school pressed us to pay the asked amount, they did not think that we could not afford it. At the time of my son's admission here [class 7 in Pratibandhi HS] I had to pay Rs.200 as a donation. In total I paid Rs.350 and for my daughter [class 11] Rs.600 at the time of admission. It goes subject-wise, if she had taken biology, she would have had to pay Rs.100 extra. For computer education it costs Rs 25, for the cycle stand Rs.8. In fact it would be good to pay it all monthly so that we felt less burdened. My monthly expenditure for my daughter [that is, for private tuition] is Rs. 700 and for my son Rs. 500. They could perform better if I spent more.'[30]

Legally, teachers are not permitted to take private students, and they have to sign a document to this effect for the school to receive its government funding. In practice, the majority of male teachers are paid for tutoring students. None of the women teachers interviewed provided tutoring, all saying that they had no time because of having to run their households (cleaning, shopping, and cooking). Over two-thirds of the male teachers acknowledged that they did give private tutoring. The opportunities are

considerable not least because parents believe that having their child's class teacher as a private tutor increases the chances of the child passing through the school up to the Madhyamik. There is also a certain pressure on the teacher to get the child through the Madhyamik if he is to retain a good flow of well-paying students in the future.[31]

The decision as to whether to provide a child with private tutoring appears to be based solely on the family's ability to cover the financial cost. In the case of first-generation-pupil families, lack of education on the part of parents appeared in no way to affect their desire to secure extra support for their children, the main consideration being one of cost and therefore whether it would be by a higher secondary student, a college graduate, a teacher, or even a teacher from the child's school and class.[32] There was no significant difference in the provision of private tutoring between girls and boys; where girls are continuing their studies, they are as likely to receive the same level of private tutoring as their brothers.[33] The real gender difference is in the household's and the child's respective aspirations. Here lies the cultural map that influences the family's and the child's capacity to aspire and the horizons of aspiration.

Girls Who Aspire

Girls enter Pratibandhi HSS in class 8. The first class that we studied was class 12. Some 120 children are registered as pupils, but the classroom has only room for 80 on its benches. This is not seen to be a problem by the teacher because there are rarely more than 80 pupils present. The girls sit together in a group; there were 22 on the first day we visited the class.

In Bardhaman District, 55 percent of the enrolled pupils in classes 9 and 10, the two classes preceding the first public examination, are boys and 45 percent are girls, exactly the same figures as for the whole of West Bengal. In classes 11 and 12, 62 percent are boys and only 38 percent girls. The equivalent state figures are 52 percent and 48 percent. It seems strange that in one of the most economically developed districts, the gender imbalance is considerably greater than at the state level. A possible explanation is that urban schools attract boys from rural areas, while the girls remain at a local and possibly inferior secondary school. The figures for Kolkata reflect the same greater inequality at HS level. Interviews suggest that it is from a desire to safeguard the daughter rather than straight discrimination in favor of the son.

However, the real gender difference lies in the aspirations held. The family of one of the girls in class 12 at the school is illustrative. She was the eldest of three children – two girls and a boy – but she was the only

one attending Pratibandhi HSS because the other two had gained entrance to 'better schools'.[34] When asked what she would do with her education, her father replied that it would depend on her future husband and mother-in-law. His son on the other hand would follow him into his engineering business making shutters for the fronts of shops or perhaps go into a pharmacy. His wife acquiesced. Both held the education of all their children to be a priority and worthy of investment, including considerable private tutoring for them, but thereafter the aspirations diverged: good employment for the son, being a worthy bride and daughter-in-law for each of the daughters.

The discussion in another female pupil's family illustrates the same theme with the twist that it was the daughter who limited her aspirations. According to the mother, 'It is very difficult to plan the future. Our daughter once decided to leave her studying as it was becoming very difficult to continue. I told her that I would take on extra work, for instance "cow dung cake" selling, but you should continue, don't stop. But she replied that "I will get married any day and get another family, but my brother has to take responsibility for this family" '. Some poorer parents also explained that educating daughters beyond primary level can lead to economic problems because, in addition to the cost and loss of income involved in having a daughter in secondary school, a good education requires a well-educated husband, which can be expensive in dowry terms.

Many of the children do see gender inequity in the access to education. In a survey of 55 pupils in class 12, 60 percent stated that girls did not receive the same opportunities as boys, 29 percent believed they had the same opportunities today (most emphasising the present situation), 2 percent saw girls as having greater opportunities than boys, and 9 percent did not respond to the question. The reasons given for girls having fewer opportunities were housework at home, the expectation of marriage either prior to completing secondary/higher secondary or immediately after completion, and boys being favoured when there are economic problems in the family.

Aspiring Out of Poverty

The poor families pursue schooling as a way to change their status in their local world and as a central factor in their pursuit of a better life. In so doing they are, as Appadurai argues,[35] changing their position within their cultural world, but also shifting the boundaries and landscape of that cultural world. But some cultural worlds are more malleable than others; girls find their aspirations more limited as they are contained and

constrained by cultural norms and practices that not only ensure greater vulnerability during the school years, but also cut off the long-term horizon at the point of marriage. At this point, decisions pass to the husband and his family with whom aspirations have not been negotiated.

For the poor in general, the perceptions of the children and their families found during the fieldwork centred on the economic ability to enter and maintain the child in school for '10 + 2' years. Studies in remoter parts of West Bengal have pointed to the importance of social exclusion practiced by children, their families, and teachers.[36] Undoubtedly, the systemic marginalisation of Adivasis[37] and of scheduled castes in some districts continues to be practiced, not least because it is closely tied to strong, local vested interests linked to agricultural employment relations and control over land (agricultural and forestry). In the Bardhaman municipality, children and families do not appear to bear the same prejudices. As stated previously, problems of economic exclusion and gender appear to take precedence in explanations of dropouts than problems directly related to caste and ethnicity.

Is the capacity to aspire with respect to schooling more than a question of opportunity? In the above interviews, the capacities are framed primarily in terms of a desire to secure access, to attend, and to achieve a successful outcome at class 10 or 12. Although Pratibandhi HSS might be a school for the poor, it should not be seen as a residual school for those with little ambition. Here the use of private tutors by the poorest families is indicative of their commitment. Most speak of the better notes provided by such tutors and the individual focus of the teaching not possible in a class of 60 or more. Five or more years of private tutoring with a good set of notes is seen as a prerequisite for passing the public examinations.[38] So even if a college graduate or high school teacher is not within the family's financial capability, a student who has completed the School Final can be found.

The school as a structure and an organisation is a focus for parents' aspirations: the physical surroundings in which teaching occurs (separate toilets for girls, clean drinking water, and proper – separate and equipped – classrooms), the attitude of the teachers toward their children, the attendance of the teachers, the nonuse of physical punishment, and the modernising of the curricula (computer classes are seen as an important, but too expensive). These are 'inevitably tied up with more general norms, presumptions, and axioms about the good life, and life more generally',[39] and they are not only concerns with the education system. However, they do make the school a site for emerging social norms that indicate shifting cultural boundaries that often challenge traditional and deeply entrenched hierarchical practices. They might be subtle and nuanced, but such aspirations in the site of schooling are indicative of a citizen's sense of rights.

The capacity to aspire is not the prerogative of the poor; the wealthy also aspire. The difference is their capacity to push the horizons of their aspirations and then pursue the means with which to realise them. The privileged use the capacity more frequently and more realistically; they can share it more easily and accumulate a greater store of knowledge with which both to plan and seize opportunities as they arise. 'The poorer members, precisely because of their lack of opportunities to practice the use of this navigational capacity (in turn because their situation permits fewer experiments and less easy archiving of alternative futures), have a more brittle horizon of aspirations.'[40] Brittleness for the poor is linked to their vulnerability to economic and natural crises, while the presence of political and economic opportunity structures increases the poor's cognitive field of vision (knowledge) and their capacity to practice and secure their aspirations. In 2006, the growth in the capacity to aspire can be said to be a characteristic of families living in or close to Ward 10.

Their political space[41] in particular is shaped by a discourse that acknowledges poverty and promotes poverty reduction and by institutional channels that centre on the democratic institution of the ward, its elected representatives, and its committees. Ward council members are approached directly or via the Education and Health Subcommittee to obtain the BPL status and to pursue complaints about teacher nonattendance or school mismanagement. The local politicians are the patrons of the poor because the poor tend not to approach the administrative officials,[42] and this is the case in Ward 10. There is a steady flow of parents into the headmaster's and deputy headmaster's shared office at Pratibandhi HSS. Parent attendance at the biannual class meetings is high, and members of the School Management Committee are regularly approached. This is not a passive parental corps, but one that explores the horizon of aspirations for what is feasible and pursues the opportunities.

What of the providers, the supply side of education, the duty bearers, those accountable to the parents or their representatives? Table 5.3 indicates the poor state of primary school provision in West Bengal with respect to both infrastructure and teachers over the past two decades.

For Amartya Sen, the link between education and democracy is quite apparent. Basic education provides economic opportunities, a means by which to access knowledge on rights, and a basis for empowering women. Basic education also is important because 'illiteracy can also muffle the political voice of the underdog and thus contribute directly to their insecurity. The connection between voice and security can well be very powerful: the observed fact that famines do not occur in democracies is just one illustration of the effectiveness of political voice and participation. The enabling power of basic education in making people more effectively

Table 5.3 Primary school provision

	1986	*1993*	*1986*	*1993*
Number of schools	50,111	51,021	51,521	49,828
Number of teachers	173,805	n/a	n/a	153,072
Net enrolment rate	96	n/a	n/a	92
Percent with no room	4.9	5.0	18.0	2
Percent with one room	26.9	23.5	18.0	23
Percent with two rooms	23.0	32.4	23.1	n/a
Teacher per school	3.2	3.0	3.0	3.15
Students per teacher	36	46	47	57
Percentage of trained teachers	64	63	66	n/a

Source: Government of West Bengal, Annual Economic Reviews & West Bengal Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan Annual Report, 2005.

vocal has a significant protective role and is, thus, central to human security'.[43]

The Pratibandhi study indicates that the capacity of the poor to aspire is present and is actively pursued. The horizons of their aspirations are continually being redrawn through input from friends, neighbours, those who bring insights from other contexts such as the domestic servant in a wealthy household, the worker who seasonally migrates to Kolkata, and the visiting relative. It is also clear that the capacity to aspire is actively encouraged by some teachers and politicians for personal and political reasons. The pursuit of schooling for a child involves lobbying, networking, going to ward meetings, PTA meetings, teashop discussions, borrowing, working longer, household sacrifice, and much more. These steps can all aid the individual child, but they do not improve the provision of schooling as such; Pratibandhi HSS is a success in its improvement, but it remains under-resourced in buildings, teachers, textbooks, and equipment generally.

The representatives at the ward and municipality levels do not perceive the provision of schooling as their problem and certainly not their failure; they prefer to point to the fact that the school is functioning, that it is a significant improvement from when the LFG was first elected, and it has just been upgraded to a higher secondary school. They do not see the way the education sector is organised as an issue to concern them. The district education officer is more aware of the organisational nature of the problem, but he is overburdened with the consequences of trying to secure the efficient and effective implementation of the programs for which he and his office are responsible. The biggest problem he was facing at the time of the fieldwork was the legal consequences of having taken

action against teachers who had consistently failed to meet their contracts, absenteeism from school being the most prevalent. The legal cases taken out by the sanctioned teachers were often backed by party-based teachers' associations, including those belonging to parties in the LFG. For him the involvement of popular representatives in school matters was very much a double-edged sword.

Two trends in representative democracy have been addressed in the chapter: one at the national level, which has seen democratic institutions being established and strengthened, the other at the local level, where poor citizens look to government in the pursuit of their aspirations. In the case of the former, it appears that a tradition of popular participation in politics that in an earlier period took the form of social movements and political activism has adapted to and adopted the democratic organisation of representative government. The turn to representative politics in Panchayati Raj and the stress on party organisation and mass associations have undoubtedly led to cases of party elitism or cronyism.[44] The abovementioned role of the party's teachers' associations is illustrative of this misuse of representative authority. However, there is also strong evidence that the politics of popular representation promotes equity and accountability in West Bengal,[45] and the engagement of the parents and children in Pratibandhi HSS demonstrates their belief in the merits of the present school provision. The real issue is whether their representatives can contribute to better schooling through influencing if not the policy on provision, at least its implementation. The chaos faced by local administrative staff, teachers, and parents at the local level offers considerable opportunities.

The Pratibandhi example is only one school. It points to the success of local representatives in helping individual citizens access the school and negotiate their children's ways through the schooling system. However, they have little impact on the broader issues governing the provision of schooling. It has been suggested that it is a combination of the LFG, school administrations, and, to some extent, supporting donor interests that drives the policy agenda. The argument for popular representation is that it carries the strongest potential for ensuring that government organisations are accountable and equitable in the long term. However, the history of school provision in West Bengal is one of many initiatives implemented by these competing interests within the political and administrative organisational structures, resulting more often than not in unintended outcomes. In Pratibandhi HSS, we have an example of a school that provides an environment for some to pursue their aspirations; this in turn renews and strengthens their capacity to aspire. In this way, the schooling builds popular representation as a system of local governance.

At the same time, the school demonstrates the need for popular representatives to take on greater responsibility for the service provided, to address the limitations arising from a technical approach to education, and thereby to empower those they represent. The representatives' future might depend on it. In this light, the capacity to aspire, the existence of organisations based on popular representation, and the electoral aspirations of the LFG's local representatives combine to give grounds for a degree of optimism.

Notes

The chapter is indebted to Asis Das and Bikas Chatterjee for the research and to a conversation with Craig Jeffrey who pointed to the work of Appadurai on the "capacity to aspire."

1. See Bardhan 2009 and Bhattacharyya 2009.
2. The Left Front is a coalition government led by CPI(M) and three major allies: the Communist Party of India (CPI), the Forward Bloc (FB), and the Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP). Minor allies are the West Bengal Socialist Party and the Revolutionary Communist Party of India plus some Independents. CPI(M) dominates the coalition and thereby elections, politics, and civil society in a way not achieved by any political party elsewhere in India.
3. Bardhan 2009 and www.wbgov.com.
4. See MA Rasul 1974.
5. The zamindari system of land tenure dominated the eastern areas of Colonial India: a zamindar could have a hierarchy of rent-collecting levels beneath him (rarely her). The Bardhaman zamindari controlled the best part of three districts with as many as 14 tiers of rent receivers.
6. The form of mobilisation varied greatly from *gheraos* (blockades) of a civil servant's office to land cooperatives that lasted several years (see Webster 1992, 1993).
7. Many of the leaders spent periods in prison or in hiding to avoid imprisonment in the fifties, sixties, and early seventies. The jails, pre- and post-Independence, served as training schools for the left. For example, more than 25,000 cadres of CPI(M) and CPML were imprisoned in the early 1970s (Franda 1978).
8. Atul Kohli 1987. On the emergence of the left leadership in West Bengal, see Rasul (1974), Konar (1977), Cooper (1984), Kohli (1997), Webster (1992).
9. Kisan Sabha (Peasants Assembly), mainly CPI(M); Krisak Samiti (local/village branch of the Kisan Sabha). Konar was later general secretary of the West Bengal Provincial Kisan Sabha.
10. Much land was concealed at the time of the 1955 and 1956 land reforms. Concealed by being registered under false names, to deceased persons, and in other ways, it is known as *benami* land.

11. The members of the krisak samiti and CPI(M) in Naxalbari Thana of West Bengal began the spiral of land seizures, forcible harvestings, and attacks on moneylenders, landlords, and black marketers that became the naxalite movement in India.
12. See Webster 1992 for an analysis of this change.
13. Kohli 1997.
14. See Bhattacharya 2004, in which he argues that initially the Left drew extensively on local schoolteachers' contacts, prestige, authority, and integrity in mediating the relations between state and society, but that their capacity to generate trust was later reduced by actual or perceived partisanship as they became politically more involved.
15. MDG Two: "Ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling."
16. The six EFA goals for 2015 agreed to at Dakar in Senegal in 2000 can be found at http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-
17. See, e.g., Ruud 1999, who argues that connection to the party is more important than the power to vote and that "influential groups or individuals" take precedence over the interests of "the developmental state" in West Bengal, notably in the field of education.
18. One can also include Moktabs (Muslim religious pre-school) in this.
19. Bardhaman has 107 primary schools, 3 upper primary schools, 17 secondary schools, and 20 higher secondary schools. Apart from Pratibandhi HSS, Ward 10 has 2 secondary schools and 5 primary schools.
20. In the 2001 census, it was recorded at 7,799, that is, an increase of nearly 7 percent in four years.
21. 20 kattas to 1 bigha; 2.5 bighas to 1 acre; 1 katta is 81 m^2 and is the minimum for a house plot.
22. For example, Kumar families (potters) come to the locality to produce religious figures for the main festivals; the ward has a covered work site where the idols are mass produced. The cycle of transplanting and harvesting in rice production is another factor in such movements.
23. Interview with a parent.
24. Interview.
25. Interview.
26. Family interviews.
27. Interview.
28. There are 12 aging computers on which the children learn basic skills in word processing and spreadsheets. The machines are also used for games. There is no Internet access; the school possesses a single telephone line to the headmaster's office.
29. Interview.
30. Interview.
31. We found no empirical proof suggesting that correlation and causation went together!
32. As noted elsewhere, other studies have noted a correlation between first-generation pupils and poor school performance.

33. Findings based on the interviews with children in four classes (two with girls attending) and a selection of parents.
34. See the family referred to in note 5.
35. Appadurai 2004.
36. For example, studies undertaken by the Pratichi Trust India.
37. Adivasis are indigenous groups also known as Scheduled Tribes.
38. There are minimum of seven subjects for the Madhyamik examination.
39. Appadurai 2004: 68.
40. Appadurai 2004: 69.
41. See Webster and Engberg-Pedersen 2002, chapter 1.
42. See Harriss, this volume.
43. Amartya Sen, Statement on Basic Education and Human Security, Kolkata Workshop on Education, Equity and Security, January 2–4, 2002.
44. Mallick 1992, Ruud 2003, Bhattacharyya 2009.
45. Veron 2003.

6

The Politics of *Gradualismo*: Popular Participation and Decentralised Governance in Mozambique

Lars Buur

Introduction

The question of how to proceed with democratic decentralisation has been of political concern in Mozambique over the past decade. In accordance with post-war constitutional commitments to democratisation after the country's post-independence flirtation with socialism and a high degree of centralism, the process of decentralisation has taken two forms. First, a system of locally elected governments in the form of municipalities (*municípios*) for the urban and semi-urban areas was approved in 1997 to cover the devolution of direct although limited powers and functions to autonomous elected bodies. The Municipal Law (2/1997) made provision for locally elected municipalities (*autarquias locais*) in 33 urban or peri-urban settings.[1] Second, for the rest of the population (roughly 70 percent) and the local state administration, the process of decentralisation has taken the general form of de-concentration and a transfer of responsibility to lower level bodies within the state sector combined with different forms of participatory mechanisms for representation and consultation. These participatory mechanisms are grounded in community-based organisations claiming representative status on the basis of identity, interest, community, and similar factors.

The different forms of participatory mechanisms for representation and consultation have taken two overall forms. The first form is the official

recognition of around 4,380 community authorities since 2002 to represent local communities in the state.[2] This followed the passing of Decree 15/2000 that, on the basis of local community legitimacy, recognised 'traditional leaders', former *Frente de Libertação de Moçambique* (Frelimo) 'secretaries of suburban-quarters or villages', and 'other leaders legitimised as such by the respective local communities'.[3] The second form, which this chapter concerns itself with, is the *Instituçoes de Participação e Consulta Comunitária* (IPCCs) framework for rural populations' participation and consultation in district planning and poverty reduction strategy programs.[4] The IPCC framework was based on various ministerial regulations tested from 1999 and made law in 2005.

It is a complex picture. On the one hand, there is a top-down Frelimo party-state form of controlled democratisation and governance based on a slow and cautious extension of mainstream local democratic representation; on the other hand, a form of group-based representation with a Mozambican version of participatory budgeting at district level.[5] Taken together, however, as Vaux *et al.* suggest, it indicates a form of instrumentalised party-state capture[6]: 'Despite the appearance of a multi-party state, in practice Mozambique is controlled by an oligarchy within the ruling party which purchases support through patronage, much of which derives from aid'. In short, the majority of the population has been excluded from direct engagement with the much-heralded process of democratic decentralisation, with residents deprived of the right to vote directly for their own local government representatives.[7]

This chapter argues that although there are clear attempts at party-state capture, it is important to acknowledge that the wider field in which state-society relationships are attempted, shaped, and structured is under constant reform and that reforms themselves have a whole range of unintended consequences. The chapter will explore the implementation of the IPCC framework for participation and consultation. It is suggested that the IPCC's framework, when explored over time, can be seen as a site of governance where rural residents learn to engage with the state and governing party, while state and party functionaries accustom themselves to different forms of popular influence on matters of public concern. In other words, what started out as an instrumentalised site of governance, where the party-state tried to reproduce its grip over society, changes as local state functionaries search for their roles and in the process create fissures and divisions within the local state. In contrast to most analyses of new and celebrated forms of civic activism, this chapter suggests that we need to focus on state and party officials' attempts to appropriate participatory mechanisms for representation and consultation, not least as civil society activism is bound by historical relationships to the state and other

authorities: for example, international donors, nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), and market forces.

The chapter will first provide a discussion of the wider ideological domain informing democratic decentralisation in Mozambique. The chapter will then provide a brief contextual overview of new attempts at securing participation in district planning. The following section will specify in more depth the representative and participatory modalities that have been tried before discussing the ways in which Frelimo state and party officials have attempted to appropriate representation and participation. In the conclusion, the chapter discusses possible future directions for the politics of representation and participation in Mozambique more generally.

Gradualismo

In Mozambique, the particular democratic impasse where the Frelimo government officially pursues liberal-democratic decentralisation while doing so in a cautious and restricted manner has a name: *gradualismo* (gradualism). Formally, it is defined as the gradual 'transfer of functions and resources from districts to already existing municipalities, as well as the transformation of district centres and villages into autonomous municipalities'.[8] *Gradualismo* has been the official policy pursued by the Mozambican government from 1997 up to the present and is accepted by bilateral and multilateral donors.[9] However, *gradualismo,* in its formal definition, has not led to any new elected municipal officials or broader allowance of local democracy for ten years. That there was a sudden rush through of ten new municipalities for the 2008 elections and provincial elections were scheduled first for 2007, then early 2008, before finally being shelved for possibly 2009 continues to beg questions.

Gradualismo has both technical and political dimensions. The technical aspects of democratic decentralisation have emphasised implementation, sequencing, and, last but not least, lack of capacity both within the state apparatus and among the electorate as causing problems for extending local elections to new municipalities and the 128 districts. Here, the Mozambican government can be seen as stalling the process of democratic decentralisation with the argument that state capacity and legal frameworks are not in place and that the electorate is 'immature', following a long line of Frelimo ideas concerning rural residents as 'culturally backward' and captured in the 'shackles of tradition'.[10] Technical aspects of democratic decentralisation fit as such well with the evolutionary aspects of *gradualismo*.[11]

The way in which politics has been accounted for has emphasised differences between influential donor groups, state officials, and Frelimo politicians (the last two often overlap) and conflicts between technocrats or modernisers and traditionalists within the Frelimo party-state. Between influential donor groups and the Mozambican government, perceptions have differed on the extent and pace of reforms and how to deal with de facto low levels of state capacity.[12] Between technocrats who possess the technical capacity to engage with reform processes and Frelimo traditionalists who honour the postcolonial one-party state-building exercise, perceptions have differed on how to reform the state without losing control over both the state and society.

I will suggest that political and technical dimensions of *gradualismo* in practice are circumscribed and encompassed by what Schmitt has referred to as 'the political'. Underpinning the above-mentioned contestations is the 'friend–enemy' distinction of 'the political' as the 'high point of politics'.[13] This form of politics is played out at a different level of reality than that of everyday, local political and technical struggles related to the implementation and sequencing of certain policies. The political is concerned with regime survival. For the Frelimo government and many party-state officials, it is imperative that the Frelimo-state does not lose its de facto, but highly insecure, hegemonic status. Despite adherence to multiparty democracy, the quest for sameness and identity among the multiplicity of social forces has not vanished in Mozambique, where the political ethos of monism still structures all political contestations between Frelimo and its 'Other', the *Resistência Nacional Moçambicana* (Renamo).[14]

Underpinning the official ideology of *gradualismo* are powerful uncertainties. Frelimo lost heavily to Renamo in a majority of provinces and the rural hinterlands in the first national elections in 1994 and since then has struggled in national elections. In the 2003 municipal elections, Frelimo lost five municipalities despite the fact that Renamo internally has been at war with itself and organisationally is depleted.[15] These factors have weakened the Frelimo government's will to extend local franchise, encouraging the pursuit of *gradualismo* in surprising ways. This chapter suggests that Frelimo fear of the electorate in practice circumscribes and limits legislative attempts to secure popular participation and consultation. As it was often stated in interviews: 'The people have no maturity, they don't understand this democracy, they need to learn it first if it is not to lead to problems, irresponsibility and conflict',[16] Here, political maturity means not merely that the technical capacity and the legal frameworks are in place for the extension of democratic decentralisation, but that the people will vote for the people's party, Frelimo.

The IPCC system can be seen as reaching out to rural constituencies where hitherto the Frelimo state has had a limited outreach and has lacked legitimacy.[17] As Weimer has pointed out, the various types of participation and consultation presently tested reflect deep political concerns about the ramifications of extending democratic decentralisation to the rural areas.[18] Due to the underlying logic of *gradualismo*, which I suggest at its core has the political ethos of monism, any assessment of possible avenues for popular representation and participation in Mozambique must not only take into account the will and capacity of community-based actors to deal with democratic decentralisation, it also must examine state and party officials' attempts to appropriate representation and participation.

New Openings for Consultation and Participation

After Mozambique attained independence in 1975 following the Portuguese 'carnation-revolution' of April 25, 1974, political power was handed over to Frelimo without elections. Since then, the new power holders, Frelimo, have been in government, first as a liberation front; then, after 1977, as a one-party government structured along Marxist-Leninist lines; and, after the peace agreement in 1992 between Frelimo and Renamo ending 16 years of civil war, within a multiparty system. During the first decade and a half of Frelimo rule, organisational and associational life was only permitted to organise in mass democratic organisations (MDOs) by and through the Frelimo Party. Besides mainstream MDOs like *Organização da Mulher Moçambicana* (OMM, women), *Organização Nacional dos Professores* (ONP, teachers), and *Organização da Juventude Moçambicana* (OJM, youth), trusted people were elected to function as *secretaries* and *chefes* for neighbourhoods, following the principle of democratic centralism that was 'inscribed by law into the structures of non-party organisations'.[19] The particular grip of Frelimo on society was partly diminished after the tragic death of Samora Machel in 1986 at a time when the Mozambican economy was close to collapsing and Renamo threatened to overthrow Frelimo by force. Not long after Samora's death, Mozambique accepted World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF)-guided reforms[20] ending with the 1990 constitution that allowed for multiparty contestation, formally enlarging citizens' ability to organise relatively freely and hold decision makers accountable through the election of the president of the republic and a parliament by universal, direct, secret, and regular general suffrage.

In 1994, the (then) Ministry of Planning and Finance launched a block investment grant to be allocated to provincial governments to distribute

among the various line agencies and district administrators' departments. This initial step was followed by experimentation in provincial annual planning and budgeting, and some provinces experimented with transferring resources directly to districts. From the proliferation of disbursement arrangements that emerged – many arranged by international NGOs and bilateral donors to reach out to rural constituencies and avoid party-state capture – guidelines were considered necessary both to mainstream the funding arrangements and to create synergy between national, sectoral, and other types of transfers and planning. The Ministry of Planning and Finance, which took the lead in exploring the future and potential role of districts in the planning and budgeting system, released a set of national *orientações* (directly translated orientations) for District Development Plans in 1998 (MAE and MPF 1998). The *orientações* created the possibility of setting up district consultative forums or councils, now known as District Consultative Councils (CCDs). The CCDs lacked any legal powers but were considered participatory institutions that would provide the initial consultative interface with community-based civil society actors with respect to district planning and budgeting. The main power in the arrangement would be held by the district administrator, who would be in charge of selecting CCD members, giving the Frelimo party-state firm control over appointments to the councils.

If this series of developments offered the first opportunity for participation and consultation in local governance, then the second opportunity for expansion was based on experiences from the province of Nampula. In 1998, the national government decided to test district planning and consultation in Nampula Province prior to the possible introduction of the district as a budget unit for the whole of Mozambique. Strongly supported by the lead donor, the Dutch, and later by the Swiss donor mission in collaboration with the Irish INGO Concern,[21] the Nampula Local Development Project was built on a pre-existing project through the United Nations Capital Development Fund. After the first project cycle was extended in 2001, and based on the documentation to that point, a series of manuals was produced.

Similarly, an official *guião* (guideline) for community participation and consultation in district planning was approved in 2003. This guideline detailed and explained the role, organisation, and functioning of consultative institutions not only at district level, but also beyond at administrative posts and localities, specifying how they should link up with different types of development committees. The aim was to secure the election or selection of representatives from local communities, thereby avoiding the instrumental use of the participatory mechanisms with members appointed by administrators and similar officials. For the most part, the *guião* were later

included in the 2005 *Regulamento* appended to the Law for Local State Organs (LOLE 2003). To many observers' surprise, the law from 2003 did not make any reference to consultative bodies, thereby avoiding establishment of mandatory downward accountability mechanisms in local government. In the initial versions of LOLE, of which there were more than 18 drafts, there was a provision for 'elected' consultative forums (IPCCs), but this was subsequently removed and then (re)introduced two years later when the *Regulamento* was approved.[22]

The IPCCs are comprised of state officials and representatives who have been appointed by the district administrator or by other state authorities at the different administrative levels and community representatives who have been selected by their respective constituencies.[23] On the one hand, IPCCs are merely consultative forums to enable the inclusion of rural voices and needs in the quest for de-concentrated organs of the state administration. On the other hand, district councils – the highest level of participation and consultation – are formally responsible for approving district plans and decisions taken with regard to district funds.[24] Thus, IPCCs are not autonomous organs like municipalities, but have functions similar to municipalities, with little say in the actual administration of district affairs.

The attentive reader would have noticed the difference between the English language notion of *council* and the Portuguese notion of *conselho* or *counsel*. Among donors, national and international NGOs, *conselho* is usually translated as council, pointing to similarities with district councils in other parts of Africa. For Frelimo Party and state officials, the problem of translation is not there, but *conselho* nonetheless points to a tension because *conselho* implies advice, guidance, and assistance in decision making while the concept of *council* implies a meeting, an assembly, and a board that makes decisions. The legislation refers to both uses, and with the CCDs tasked with providing the final approval (*aprovar*) of the district plans and use of the district funds, the concept leans heavily toward *council*.

Despite these uncertainties with regard to the actual status of participatory mechanisms for representation and consultation, the legislation is seen as a significant instrument with which local state organs can put community participation and consultation into practice and for exposing a wide range of rural constituencies to new ideas about district planning and capacity building.[25] The development of the IPCC framework for the rural areas can in this sense be seen as an attempt to institutionalise the good local governance agenda[26] and thereby as bridging 'the "legitimisation gap"…between government and the citizen (tax-payer, voter, client).'[27] By virtue of its efforts to elevate and set in motion a lively, forceful, and

hopefully more inclusive local polity that can promote state–society synergies at the lowest levels of decision-making, the IPCC framework can be said to counterbalance the tendency to use the process of decentralisation solely to extend the state's central administrative control.

The extensive use of the *guião* (2003) by NGOs and donors has been important in creating openings for participation in district planning beyond Nampula. The model for participation and consultation developed in the controlled environment of Nampula, under close supervision by government and multilateral donors, has proved less linear and direct than it initially appeared to be. Outside Nampula, the IPCC framework was appropriated in such a manner that efforts to extend democratic modes of governance have consistently been captured at the local level by state functionaries based on what they assumed were the intentions behind the IPCCs. The next section will look more closely at how the ideal model for participation and consultation was appropriated in two districts, Mavago and Muembe, in Niassa Province, drawing on examples from the development of their five-year strategic district plans (PEDD) in 2002 and 2006.

Appropriating Ideal Models

The approach to producing a five-year strategic district development plan in the districts of Muembe and Mavago in 2002 was based on the first and somewhat brief *orientações* passed in 1998.[28] The occasion was also used to establish the first consultative council in Niassa. In charge was the Provincial Technical Team (*Equipa Técnica*) that consisted of four members from different provincial departments accompanied by high-profile Frelimo members from the provincial and national governments who were selected as responsible duty bearers and political *padrinhos* for the districts.[29] The provincial team had overall responsibility for the development of the district plan and for coordination with the District Technical Team, headed by the district administrator, that they should train. The design of a district plan, scheduled for half a year, had three formal phases.

Phase 1 began with setting up the district technical team and CCD followed by 'sensitising' to prepare members to carry out the Rural Participatory Diagnostic process. This was followed by visits to local communities at the three administrative levels where local problems were identified and needs were selected and prioritised.[30] In total, the campaign took five days, after which the provincial team returned to Lichinga to process the data and produce a first draft of the PeDD. Two months later, the team

returned to the district to present the draft to the CCD. The final document was then taken back to the province.

Phase 2 involved submitting the document for review by the provincial sector directorates to ensure that they took the PeDD priorities into account. The provincial team made necessary alterations based on input from provincial directorates.

Phase 3 involved the provincial team finalising and harmonising the PeDD, which was presented to the district technical team before being submitted for approval by the provincial government. The PeDD was returned to the district where the CCD approved the plan roughly two months after the last visit.

Despite much talk about district ownership, the provincial technical team was in fact the driving force behind the five-year strategic district development plan process because technical expertise was situated at the provincial and national level. However, the districts did participate and had to formally approve the result. The working model presented above has been referred to in an internal evaluation as the most recognised methodology for district planning.[31] The initial district seminar on designing the PeDD s was also the occasion for formally constituting the consultative organ of the CCD. The question is, who became part of this organ?

Consultation and Identification of pessoas de confiança ano 2001

During the first day of the campaign, time was devoted to speeches in Mavago by the national delegation on political matters: the latest policy developments within Frelimo and the government's priorities regarding the *Combata Absoluta de Pobreza* (poverty reduction) (issues such as education, health, water, and so on). The visiting delegation was led by the then deputy minister for women (in 2005, minister for the environment), referred to as their Frelimo *padrinho*. After political speeches, the first half of day two was set aside for planning purposes and the seminar where the guests briefed the Mavago administration, the technical team, and the different heads of administrative post and locality on how the PeDD should be produced and how community consultation should be carried out. The briefings were based on oral presentations with no manuals distributed. During the second half of the day, civil society members were included, and the CCD-Mavago was formally constituted. Members from the national delegation and the provincial technical team gave various speeches on how the CCD should work 'hand in hand with government on poverty reduction'.

Members were briefed on the formal operations of the CCD: how many meetings per year, what procedures to follow, and how they should represent people. It was stressed how to put the new government approach of community consultation into practice when they visited local communities over the following days: 'Our role as members of the government and as members of the CCD is to support the government,' and to use 'our knowledge about what people needed so the plan would be good, reflecting their needs'.[32] In M'siwise, a traditional Frelimo stronghold close to the border with Tanzania, people recalled how, during the much publicised visits, the deputy minister had asked questions about schools, running water, and other issues.[33] The difference from earlier ways of handling what was called 'giving development' was described this way: previously, delegations would visit 'when they had the money for water or a school and they would build it; now they ask if we want it . . . and nothing happens'.[34]

How were the civil society members of the CCD Mavago (s)elected?[35] Officially, the 15 members were 'elected by their different populations and the communities they represent'.[36] According to the administrator, 6 out of the 15 members can be defined as 'representing civil society or community-based organisations in one way or another'. But the election was less inclusive than this description implies. According to a *Chefe do Barrio*, he was elected at a meeting called by the 'government' where '*pessoas de confiança*'[37] voted.[38] From the minutes, it is clear that, in 2002, the election for the CCD took place by secret vote among 80 Frelimo delegates primarily from the district centre, with some administrative posts and localities among *pessoas de confiança*.[39] The group of *pessoas de confiança* consisted of Frelimo secretaries, members from the association for *Antigos Combatentes* from the liberation war, state officials at the level of administrative post and locality, and members of the Frelimo-initiated MDOs.[40] The election of this exclusive group dated from the district administrator's exchange visit with Nampula in 2000 or 2001 organised by the Irish development cooperation, where he was, for the first time, exposed to the idea of district councils. Originally, the name of the election was referred to in the minutes as 'a Frelimo election', but it was changed to 'an election by the population' because of new ideas about *democracia.* According to the minute taker, the Irish, the main provincial and district donor, would have considered it 'an act of a *mafiosa*' if they had known how it took place.

The intense focus on *pessoas de confiança* is not confined to Mavago. In Muembe, members of the CCD were, in contrast to Mavago, drawn from all over the district territory and included several traditional and religious leaders. The main difference was that in Muembe, Irish development projects allowed for the inclusion of a five-person civil-society contingent consisting of presidents or representatives from committees in charge

of three locally run mills (*comités de gestão da moageiras*). This was seen as allowing the district administration to secure 'bottom-up civil society representation'.[41] Despite this attempt to secure local representation in the CCD, it followed the same path as the one described for Mavago, because candidates came from members of a predefined group. All those (s)elected to be part of the CCD in Muembe belonged to Frelimo bodies either explicitly as with members of OMM, or implicitly, if they belonged to the mill committees where membership of Frelimo was a defining criterion. Non-Frelimo members would be excluded from the committees; even a community member paying to use the mill would be 'chased away if [s/he was] found to be a card-carrying Renamo member, you can't have Renamo members in the *Boma*', (Interview President for Mill Association June 2005). Furthermore, the election of the president of the committees took place at the local Frelimo branch. However, in light of the non-political intentions behind the mill committee and CCD frameworks, they were afterwards recorded solely as 'presidents for the committees' on the register for CCD, with no reference to their position as Frelimo secretaries.

Civil society members who became part of the two CCDs saw their role as 'approving what had been decided by *Boma*'. The five-year strategic district plan had mainly been discussed by 'members of government, but when we had approved it, it was our task to tell our communities what had been decided by government'. In this way, (s)elected community representatives defined their specific role in the CCD as 'providing *orientações*' to the sections of the population they represented and providing 'information for *governo*' when needed.[42] Thus, they see themselves primarily as *mensageiros* (messengers) briefing the populations they represent on new developments. If indeed a project is started in their area of jurisdiction, 'we have oversight, and we control that everything is done correctly. We also select the beneficiaries'.[43] This allows for little or no proactive engagement and members seem to have little say or initiative even when projects are approved for the communities they represent.

Changing the Script?

Attempts to resolve this contradictory state of affairs date from 2005 when Irish- and Swedish-sponsored projects merged with those of Ibis, a Danish international NGO, in the two districts. The merger formed part of the broader aid harmonisation and alignment of district projects to national policies as stipulated by the Paris Declaration.[44] A comprehensive plan was initiated to establish local forums (FLs) below the level of district councils, restructure the IPCC system, and train the district

technical teams (D-ETs) so they were less dependent on the province technical team. The project's double-edged strategy of training both state functionaries and local community representatives by an external agency has provided valuable experiences with regard to the possibility of changing practices and ideas about participatory mechanisms for representation and consultation.

The project concentrated on setting up FLs situated, in terms of hierarchy, below the three-tier CCD, administrative post council (CCPA), and council for locality (CCL) to stipulate and enhance active participation by civil society-based organisations and community-based organisations in district planning. Crucial elements in this strategy were the (s)election of members for the three-tier council system and the monitoring of district plans and activities. FLs initially contained members from between one and three different communities or populations, among them representatives of a variety of community-based organisations including school councils. School councils were ideal in the sense that membership is drawn from a cross section of the population and a variety of different organisations. Such members therefore confront the typical range of problems that most rural populations and communities contend with. Members of local community-based organisations and school councils were not linked up to the district council system, because all representatives were top-down appointments by the district administrations based on political affiliation.

In total, well over 30 FLs were established in the two districts, with a variety of success, and given some initial training in their function and role within the planning processes. Training took place in close cooperation with the District Technical Teams, whose members accompanied the whole process and thereby accustomed themselves with what the decrees, regulations, guidelines, and laws actually said about representation, consultation, and participation; information that they had not been given before. As part of the process, FLs began (s)electing members for first the CCLs, from this level for CCPAs, and finally for the two CCDs. Based on former experiences of (s)election from the postcolonial system of Frelimo *secretarios*, MDOs, and Frelimo party representation, District Technical Team members and local leaders insisted that the positions of president, vice-president, and secretary be filled first. This ensured that different Frelimo–state officials drawn from the ranks of *chefes do barrio*, *secretarios,* and party cadres were (s)elected.

After this first test case, and based on further reading within the District Technical Team, it was recognised that, as stipulated by the *guião* (2003) for IPCCs and the 2005 *Regulamento* (2005) for the local state law, the different populations and villages should first elect a consolidated group of FL members and from this group the different formal positions could be

chosen. It was not stipulated that government allies should occupy positions of leadership. Importantly, Technical Team members acknowledged that state functionaries and associated local community leaders could hijack the process and use it to entrench their positions as local leaders in situations where local communities or populations with a more open process could have made other leadership choices. They also recognised that able members of the electorate could decide against standing for election, because the pre-selected leadership was not considered legitimate when the positions of president, vice-president, and secretary were chosen first and it would be 'business as usual'.

Although members of the local state administration outside the Technical Team were against the changes to the election process, partly because they were confronted with modes of operating they had little knowledge about, and partly based on what they expected the 'government wanted', the Technical Team decided to change the format. This relatively small change meant sudden and significant changes to the election of FL members in general and to the potential candidate for presidents of a forum in particular. Instead of just reproducing already-established power hierarchies, the populations elected many young people with reading and writing skills. Furthermore, they specifically chose people with 'energy' that would 'not be afraid of challenging the *Boma*' as they explained, recognising that, in order to take full advantage of the new openings for consultation and participation, they must 'study' the legislation 'so we know the laws'. Alongside the younger people, populations and communities elected older people of good standing; some from within the Frelimo hierarchies and others from traditional hierarchies (primarily Muslim and kin-based, in these two districts).

Interestingly enough, voting itself took different forms. In some instances, people voted by ballot or by placing themselves physically behind the preferred candidate. Most commonly, the electorate would vote by *dar palmas* (a sequence of clapping) where the strength (volume) and length (time) of applause indicated approval/disapproval of the candidate. These differences in approach and voting measures are important because they point to local ways of understanding representation and how to elect representatives. It showed that, when allowed to, rural residents were quite capable of choosing between candidates, where the issue was (s)election on the basis of the candidate's capacity to perform the tasks of representing her or his constituency. In many instances, those who took it for granted that they would be elected because of the position they occupied in local Frelimo hierarchies were not elected.

In some cases, people known to be from one of the opposition parties were (s)elected as representatives of smaller quarters or villages based on

their previous work for the village, demonstrating that political affiliation was not, when allowed, the sole defining criteria for representation. These choices was generally accepted by the District Technical Teams after much internal debate, with members finally acknowledging that the various legal frameworks had been approved by the Frelimo government so they 'as government representatives' were merely following the government's policies. Those in the administration who resisted the changes were, as it was explained, 'in need of training so they could understand the government's laws'.[45] These developments nonetheless meet severe resistance among state officials outside the Technical Teams where the perception was that members of the IPCC worked with and for the Frelimo government, and that others should not be represented in the system because they 'were against the government'.

District Council Meetings ano 2007

One important change happened among CCD members elected through the IPCC system. They began, slowly and with the various legal frameworks in their hands, to speak out openly in meetings. Instead of just accepting the administration's yearly plans and approving them, they pointed out where money was spent on issues not stipulated by the *orientações* to guide the use of the US$300,000 *Orçamento de Investimento para Iniciativas Locais* (OIIL) (grant for community investment) that became available in 2006. To the embarrassment of the District Technical Team in Muembe, the administrator and the rest of the local government decided that most of the funds should be used to renovate the palace of the administrator and constructing a house for the newly appointed permanent secretary and various other local administrative buildings.[46] Although this did not form part of the OIIL and district plan for the year developed by the district team after extensive community consultation, the local government simply changed the plans. At public meetings hosted for the province administration, forum members of the various CCLs, CCPAs, and CCDs brought the 'misappropriation' to the public's attention. As a result, the administration had to change the expenditure plans halfway through the year to include community projects that had been proposed during the consultation phase. In the same manner, a five-hour debate followed when, at the end of the year, the CCD had to approve the balance of the plans. Here, each and every Mozambican metical spent on projects was debated at length, and the administration was severely castigated if money had been used for projects that were not stipulated by the law. The administrator and the permanent secretary had to apologise and to

promise the CCD that this would not happen again. According to local community leaders, this was the first time the local administration had offered a public apology to the population.

At the same meeting, the administrator went on to present the district plan for 2007, and many of the projects that had been excluded from the 2006 plan re-emerged, such as the renovation of the administrator's palace. This triggered another four-hour discussion, during which each and every item on the budget was scrutinised, and all non-stipulated issues were finally removed. At the outset, forum members appointed to the CCD by the administrator defended some of the administrator's spending suggestions, such as the need to renovate his palace. However, their attitudes gradually changed, and they ended up backing those IPCC representatives (s)elected by the independent system of FLs. The administrator first backed down on his demands when the first secretary of Frelimo (one of his own appointees) acknowledged that 'the will of the people' clearly differed from the administrator's perspective.[47] The scheduled upcoming provincial elections presumably played a part in the first secretary's sudden awareness of the electorate's opinions. A week later, Frelimo invited the full CCD for a special seminar on the forthcoming elections. It emerged that this event formed part of a wider Niassa strategy, which saw brigades consisting of Frelimo's senior provincial leaders joining district first secretaries and state officials to address CCDs all over the province. It was put to me that 'this is internal family business, the party needs to speak to its children. It is about the elections, we need to explain it to them. It's the first election, you must remember.'[48]

Conclusion

This chapter suggests that the emergence of the participatory mechanisms for representation and consultation needs to be seen in light of the limited scope of democratic decentralisation and attempted party-state capture of close to all societal domains in Mozambique. The importance of this point cannot be overestimated. If, in the future, democratic decentralisation is extended to the rural areas – according to the ideology of *gradualismo,* it would be logical – then one must expect this to occur when rural areas reach a certain level of democratic development. To this end, the types and forms of engagement currently under design and implementation will have considerable bearing on how democratic decentralisation will be received by the populations targeted and by the state apparatus supposedly responsible. The reception of the consultative and participatory framework by their target populations has for the

second phase been encouraging and reveals an emerging democratic ethos and a strong capacity to assess who should or could represent them. The ideology of *gradualismo* that underpins the Mozambican government's attitude toward democratic decentralisation is based on the assumption that because most of the population is rural and uneducated, democratic decentralisation will not function. However, this chapter suggests that the problem lies more with the Frelimo-controlled state apparatus than with the potential electorate.

As the discussion above illustrates, it proved more than difficult to establish in Niassa the participatory mechanism for representation and consultation that was developed in the controlled environment of Nampula. Using Frelimo party and state officials as model transfer agents reproduced post-independence modes of statecraft based on a patriarchal provider. The consultative councils were initially filled up by trusted Frelimo members who rubber-stamped local government decisions without any discussion or any consideration of rural residents' needs. This situation began to change from 2006 when both district technical teams and community-based actors received training in the new approach to participatory and consultative district planning. The result was a change both in how the consultative councils functioned and in how members of the technical teams understood participation and consultation in matters of public concern. The changes depicted revealed that state officials' understanding varied considerably, depending on whether or not they had been directly involved in the process. Those who had not been directly trained in the consultative and participatory approach tended to reproduce past forms of engagement with representatives of the consultative councils. Furthermore, as long as the Frelimo government and state operated from the premise of the political ethos of monism, the Frelimo party-state will continue to struggle to come to terms with the polycentric aspects of liberal democracy.

Does the experience presented here suggest there is a way forward? Instead of rejecting the mix of participatory mechanisms for representation and consultation slowly being put in place countrywide, the chapter suggests that it is important to explore these developments in greater depth to better understand how *gradualismo* in both its technical and its political aspects informs the present reform process. Rural populations in Mozambique are commonly conceived of as passive and docile. But as Mbembe has suggested, the concept of resistance is often in an African context inappropriate because there is not necessarily an open disjunction but instead what Mbembe calls a 'conviviality' that is characterised by 'the dynamics of domesticity and familiarity, inscribing the dominant and the dominated within the same episteme'.[49] In such an environment, rural

residents' responses are intimately related to party-state officials' different responses and not least how long-standing ideas concerning internal enemies, representation, and (s)election are promulgated. Within such a political system, the models presently in play in Mozambique give a fairly good impression of how the government and various state entities regard active public participation in matters of public concern. Perhaps more importantly, we can also deduce how liberal-democratic participation in questions of governance is envisaged in Mozambique and how easily it can be captured.

After a period of testing participatory mechanisms for representation and consultation and the confrontation that can be made by local technical teams and community-based actors (for example, the multiple committees and forums), the latest reform legislation now seeks to separate the two processes. Based on the alignment and national empowerment requirements of the Paris Declaration, present legislation stipulates that training of state officials should be executed solely by province technical teams drawing when necessary on technical input from consultants. In contrast, the new decentralisation policy provides for civil-society building to be done by national and international NGOs, closely monitored by the different levels of the state. Although this may seem both reasonable and consistent with present thinking on harmonisation and national ownership, it has the potential to reproduce existing authoritarianism and the political ethos of monism. Such an approach may deliver short-term benefits such as the delivery of certain service up to the time of elections, but their long-tern effects will most probably prove detrimental to the broader process of democratic decentralisation.

The experience from the two districts in Niassa suggests that the answer to party-elite capture is not less separation of district officials and rural populations and their leaders, but rather a close engagement mediated by third parties, where the various law frameworks are negotiated between state and rural populations. Before embracing participatory mechanisms for representation and consultation, one should nonetheless remember that the importance of these modalities emerges in Mozambique in lieu of a process that has been, if not directly aborted, then at least temporarily postponed: that of extending elected representation to the rural areas in matters of local governance.

Notes

1. The first municipal elections took place in 1998 but were boycotted by the opposition. By late 2008, ten new municipalities were added so the November 2008 elections took place in 43 municipalities.

2. MAE, DNAL internal communication 16 August 2005, see also Kyed and Buur 2006.
3. *Republica de Moçambique* 2000: Art. 1, Buur and Kyed 2006. Rule or legislation by decree points to a political tradition that operates from the premise of an ongoing "state of exception," as Agamben (2005) has suggested, allowing for exceptional means to be deployed when found necessary to protect the political system.
4. Kulipossa and Manor 2007.
5. *Party-state* refers to the close relationship that developed between the state and the Frelimo party after independence where one had to be a Frelimo member to take up a position within the state. In many and complex ways, the intimate relationship has been carried over into the democratic dispensation after the constitutional changes in 1990 where party and state formally was separated.
6. Vaux, Mavela, Pereira, and Stuttle 2006: 3.
7. Recently approved legislation does allow for provincial elections, first scheduled for December 20, 2007, and later rescheduled for January 2008, before being postponed for 2009. Interestingly, donors are highly critical of the proposed provincial elections because of the lack of time and resources for preparation. They fear that lack of transparency with regard to the political process masks a Frelimo attempt to manipulate the process and results. Like all elections in Mozambique, these elections were scheduled for the rainy season, so low voter registration and turnouts may appear natural.
8. Weimer 2004: 16.
9. Donors have constantly attempt to push *gradualismo* further in content and outreach to allow for an expansion of democratic decentralisation.
10. See Hall and Young 1997, Dinerman 2006, Buur 2009 forthcoming.
11. Interestingly enough, one cannot really identify any criteria for adding the ten new municipalities other than they all refer to areas where Frelimo more recently has had good national election results.
12. Kulipossa and Manor 2007.
13. Schmitt 1996: 67, see also Chantal Mouffe's recent discussion of Schmitt and the concept of the political: Mouffe 2005.
14. There is ample evidence that Renamo was set up and supported by the Rhodesian government and after 1980 had the backing of the South African government (Vines 1991). But Renamo also captured a whole range of local grievances after 1977 related to the Frelimo government (see Schafer 2001). As recounted by Alexander (1997: 8), most of the depictions of "immaturity" suggested above echoes the general language of Frelimo during the war where Renamo was described as brutal, uncivilised, poorly educated, and from the bush and Frelimo as civilised, literate, and urban. Since the war, this language has continued to circulate in the national media debate, especially around elections.
15. Frelimo lost, for example, in the second biggest town of Beira and in several important harbour towns such as Nachala in the central part and north

of Mozambique. In contrast, Frelimo won comprehensively in all Southern urban centres.

16. Interview, state official Niassa, 2006.
17. Buur *et al.* 2007.
18. Weimer 2004.
19. Hall and Young 1997: 70. Many of the MDOs became formally detached from Frelimo with the 1990 constitution, but de facto the relationship between party and MDOs continued. With the ONP, for example, the separation was reversed at the latest teachers' congress where Frelimo again took full control of the teachers' union.
20. Hanlon 1991.
21. See Kulipossa and Manor 2007.
22. The 1988 *orientações* (MAE and MPF 1998) that regulated the initial testing of consultative councils in Nampula did allow for election of some of the members of the councils by local communities. But because it was "orientations," they did not have the weight of a law and were vague with regard to how elections should take place.
23. As part of the IPCC framework, *Conselhos Consultativos* (consultative councils) are set up at district and administrative post levels, as well as at the level of locality (the lowest administrative level).
24. Community participation has been set as one of the conditions for province-level approval of five-year strategic plans, or *Plano Distrital de Desenvolvimento* (PeDD), that all districts must design and of the yearly economic and social plan, or *Plano Económico e Social* (PESOD), around which expenditure is made available by provincial and national governments. Consultation and participation are also crucial for eligibility for the grants for community investment, or *Orçamento de Investimento para Iniciativas Locais* (OIIL). In 2006, each district received US$300,000 for community projects from this source (Buur 2006; Hanlon 2007).
25. See Kulipossa and Manor 2007.
26. Abrahamsen 2000.
27. Weimer 2004: 11.
28. MAE and MPF 1998, Martinho 2003.
29. Interview, P-ET, May 2005.
30. Interview, P-ET, June 2005, see also Martinho 2003.
31. Martinho 2003: 6.
32. Interview, representative from OMM Mavago, June 2005.
33. M'siwise is situated within the liberated zone during the war of independence and next to the first Frelimo base on Mozambican territory: *Base Central*.
34. Interview, M'siwise, June 3, 2005.
35. The Portuguese word used for election is *escolha* or *escolher*, which can mean "elect," "choose," and "select," hence my use of "(s)elect," whose wider meaning will become clearer.
36. Interview, district administrator Mavago, June 2, 2005.

37. Here, *pessoas de confiança* means "those trusted by the government," referring to government, state, and party, considered to be the same thing. There is only one word for the three entities in the local Yao language: *Boma*.
38. Interview, June 6, 2005.
39. Minutes, director de *Antigos Combatentes,* 2002.
40. All civil society members were drawn from Mavago-Sede, the main centre of Mavago, except for one person. The group included *secretarios do bairro*, members of ONP and OMM, as well as members of *Associação dos Antigos Combatentes*. The only member from outside the Mavago-Sede was the *Chefe da Localidade* of Nkalapa (a former Frelimo secretary).
41. Interview, administrator, June 4, 2005.
42. Interview, *Chefe do Barrio* Mavago, June 2, 2005.
43. Ibid.
44. For an assessment of the Paris Declaration, see Winkler and Therkildsen 2007.
45. Interviews, D-ET members.
46. "Palace" is how the residence of the administrator is referred to all over Niassa. It is usually the biggest house, made of bricks, and "modern," that is, it is fitted with running water, electricity, and a toilet.
47. Fieldnotes, Muembe, March 2007.
48. On the use of family metaphors in relationship to Frelimo and traditional leaders, see Kyed and Buur 2006.
49. Mbembe 2001: 110.

7

Representation by Design? Variations on Participatory Reforms in Brazilian Municípios

Gianpaolo Baiocchi and Patrick Heller

Introduction

If the 1980s were widely considered a lost decade for some parts of the developing world, a retrospective look at the 1990s finds much less consensus in the literature. Scholars looking to the Global South find contradictory patterns of economic globalisation, the deregulation and liberalisation of national economies, the decentralisation of national states, and tentative steps toward democratic consolidation. Particularly contested is the understanding of decentralisation that nearly universally occurred in the developing world. For some it is proof of the positive impacts of globalisation, as bloated and corrupt national-level bureaucracies were dismantled in favour of presumably more responsive local units. For others, the weakening of national states meant the erosion of their regulatory capacity to ensure the minimum conditions for democracy. A third position is held by those who focus on the way that globalisation has altered the sociospatial scales of the functioning of states. As the state 'hollows out', it does not just 'wither away', but its functions are displaced into newer or altered lower- or upper-level state institutions, creating new arenas for potential political contestation. In many settings, the local urban state has emerged as an especially important site, because it is more porous than national states and is situated 'in the confluence of

globalisation dynamics and increased local political action based in civil society'.[1]

Local governments have thus assumed increased importance as the perceived new site for democratic deepening and as the new arena in which public authority and socially transformative projects are being reconstituted in the era of globalisation. Some of the most exciting developments in the last two decades are the myriad new instances of participatory democracy implemented by municipal governments in both consolidated and new democracies. These instances of urban participatory democracy, which we define as direct citizen participation in municipal government's decision-making, range from broad-based forms of participatory planning to citizen councils to direct health policy to various other forms of citizen participation and input into the management of local government. Among the most broad-ranging instances are those that directly turn over governmental decision-making to direct forms of the popular mandate, such as the experiments in participatory budgeting in Brazilian *municípios*. These cases have attracted a great deal of academic and policy attention and have provided fodder for creative thinking on some of the fundamental questions about democracy, the state, and civil society.

The Changing Nature of Representation

In particular, the nature of these participatory institutions allows some important insights into the central questions that Törnquist[2] identifies concerning the redress of the democratic deficit that characterises local politics in the Global South. As we describe below, participatory reforms do substantially address democratic deficits by radically expanding the access of the demos to public matters, in our cases, municipal budgets. We draw from this story a number of lessons. First, as Törnquist suggests, this has happened even in the face of supposedly intractable clientelism and entrenched local elite power. Second, the story of the development and institutionalisation of these institutions is a political story. They emerge very much as a result of programmatic and ideological commitment of a leftist party to redistributive politics. In the terms suggested by Törnquist, the establishment of these institutions introduces new forms of representation to local politics and thus alters the political landscape by incorporating citizens and groups long excluded from the political process. However, the third lesson here is that the form of representation that has emerged, which we might call 'instituted participatory democracy' or 'participatory democracy by design', constitutes a distinct form of representation *in itself* that can only be located between the

chains-of-sovereignty approach and direct democracy that characterise the current debate.

Instituted participatory democracy is a pointed and self-conscious break from clientelism and bossism and similar forms of patrimonial intermediation that have long shaped both political and civic forms of representation in Brazil. On the one hand, it seeks to bypass traditional forms of political mediation and create a parallel chain of sovereignty by creating new spaces and channels of citizen engagement with the local state. On the other hand, by carefully specifying the rules and processes of participation and linking civil society inputs to specific forms of governance, it also represents a break from 'spontaneous' civil society mediation or the direct democracy view. Although civil society organisations do find representation in these institutions, by design, participation is *not* organised along civil society lines, but is rather based on individual participation. The reasons for the emergence of this novel form of representation have to do with complex processes of political crafting and trial-and-error of successive municipal administrations. Although we allude to them below, they are not the focus of this essay. What we do discuss below is the nature of this form of representation, its potential to address democratic deficits across contexts, as well as its limits. This form of representation can be fragile, can overwhelm traditional forms of representation, and has uncertain relations with them.

Making Democracy Work

In many respects, Brazil stands out as one of the more extreme cases of a broken chain of popular sovereignty. The political science literature on Brazil until the 1990s points to what has typically been described as a dysfunctional political system dominated by clientelistic and oligarchical parties that rule but cannot govern. The problem of intermediation has been acute, both in terms of the social conditions of Brazilian politics and the basic institutional characteristics of the electoral system. Pervasive inequalities and pronounced social and political exclusions (including highly circumscribed political rights before 1989) have promoted highly personalistic and hierarchical modes of political representation. Against this background, an electoral system marked by malapportionment and an open-list proportional representation system has resulted in poorly institutionalised parties. The sum result has been the dominance of political elites that thrive on discretionary power and routinely flout both the rule and the spirit of democratic process. Much as this is the case at the national level, it is even more prevalent at

the municipal level where politics have traditionally been dominated by powerful families or narrow cliques and where the business of governing has essentially been one of highly organised rent-seeking. The problem is compounded by the extensive powers that Brazilian law extends to executive authority, most notably in budgetary matters. For all intents and purposes, Brazilian mayors have operational discretion in determining budgetary allocations.

The return to democracy in 1989, however, opened up new opportunities for reforming the system of representation all the more so because the transition to democracy was dominated by civil society. The return to democracy marked not only a significant political transition, but also the ascendancy of civil society organisations and a political party – the *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (PT), or Workers' Party – that was itself the direct product of the movements that drove the democratic transition. The new constitution (1989) introduced a wide range of participatory mechanisms, including popular councils in health and education, and new powers and responsibilities for local government. Much as in the case of Kerala,[3] the convergence of three factors created a favourable context for innovations of participatory democracy: political openings from above made possible by constitutional reforms, the coming to power of a programmatic leftist party, and a vibrant civil society sector with a long record of promoting new forms of representation.

First introduced in the city of Porto Alegre in 1990–1991, participatory budgeting (PB) has been widely acclaimed as a novel means of increasing accountability and participation in the formation of municipal budgets. Although there is wide variation in the actual design and implementation of PB, the baseline institutional feature is the creation of submunicipal assemblies of ordinary citizens that discuss and then prioritise budget demands for their areas. These demands are then integrated into the city budget. In principle, PB marks a dramatic break with the patronage-driven politics that has long dominated municipal budgeting in Brazil. The case that has been made for PB follows along the lines of the arguments made in favour of democratic decentralisation more generally: devolving decision-making authority downward and into the hands of local actors increases transparency, taps into local sources of information, improves accountability of elected officials, and encourages innovation. In the case of PB, it has also been argued that, by expanding the actual spaces in which citizens can directly affect authoritative resource allocation, PB incentivises citizen engagement and strengthens civil society.

In its design, participatory budgeting, as implemented in Porto Alegre, specifically seeks to expand the opportunities for engaging the state *as a citizen* by, on the one hand, reducing the transaction costs of participation

for the poor and, on the other hand, increasing the transactions costs for traditional elites. It does so through four mechanisms:

1. Giving citizens a direct role in city governance by creating a range of public forums (microregional councils, district councils, sectoral committees, plenary meetings, and delegate councils) in which citizens and/or delegates can publicly articulate and debate their needs
2. Linking participatory inputs to the actual budgeting process through rule-bound procedures
3. Improving transparency in the budgeting process by increasing the range of actors involved, publicising the process, and reducing the possibility or extent of elite-capture
4. Incentivising agency by providing tangible returns, in the form of urban investment projects chosen by participants, to grass-roots participation

The most successful and carefully researched case of PB in Brazil has been Porto Alegre, which has become a model administration and a point of reference for other PB initiatives. The process begins in March of each year, with district-level assemblies in each of the city's 16 districts in which citizens participate as individuals and as representatives of various civil society organisation (CSOs) (neighbourhood associations, cultural groups, special interest groups). These popular assemblies are followed by meetings in subsequent months by delegates elected from each assembly who deliberate about the district's needs and specific projects. By the end of the year, projects and priorities are passed on to the Municipal Council of the Budget, which is made up of councillors from each district who then reconcile demands with available resources and propose and approve a municipal budget in conjunction with members of the administration. The municipal legislature then approves the budget. Participants in subsequent months and years then monitor the projects proposed.

It is important to emphasise that the form of instituted participatory representation created by PB is unique in two respects. First, the delegates are a form of representation that is parallel to, but independent of, the elected legislative council. Following Pitkin's conceptualisation,[4] authorisation takes a very direct form of a closed and substantive mandate. Delegates in Porto Alegre are elected specifically to represent the bundle of demands that emerge from the neighbourhood assemblies to the Municipal Council of the Budget. Second, the PB process is not legally binding. The municipal legislative is not legally held to approve the budget presented by the Municipal Council of the Budget, although in the case of Porto Alegre,

it always has. Authorisation, in other words, is not secured through a formal representative chain of popular sovereignty but rather through an instituted, that is, rule-bound process that is effective only to the extent it produces a set of demands that enjoy a high degree of public legitimacy. In this respect, PB is the archetype of Habermassian public sphere: its authorisation and capacity to influence the political sphere is grounded not in legal sanction (which it does not have) but rather its procedurally rational and substantively deliberative mode of legitimacy-producing reason.[5]

PB reforms have been copied and transformed in the process of diffusion throughout Brazil.[6] Twelve cities introduced PB from 1989 to 1992, 36 from 1993 to 1996, at least 103 from 1997 to 2000, and 183 from 2001 to 2004 according to surveys done by Brazilian NGOs. A 2001 survey carried out by Polis, a Brazilian NGO engaged in urban reform, offers a snapshot of the practice in Brazil for the time period.[7] The basic structure adopted by *municípios* generally included a yearly cycle with district-level meetings, concurrent meetings of a main budget council, and, somewhat less commonly, municipal thematic meetings. The majority of cases included a system of representation of delegates based on numbers of participants at some meeting or, less commonly, on the number of residents per district, as well as a second tier of councillors who were elected among delegates. Within this overall framework, there is variation in how much decision-making is afforded participants and how this decision-making takes place, ranging from arrangements that empower councillors to directly compose the budget to more consultative arrangements.[8]

The Study

The findings we report here are based on a study that goes beyond the existing, case-based literature on participatory democracy[9] by evaluating the impact of participatory reforms through a series of carefully constructed matched comparisons between PB and non-PB *municípios*. Our matching rule was to pair PB *municípios* with non-PB *municípios* based on similar, but not identical, electoral outcomes in the 1996 election. Local research teams that collected primary data and administered a lengthy semistructured questionnaire to key respondents in each *município* collected the data we analyze.

The pairs consist of a *município* where the PT came to power with a small margin of victory and subsequently implemented the PB, with a *município* in the same region and similar size category where the PT's vote share was only somewhat lower but translated into a small margin of loss for the PT, resulting in the nonadoption of PB. Because the PT is very

Table 7.1 Matched pairs

OP municípios							*Non-OP municípios*						
State	*Municipio*	*Electorate size*	*PT vote share*	*PT margin*	*Winner*	*Runner-up*	*State*	*Municipio*	*Electorate size*	*PT vote share*	*PT margin*	*Winner*	*Runner-up*
Northeast							Northeast						
PE	Camaragibe	72544	0.404	0.07	PT	PSDB	CE	Quixadá	43032	0.440	−0.08	PSDB	PT
North							North						
RO	São Miguel do Guaporé	8119	0.412	0.02	PT	PMDB	RO	Miranta da Serra	8181	0.464	−0.02	PMDB	PT
Southeast							Southeast						
MG	João Monlevade	44365	0.466	0.06	PT	PSDB	MG	Timóteo	43064	0.491	−0.02	PSDB	PT
SP	Mauá	196121	0.487	0.13	PT	PSDB	SP	Diadema	220292	0.442	−0.01	PSB	PT
South							South						
RS	Gravataí	109612	0.408	0.02	PT	PDT	RS	Sapucaia do Sul	76836	0.361	−0.07	PDT	PT

much a party born of civil society and Brazil's social movements of the 1980s,[10] we assume that two *municípios* in which the PT garnered similar vote shares would be similar in terms of the important features of local context, for example, a tradition of political activism and the composition and strength of civil society. Geographical proximity and similar size would, we assumed, make for similar contexts in terms of economic development and socioeconomic divisions. The logic is that a comparison of *municípios* with similar PT vote shares and thus roughly similar political contexts and civil societies but with large differences in institutional reform (adoption or nonadoption of PB) makes it possible to identify the impact of institutional reform cleanly.

The *municípios* that we paired reflected national patterns: those in the south and southeast were more economically developed, wealthier, and had higher human development indicators than those in the north and northeast. The regional distribution of the pairs – one in the south, two in the southeast, and one in the northeast – roughly follows the pattern of adoption of PB in Brazil in 1997–2000.[11] The paired cities and results for the 1996 elections are presented in Table 7.1.[12]

Teams of investigators in the various regions of Brazil conducted the paired research. Drawing on insights from collaborative ethnography as described by May and Patillo-McCoy,[13] we relied on an interactive process in which we aggregated and offered preliminary summary results for each of the cases and circulated this back to the field researchers in a workshop. We created categories for each of the variables based on how responses were clustered; in effect attempting to identify 'natural' breaks in the data. The final results reported here are the result of this iterative process between field researchers and the principals.

The Varying Nature of Participatory Governance

For each of our ten cities, we conducted three separate analyses. First, we examined the nature of civil society before 1996. Second, we evaluated how all forms of institutional reform affected the budgeting process in the 1997–2000 period. Third, we examined the impact of these reforms (or the lack thereof) on civil society. The findings on civil society have been reported elsewhere.[14] For our current purposes, the important point to report is that our strategy of pairing *municípios* with almost identical PT vote shares (but different election outcomes) to control for important contextual political variables was effective. Our analyses of local civil societies found that each of our pairs was indeed well matched. In every instance except one, local civil society, assessed both

in terms of its capacity for self-organisation and the nature of its ties to the local state, was found to have similar characteristics. The exception was Mauá/Diadema where we found that although civil society was quite well organised in both cases, civil society organisations relied on clientelistic ties to the state in Mauá, whereas in Diadema, the relationship was much more contentious. Overall, however, we are confident that our research design effectively controls for civil society, allowing us to isolate the impact of institutional reform.

In this section, we address the participation outcome by examining direct participation in the budgeting process between 1997 and 2000. In conducting this evaluation, we are interested in answering two broad questions.

First, what are the mechanisms and the actual spaces where participatory inputs – both those tied to the PB and others – become possible? Reforms in the political regime and institutional changes, including the decentralisation initiatives of the late 1980s, have created a wide range of new participatory spaces in Brazil. These spaces are all the more significant given Brazil's long-established traditions of clientelism and elite-based politics. Yet precisely because of the well-developed skills and tactics of elites in circumventing the rule of law and the norms of democratic practice, as well as the high and manifold transaction costs that nonelites face in engaging the political arena, we are interested not just in the form of the new institutions but also the actual practices. The mere existence of PB structures does not translate into participation as such. New institutional spaces are particularly susceptible to elite capture. It is, therefore, vitally important to examine the functioning of participatory spaces, including their social composition, their links to the formal decision-making process, and their internal deliberative qualities.

Second, *to what extent are participatory inputs translated into concrete outputs?* This later question has largely been neglected in the literature. Most studies of participation generally focus on documenting participation itself, but only rarely evaluate the extent to which participatory decision-making is binding on actual government decisions. We address this question specifically through *process tracing*, that is, documenting and evaluating the entire participatory input chain from the first articulation of a demand to the actual budgetary allocation.

To consider these two questions, the type of governance found in each *município* was compared against four criteria that assess different dimensions of what we label participatory governance. The first two criteria capture the nature of participation, that is, the specific modalities through which citizens engage the local state. The third and fourth criteria capture the extent of actual governance that results from

participation, that is, the extent to which citizen inputs actually affect public choices.

First, we considered *mode of engagement*: how is popular representation in the budgeting process organised? This is a basic distinction made by participatory theorists and refers to a distinction between participatory and representative forms of engagement. Four possibilities emerged among our cases: none, direct, delegated, and mixed (direct and delegated). *Direct* refers to participation by citizens in open decision-making forums, such as neighbourhood assemblies. *Delegated* refers to instances in which delegates are given a role at the municipal level in shaping the budget. It is important to underscore that by delegated we refer only to new forms of representation (in most instances what are called delegate councils) and not to the elected city council structures (formal representative structures). In all cases where direct participation occurred, delegates were also elected to represent the community in the delegate council. The category *mixed* refers to this combination.

Second, we considered the *formalization of process*: what are the rules and procedures governing participatory inputs? This is an important dimension, because even a direct process (as above) would have a very different character if it were informal, or not rule-bound. Three possible categories exist: none, formal, and informal.

Third, we considered *decision-making power*: to what extent are citizen inputs translated into budgetary outputs? This is a central dimension to understanding whether participation is 'empowered'[15] or not. Three categories emerged: none, consultative, and binding. Given that participatory processes have no legally binding authority, *binding* in this context is a matter of influence and was evaluated on the basis of the observed degree to which municipal authorities took citizen demands into account.

Finally, we addressed the *scope of discussion***:** over what range of governance functions (or domains) did participatory processes have influence? This dimension captures whether participation is limited to investment decisions or if it is broader and involves other government policy domains (such as the mode of provision of social services, for example). Four categories emerged: none, making general demands, budget, policies, and mixed (budget and policies). *Making general demands* refers to expressing needs. *Budget* refers to actual discussion of projects and costs. *Policies* refers to the modalities of coverage and delivery of government departments. *Mixed* refers to both budget and policies.

As Table 7.2 clearly shows, the study period (1997–2000) was one of significant change in the institutional forms and practices that govern citizen engagement in our selected *municípios*. Thus, eight of the *municípios* had

some form of participation in budgeting affairs. Only Mirante Da Serra and Quixadá had no form of participation.

Because there is a perfect correspondence of 'binding decision-making power' with 'mixed scope of discussion', the outcomes can be thus summarised in a shortened form in Table 7.3.

The table shows that cases fall into three clusters. The upper right corner, which we term *full PB*, represents the greatest expansion of participation in that it involves direct and representative forms with a binding dimension. In the three cases in this box, the process was formalised (F) and demands were mixed, affecting both the budget and policy more generally. The upper

Table 7.2 Participatory governance, 1997–2000

Municipality	*Types of participation*	*Formalisation of the participatory process*	*Decision-making power*	*Scope of discussion*
Camaragibe/PE	Mixed	Formal	Binding	Mixed
Quixadá/CE	None	None	None	None
São Miguel do Guaporé/RO	Mixed	Informal	Consultative	Demands
Miranta da Serra/RO	None	None	None	None
Gravataí/RS	Mixed	Formal	Binding	Mixed
Sapucaia do Sul/RS	Delegated	Informal	Consultative	Demands
Mauá/SP	Mixed	Formal	Consultative	Demands
Diadema/SP	Mixed	Informal	Consultative	Demands
João Monlevade/MG	Mixed	Formal	Binding	Mixed
Tomóteo/MG	Delegated	Formal	Consultative	Demands

PB municípios in bold.

Table 7.3 Synthesis of participatory governance, 1997–2000

	Decision-making power	
Mode of participation	Consultative	Binding
Direct and delegative	**São Miguel** (I) Diadema (I) **Mauá** (F)	**Camaragibe** (F) **Gravataí** (F) **J. Monlevade** (F)
Delegative	Timóteo (F) Sapucaia (I)	

I = informal; F = formal; PB municípios in bold. Quixadá and Miranta do not appear here since no form of participation was introduced.

left corner, which we term *partial PB*, represents cases where direct and representative participation was introduced, but where decision-making power was limited to a consultative function. The lower left corner represents the narrowest form of participation, which we term *state-controlled participation*, in the sense that it is both only consultative and delegated.

As might be expected, all the PB cities saw the introduction of direct forms of participation. Three *municípios* – Camaragibe, Gravataí, and João Monlevade – experienced the maximum degree of participation and control over public goods: the form of participation was both delegated and direct, it was formalised, it was binding on municipal authorities, and it covered a wide scope of developmental areas (budgeting and policies). In all PB cases except São Miguel, the PB was to varying degrees formalised. Because the scale in São Miguel was so small (only 8,119 voters), respondents reported that formalisation was not seen as necessary. However, it is also quite clear that the introduction of the PB does not always ensure that citizen inputs are translated into concrete outputs. In our assessment, only in João Monlevade, Camaragibe, and Gravataí did the deliberative process qualify as binding.

Among non-PB *municípios*, there was less participatory governance, and generally, it tended to be less direct and less binding. Two cases had no participation. Two cases had consultative participation. In Timóteo, São Miguel, and Mauá, participatory input was largely of a consultative nature and limited in scope to the expression of demands. Diadema was the only non-PB city in which direct participation took place. The form of participation here was not organised through PB. It was rather the result of contentious demands by a highly organised civil society. We discuss each of these three clusters as well as the Diadema exception below.

Full PB: Binding Participation

Gravataí, João Monlevade, and Camaragibe are all cases of binding participation. In all three cases, the mode of participation is a mix of direct and delegated participation. Gravataí, for example, combines direct participation in microregional and regional plenaries (more than 80 for a city of 230,000), with instances of representation (forum of delegates and the council of the PB). The process is extremely formalised, with a very detailed set of procedures and rules that define the roles, responsibilities, and criteria for the distribution of resources and the manner in which delegates are chosen. In terms of decision-making power, the PB there is binding. In all three cases, the process of the PB empowers the council of the PB to deliberate and decide on the public works and services

demanded by the population and is as such de facto binding. Finally, the scope of discussion encompasses both budget decisions and policy. We examine the case of Gravataí to provide a fuller picture of how full PB works.

Gravataí modelled its PB on Porto Alegre, but modified the process to make it more accessible to the population. Citizens are directly engaged in making choices in microregional and regional plenaries that are more decentralised than in Porto Alegre into 85 microregions of 5,000 to 30,000 inhabitants. Microregional demands and preference hierarchies are aggregated to the regional level, delegates from the microregions participate, and then once more to the level of the council of the budget, where councillors from the region participate. Because the plenaries are at the neighbourhood level, they make participation fairly easy. Participants in Gravataí's PB had very little previous associative experience, by and large. According to interviews, the median was someone from an irregular urban area with specific demands and problems, but no experience in organised civil society. Due to the political opposition in the first years from neighbourhood associations accustomed to clientelistic forms of intermediation, many of the participants chosen as delegates and councillors were first time participants in associative life. Participation in the first year was high (6,900 participants), dropping in the second year (3,500) to climb again to 13,000. In a proportional comparison, this is four times as high as the participation in Porto Alegre.

The voicing of demands in Gravataí is also authoritatively linked to the decision-making process by the election of delegates who participate in the council of the PB. The council not only actively discusses actual projects and services, but also translates these into budgetary allocations. As result of these changes, expenditures in health and sanitation as well as in social services increased significantly in real terms as well as proportionally over the four years in question. Social service expenditures went up to 10.76 percent of the 2000 budget, against 1.58 percent for 1996, just as health expenditures went up to 11.15 percent from 2.15 percent of a total budget that increased in real terms. Despite being a poor municipality with a per capita budget a fraction of neighbouring Porto Alegre's, the administration registered some improvements in basic access to education, adult literacy programs, and the building of new health clinics. Participatory governance also takes place across a number of domains, including general governance (specifically in the determination of allocative priorities) and service delivery. During the period in question, councils in health and in social service delivery became active.

However, the difference with the past is not only in the actors and the processes, but also in the mode of agency, and specifically in how choices

are made. The inputs processed through the PB in Gravataí are not the reduced form of demand making posited in pluralist democratic theory (that is, representatives aggregate the interests of their constituents). The deliberative structures of the PB represent a fundamentally different mode of making choices, one that takes place through iterated processes of public discussion. The difference between expressing choices through representative structures and *forming* choices through public deliberation is precisely what distinguishes representative from participatory theories of democracy.[16] The latter implies learning effects, active problem solving, and the willingness to change a priori choices in light of open discussion.

Partial PB: Consultative Participation

In all three cases that fall into the upper left box of Table 7.3 – Diadema, Mauá, and São Miguel do Guaporé – that is, those where delegative and direct forms of participation have been instituted, but where citizen engagement remains largely consultative, it is less clear what has been the impact of participation. Measured against the ideal of the PB in which citizens are de facto (if not de jure) empowered to shape the budget, this form of participatory governance clearly falls short.

One should, however, not be too quick to dismiss consultative participation as not contributing to popular representation. The PB ideal of binding participation is in fact quite rare, even in the most developed democracies.[17] Indeed, insofar as civil society is judged to have an important role in Western democracies, its impact has more to do with the 'politics of influence'[18] than with binding authority. Most discussions of the politics of influence generally focus on fairly diffuse mechanisms such as opinion formation through the media and efforts to sway decision-makers through the 'strength of the better argument'.[19] If anything, the form of consultative participation observed here represents a more forceful mode of influence because it specifically creates forums in which opinions can be discussed, formed, and publicised. Even if such opinions are not binding, there are a number of ways in which the open and public expression of demands can increase the leverage of civil society. First, it provides an opportunity for groups traditionally excluded from the decision-making process to form and express choices. Second, to the extent that such choices are well publicised, they provide new points of accountability for politicians and officials. Third, the public articulation of direct demands can to some extent short-circuit traditional patronage politics by giving greater visibility to public, rather than private, demands.

Mauá is a case in point. There, the participatory budget plenary meetings in the district did not have the purpose of raising demands and priorities. The administration held more than 40 such plenary meetings in the first months of its government, primarily to publicise the financial straits of the municipality. The PB that then emerged revolved around regional meetings that were still largely educational, focusing on the state of municipal finances. Councillors elected at these meetings participated in a participatory council that was limited to bringing the priorities of their regions and neighbourhoods to the administration. One councillor described it, jokingly, as *conselho escutativo* (a 'listening council', which is a play on the Portuguese *conselho participativo*). Nonetheless, councillors described being able to exert political pressure on the administration, and there ultimately was some significant investment in a few areas such as health. Second, the creation and discussion of documents that listed regional demands and projects fostered accountability. And third, the limited PB occasioned other participatory forums such as in the health sector.

The case of Diadema also deserves some comment. Diadema falls into the consultative participation category, even though it is not a PB city. Here, the influence of citizens is not found in a formal structure, but rather in the overall strength and contentiousness of civil society. In Diadema, in fact, a PB was attempted during the first two years of the administration as result of social movement pressures. It was not, however, a decentralised process and was instead held downtown. Because of an unclear formalisation of rules where ultimate decisions were taken by the administration and apparent lack of success in drawing large numbers of unorganised citizens (perhaps due to its centralised format), there were claims that more-organised groups were able to exert more pressure, and this also cost the process some legitimacy. Fundamentally, because the raising of local demands was not linked to binding decision-making on the overall budget or linked to knowledge of budget constraints, demands raised and actual projects were severely mismatched, which led to a discrediting and abandoning of the process.

But despite the failure to institute participation, social movement activists were able to pressure the administration into publishing an annual 'Budget Block' – a notebook that listed projects for each district and neighbourhood as well as information on the municipal budget – as well as organising training courses on the budget for citizen activists. Social movements were also active in starting participatory councils on health, social services, and education, where citizens monitored and influenced service delivery. Ultimately, the promise of a PB had the effect of mobilising organised sectors that, dissatisfied with stillborn participatory attempts, demanded more access to and decision-making in governmental

affairs. Movements were able to gain influence, not through the creation of a regular forum, but through sporadic but organised contention. This is very much an instance of the politics of influence, albeit predicated on the strength and militancy of a highly mobilised civil society. What is important to underscore here is that that citizens can experience an increase of agency even in the absence of institutional change.

State-Controlled Participation

We finish with the cases of Timóteo and Sapucaia to underscore the importance of carefully examining the nature of participation. On the one hand, new forms of participation were introduced. Specifically, delegates to a citywide council were given a direct role in consulting on the budget. In both cases, however, politicians, not popular assemblies, selected these delegates. In Sapucaia, for example, the mayor appointed the president of the Unions of Neighbourhood Associations of Sapucaia do Sul (UAMOSSUL) as the director of community relations and exerted tight control over neighbourhood associations that participated, even to the point of providing financial support for the creation of associations in areas where existing associations did not support the mayor. There were significant continuities between these participatory schemes and earlier clientelistic forms of mobilisation. In both cases then, if anything, participatory reforms were participatory in name only, and in fact undermined popular representation.

Conclusions

These are extremely complex institutional reforms that display highly uneven levels of implementation and impact. Drawing out any lessons must be done with care and with many qualifications. The most important qualification is that there are no ready-made transposable solutions given that institutional performance is always conditioned by history and context, most notably existing state capacity, the quality and activity of civil society, and the underlying political configuration. The same set of reforms can thus have highly varied impacts on citizens' capacity to shape public policy. Because of the controlled nature of our sample – pairing similarly structured PB and non-PB cities – we can, however, draw two specific lessons about participatory reforms in Brazil.

The most clear-cut lesson is that reforms from above can make a discernible impact. In all our pairs, the city that introduced PB witnessed a measurable increase in the capacity of citizens to shape the municipal

budget. The fact that introduction of PB is tied to PT governance underscores that political processes are critical to institutional reform. However, the fact that across our five cities there was substantial variation in the actual impact of PB and that Diadema achieved significant gains in participation without a PT regime, underscores that institutional reform must be more broadly understood as resulting from the interaction between political and civil society. The three cities that successfully introduced binding PB were also the three that had the strongest and best-organised civil societies going into the reform period.[20] A second key lesson is that many forms of participation can amount to little more than new forms of elite control. Thus, even if on paper Timóteo and Sapucaia created new participatory institutions, in practice, elites retained control and, if anything, exerted greater control over civil society.

If we focus on our cases of full PB (that is, the expansion of binding participation) as approximating an ideal-type of participatory democracy, we can also locate these reforms in the framework developed by Törnquist in the introduction. First, insofar as PB has brought traditionally marginalised or dependent groups into the process of decision-making as citizens rather than as clients, it has in effect expanded the demos. PB, it should be noted, is itself an expression of the demand for the deepening and expansion of rights of citizenship that emerged from Brazil's powerful urban movements of the 1980s and 1990s.[21] Having made this point, we reiterate that translating the new norms of citizenship into concrete capacities required political intervention and careful institutional design.

Second, if PB deepens democracy by bringing new actors into the demos, it also broadens the range of issues that are subject to democratic authorisations. A range of local government decisions and resources that were once the exclusive purview of local elites are now, to varying degrees, open to direct forms of public scrutiny and deliberation. Of course, such public participation could be limited to advancing particularistic demands, but as Abers[22] and Baiocchi[23] have both shown in careful, detailed analyses of the actual functioning of popular assemblies, the process of deliberation does for the most part encourage more public-mindedness.

Third, PB represents a form of instituted participatory democracy that is, in effect, a hybrid of direct democracy and representative democracy. The PB structure and process parallels, but does not supplant, formal electoral representation. The PB budget is formed through a combination of direct participation – neighbourhood assemblies – and delegates who carry neighbourhood mandates to the budget council. But final authorisation of the budget rests with the legislative assembly. In formal terms, such a chain of representation would appear to be inherently unstable given the lack of legal authority accorded the PB process. Yet the fact that, in our

three successful cases, the process was judged to be 'binding' points to just how powerful the legitimacy-producing effects of a deliberative process can be.

Drawing on this study as well as other carefully researched cases of participatory governance, such as Kerala,[24] we can also draw some broader lessons about the constructability of more democratic modes of representation.

First, the most important lesson is this: not only is it possible to create institutions that allow for meaningful forms of citizen engagement, but the conditions for successful participation are not rigidly set. When offered genuine opportunities for participation, local actors will get involved. Participation is not a function of stock variables such as human capital and social capital, which can only be accumulated slowly over time. It is a function of much more malleable factors, such as institutional design, openings in the opportunity structure, alliances, and new incentives. When poor people do not participate, it is not because they do not have the skills or the determination, but because the obstacles to participation are too high. There are 'transaction costs' to participation, and careful design and political action can go a long way in changing those costs. A related point is that participation can have dramatic incidental effects. This is true not only in the sense of demonstration effects (more groups and communities join as the returns become clear), but also in the sense of expanding the possibilities and meanings of citizenship. In sum, participatory institutions that are carefully designed and properly scaled can significantly expand opportunities for the poor and the most marginalised groups to practice citizenship.

Second, the two most common policy-world objections to decentralised participation (which parrot much of the Schumpeterian argument for representative democracy in complex societies) – that poor communities do not have the capacity to engage in local planning and that too much participation can be disruptive, time-consuming and even lead to conflict – simply do not hold up. Before PB was introduced in our five cases, local citizens had few if any channels through which to influence public action and no prior experience with planning or local development. From its inception, the PB strategy has always been an explicitly political one of building institutions through mobilisation. Under the PB, ordinary citizens have proven more than capable of making city budgets and negotiating with department officials.

Third, even as it is important to bear in mind the power equations that often pit technocrats against activists, bureaucrats and politicians against civil society, institutional logics against mobilisational logics, we must also recognise that local government is often an arena where alliances across the state-society boundary can develop and produce synergistic outcomes.[25]

Many of the government officials we interviewed in our study welcomed PB as a way to develop ties to partners in civil society. This fits neatly with the argument of Chalmers *et al.*[26] that the decline of corporatism and populism in Latin America has opened up room for 'associative networks' that cut across traditional state-society boundaries. In contrast to the assumption in much of the democracy literature (as well as neoliberal views of governance) that participation and representation do not sit well together, instituted participatory democracy can produce cooperative arrangements between officials and civil society actors that strengthen both governance and democracy.

Fourth, and in clear contrast to direct democracy arguments that favour a spontaneous representation of civil society within the state, we note that the participatory structures of PB have a different representational logic than civil society and that the resulting tension can be quite productive. These institutions can address some of the representational failings of associational networks by broadening the base of participants and introducing clear criteria of accountability. In some of the cases here, notably Gravataí, this led to tension with traditional neighbourhood associations accustomed to clientelistic practices. The extralocal networks created through PB forums have created new ties *across* communities, movements, and sectors, generating precisely the kind of bridging ties that many analysts have argued promote development,[27] rather than unleashing parochialisms in a society marked by social authoritarianism.[28] Participation in PB has been far more pronounced in working-class and poor communities,[29] has often provided citizens with no previous experience of engagement new opportunities to participate, and, as we found in the case of Camaragibe, has opened doors to traditionally excluded groups such as blacks, gays, and the homeless.[30] To borrow from Hirschman's famous formulation, promoting the politics of voice can act as a counter to the politics of loyalty (clientelism, communalism) or the politics of exit (apathy, crime, flight). Given the involutionary dynamics of so many poor urban communities in the Global South (for example, the rise of sectarian politics) and increased concern with social disintegration, this may be an especially important lesson.

Fifth, even as we recognise that participation has been possible and consequential in some Brazilian *municípios* and that it has in large part emerged from civil society and social movements, we must not slip into the voluntarism of the apolitical treatments of civil society. To make full sense of PB, one has to acknowledge the historical and political configuration that made it possible and specifically that created a balance of power that was amenable to reform from below. Three key elements of a favourable 'ecology of actors'[31] for participatory decentralisation can be

identified: reformist elements within the state that recognise the limits of traditional elite-driven developmentalism; civil societies that enjoy sufficient organisational capacity and operational autonomy to align with, but not be co-opted by, the local state; and a programmatic left-of-centre political party that can orchestrate the necessary political conditions for reform.[32] Moreover, it is essential to underscore that the reform process itself was a political strategy. In all our cases, PB was made possible by an opening from above and was developed and elaborated through a continuous process of learning-by-doing. In contrast to the apolitical and incrementalist views of institution building that informs the 'good governance' literature, PB was from the outset conceived as a strategy for breaking with the cycle of clientelism that required a realignment of political forces. The emphasis as such was on immediately promoting popular participation and only then working out specific institutional forms. The strategy was predicated on two assumptions. First, only such an approach could dislodge vested interests and preempt various elite tactics of resistance. Second, this sudden opening of institutional spaces could trigger a mobilisation response that would create its own momentum of reform. Thus, even in the Mauá case of a very limited opening, creating some space for participation had incidental effects.

Notes

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1. Keil 1998: 618.
2. See introduction, this volume.
3. Heller 2001, Törnquist, Tharakan, and Quimpo, this volume.
4. Törnquist, this volume.
5. Habermas 1996.
6. Baiocchi 2003.
7. Grazia and Ribeiro 2002.
8. Ibid.
9. Most of the literature on participatory democracy, including the research on PB, is generally based on single case studies or comparisons that are not necessarily rigorously structured (Alsop and Heinsohn 2005). Here we shift the focus away from successful cases and pay attention to the differing nature of PB institutions (what economists might call the possible heterogeneity of treatment effects).
10. Keck 1992.
11. Grazia and Ribeiro 2002.

12. The states in question are Pernambuco (PE), Ceará (CE), Roraima (RO), Minas Gerais (MG), São Paulo (SP), and Rio Grande do Sul (RG). The political parties in question are Pardido Social Democratico Brasileiro (PSDB), Partido do Movimento Democratico Brasileiro (PMDB), and Partido Democratico Trabalhista (PDT).
13. 2000; Butcher and Nutch 1999.
14. Baiocchi, Heller, and Silva 2008, Baiocchi *et al.* 2006.
15. Fung and Wright 2003.
16. Avritzer 2002, Habermas, 1996.
17. Scandinavian-style corporatist structures are the most obvious exception.
18. Cohen and Arato 1992.
19. Habermas 1996.
20. Baiocchi, Heller, and Silva 2008.
21. Dagnino 1998, Holston 2008.
22. 2001.
23. 2005.
24. Heller, Harilal, and Chaudhuri 2007, Heller 2005.
25. Evans 2002.
26. 1997b.
27. Storper 2004.
28. Dagnino 1998.
29. Baiocchi 2005.
30. Baiocchi, Heller, and Silva 2008.
31. Evans 2002.
32. Heller 2001.

8

Patronage Democracy in Provincial Indonesia

Gerry van Klinken

Introduction

During the authoritarian New Order (1966–1998) Indonesia was thought unlikely to democratise. Harold Crouch listed five commonly cited reasons why it would not.[1] Business, middle classes, and working classes were either not interested in democracy or too small to be effective (a problem he had earlier termed 'the missing bourgeoisie').[2] Ethnic loyalties were a barrier to democracy. The dominant traditional Javanese culture was not democratic. External forces were unlikely to push for democracy in Indonesia unlike, for example, in South Africa. This left only political competition as the most probable source for democracy. Lack of unity within an authoritarian elite could produce rivalry that spills over into society and leads to democracy. Crouch reminded his readers that O'Donnell and Schmitter had warned of the extraordinary uncertainty of such a transition.[3]

Yet today, Indonesia is undoubtedly a democracy. Elite fragmentation contributed to the big change after Suharto's resignation in 1998, but mass protests against elite privilege and sustained pressure from the regions for democratic decentralisation were the real deciders. So far democracy has held. Crouch was wrong to place the burden of democratisation on the contingencies of elite disunity. An influential post-1998 analysis by Richard Robison and Vedi Hadiz[4] that saw no democratic transition but only continued elite autonomy will similarly, I suspect, look increasingly at odds with the situation on the ground. Ed Aspinall's argument[5] that pressure from below in fact caused the elite split gives the events of 1998 the central importance they deserve.

Today, it seems more pertinent to ask not why democracy is unlikely to succeed but why it seems so much more resilient than once thought. Even more important than asking who introduced democracy is asking who sustains it today? To answer that question, we need to look beyond the narrow clique of national elites and learn how politics works for most Indonesians: not at the commanding heights but at the provincial level where most people live. For democracy may have been introduced in Jakarta in 1998 as part of an elite pact under popular pressure, and it may be secured by legislated electoral rules made in Jakarta, but it is practiced with evident satisfaction by 150 million voting citizens in nearly 500 districts around the country.

This chapter consists of three parts. The first links empirical descriptions of Indonesian democracy to a literature on low-quality democracies. The second tries to explain its shape with a broad-brush, exploratory, and somewhat speculative societal analysis. The third looks for future directions in the quest for more substantial democracy.

Low-Quality Democracy

For the first time since Herbert Feith[6] declared it in decline nearly half a century ago, today most observers write about constitutional democracy in Indonesia as a reality. President Suharto was forced to resign amid massive protest demonstrations and rioting in May 1998. Caretaker president B. J. Habibie oversaw a raft of popular reforms, notably democratic elections and a decentralisation program, but others affected many institutional bases of New Order authoritarianism such as the military, the justice system, the press, trade unions, the constitution, and East Timor. There was also a downside familiar in many post-authoritarian situations. Prosecutions for past human rights and corruption abuses bogged down in old guard resistance. Communal violence broke out in some places. Newly empowered parliaments practiced 'money politics'. Nevertheless, in the *longue durée,* the historical exception may be the authoritarian New Order.

The discussion now is mainly about the quality of democracy. Indonesian bookshops stock numerous titles on the electoral system, corruption, violence, possibly resurgent authoritarianism, and the need for more religion and less 'westernism' in politics. Western scholars have remarked on mixed achievements: free elections, but with much manipulation and some violence.[7] Dwight King described the electoral reform as 'half-hearted' because it was not accompanied by reform of the bureaucracy or judiciary and oversight agencies.[8] All this led Robison and Hadiz

to doubt the democratic transition while highlighting continuity in underlying social forces, dominated still by 'predatory' elites and apparatchiks brought up under the New Order.[9]

Studies of Indonesian democracy tend to focus either on institutional reforms or on actual practices. The former approach gives insight into elite thinking about democratic transition but is limited by the notorious detachment of Indonesian legislation from social realities. The Demos (The Indonesian Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies) in Jakarta conducted an excellent survey of the actual state of democracy in Indonesia.[10] During two rounds of structured, in-depth interviews, researchers spoke with about 800 experienced democracy activists in every province and engaged in different fields. They adapted a long checklist of questions in a 'democracy audit' that was developed in the framework of the United Kingdom by David Beetham and his colleagues and added, moreover, a similarly long list of questions on how actors related to supposedly democratic institutions and what capacity they had to promote and use them. The normative vision behind it was the need to combine a participatory version of democracy with a procedural one focused on elections.

'Democratic deficit' is the key conclusion of the Demos survey. Vital freedoms had been won since 1998 to express opinions, organise politically, and hold free and fair elections, but democracy had made few dents in the power structure. Entrenched local inequalities produced the democratic deficit. Local elites did not deliberately bypass the democratic machinery, but they manipulated the rules to suit their own interests.[11] Democracy activists working in areas that did not threaten elite interests, such as the democratisation of political parties and, to a lesser extent, gender advocacy, felt more satisfied with democratic progress than those active in areas where elite interests potentially *were* threatened, such as land problems, labour, the urban poor, anticorruption, and human rights. Who were these elites? Informants pointed mainly to individuals associated with the state. Local and central public executives (plus police officers, soldiers, and their militia henchmen) stood at the top of the list, then parliamentarians, while 'pure' businesspersons (who did not live off the state) ranked last alongside nongovernmental organisation (NGO) figures.[12] Elites did not sabotage the democratic instruments, but they were corrupt. Democratisers, moreover, always lived with security worries, although this was not explored in depth. Yet despite these unpleasant realities, the elites were not alienated from their society: 'There are strong indications that the dominant actors do have social and political roots. . . . We are not talking of an isolated elite resting at the pinnacle of the state that can be surrounded and ambushed by civil society'.[13]

Asked to describe how elites exercised their influence, informants described clientelistic practices (jobs or other favours in the bureaucracy in exchange for support at election time) or alternative patronage through private (often religious or ethnic) organisations. These relationships too were well anchored in local identities. Demos informants felt that most people identified themselves primarily in terms of their local ethnic community or (somewhat less) with their religious community, rather than with the Indonesian nation. The effect was particularly strong in the impoverished eastern parts of the country, as well as in Papua and Aceh where secessionist movements were active.[14] Apart from these identity feelings, the broad pattern of conclusions varied little around the country. This suggests something fundamental and Indonesia-wide (Southeast Asia-wide?) in the social origins of this democracy with a deficit. This is what we want to explore: a democracy, but one that fails to shake social inequalities; local elites who derive their power mainly from the state, and who relate with their constituency through clientelistic practices; political practices marked by rent seeking and the potential for violence; and a constituency that identifies itself mainly in local, often communal, terms.

These observations roughly match the more broad-brush but comparative assessments of democracy in the annually updated Freedom House survey. This too shows significant but incomplete improvements in Indonesia. Freedom House[15] focuses on national developments such as electoral procedures and secessionist wars rather than on everyday practices. It allocates a score between 1 and 7 on political and civil rights, with 7 the least free. An average score for both indicators of 2.5 qualifies a country as 'free'. Indonesia was rated 'not free' in the 1990s and upgraded to 'partly free' after 1998. For the first time since measurements began in 1972, it was classified as 'free' in 2006.[16] Indonesia's ratings are now the same as India's. Some have argued that the average score for the category 'free' should be reduced to 2.0, because 2.5 usually means serious problems with civil liberties.[17] Indeed, India has a rich literature on defective local democratic practices. Partha Chatterjee evocatively labelled these practices 'the politics of the governed'.[18] So Indonesia remains a borderline case, albeit in a state of positive flux.

Scholars on democratic transitions have long recognised semi-democracies,[19] and since then, they have qualified the term *democracy* with a bewildering profusion of adjectives.[20] Many no longer see 'illiberal' democracy as a transitional stage to a liberal one. Moving beyond static classification, some have investigated the structures and processes that produce defective democratic regimes. Thus, Terry Karl traced the Latin American 'hybrid regime' to unequal economic and class structures and to foreign intervention.[21]

Specifically on Indonesia, few now argue that elections are unfair even if there were concerns of increased incompetence in the 2009 elections. Nor has anyone called Indonesia a hybrid democracy as defined by Diamond,[22] in which the same political party keeps getting elected despite elections being free. Some have approached this position by highlighting elite Suharto-era survivors who refuse to compete but instead act 'collusively'[23] or who have 'reconstituted' themselves[24] despite free elections. Others have focused on the inability of elected Indonesian governments to govern without having to tiptoe around military privileges[25] or on social inequalities that limit the citizenship rights of large parts of the population. Looking for structural explanations, Marco Bünte attributed the 'grey zone' (authoritarian-democratic) democracies in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand to persistent elitism and the neo-patrimonial character of elite-mass relations.[26] Nevertheless, he reasoned, limited democracies have survived in the region despite the internal odds stacked against them because they cope better with crises than authoritarianism. The present chapter pursues Bünte's leads, but at the provincial level where, it is argued, forms of competition are more deeply embedded in societal relations than at the national level.

A Societal Approach

A powerful impulse to study the democratisation process societally came from Barrington Moore.[27] The key process, he thought, was the economic opportunity to adopt commercial agriculture.[28] His memorable summing up was 'no bourgeois, no democracy'.[29] The association of wealth with liberal democracy had been statistically demonstrated years earlier,[30] and others have repeatedly confirmed how strong the correlation is.[31] But Barrington Moore wanted a historical explanation, not a mere correlation. Although the precise mechanisms that he proposed are no longer beyond dispute, his insistence on path dependency remains of great importance.

The approach inspired Hans-Dieter Evers to make some sweeping generalisations about the emergence *not* of democracy but of dictatorships in Thailand, the Philippines, and Indonesia by the 1970s.[32] Modernisation had produced its own barriers by creating and then consolidating a new upper class, which appropriated the benefits of economic development in the large urban centres while arresting it elsewhere. This embryonic upper class was the result of a loose coalition between strategic groups, in particular the military and the civil service, that emerged in a certain sequence to take advantage of the opportunities for appropriation.

If we now move forward in time to the present and down in the polity to the provincial level, what changes occur that might explain the emergence and resilience of democracy in Indonesia? The most striking change is that the military has been almost completely removed from the formal political process.[33] A freer press allowed liberal metropolitan opinion makers effectively to sideline them at a rhetorical level by portraying them as an ill-educated embarrassment to a modern nation. But institutionally, the pressure came from rising provincial elites who resented the military monopoly on the benefits of primitive accumulation. Where soldiers have remained significant players at the provincial level it has been as the tough-guy partners in well-embedded black market coalitions whose profits remain largely in the local economy. Thus, the military, once thought to encapsulate Indonesian state 'monism' par excellence, is now revealed to be a highly fragmented organisation whose actions are best understood through its locally rooted business interests. The army has always obtained half to two-thirds of its funding from off-budget sources, some of them criminal.[34] Marcus Mietzner concluded that, after Suharto, this shift transformed the army, Tentara Nasional Indonesia (TNI), into a highly particularistic organisation[35]: 'With the collapse of the omnipotent central regime, the fragmentation of power in the post-Suharto era and the disengagement of the TNI from formal political institutions, the armed forces no longer have a stake in defending a specific political regime, either at the centre or in the regions. . . . Accordingly, the TNI provides security services to an individual power-holder rather than offering institutional support.'

The civil service, that other strategic group in Evers's upper class, appears on the surface to have changed far less since the height of the New Order. Civil servants remain dominant at the national level, and they still make up the largest professional category among candidates for district head.[36] Evers expected this group to resent democratic controls, and on the whole he is right. Yet once we dig deeper, they also turn out to be a less significant obstacle to democracy today than might be expected. Just like the military, the bureaucracy in Indonesia is institutionally less cohesive and economically more embedded in local societies than most western observers trained in Max Weber have recognised. Like the military, the bureaucracy is systematically underfunded.[37] The central government expects its agencies to find much of their own funding through extra-budgetary means. Throughout the New Order, the more so as the economy grew, this led local bureaucrats to build collusive, particularistic links with business, creating an excess of rival networks all interested in the same pot of rents. A competitive entrepreneurial spirit unwittingly entered the bureaucracy, eroding centralised discipline. When post-1998 democratic freedoms

exposed these links to open view and politicised them, the genie was out of the bottle.

At the provincial level, this fragmentation, polycentrism, and, indeed, participation (of a kind) in government by elite nonofficials existed even during the New Order. The (unfortunately few) local case studies during the New Order show that local officials often received contradictory instructions from competing hierarchies above, and they had to accommodate local elite business and ethnic lobbies.[38] The fact that the overwhelming majority of studies of Indonesian politics were Jakarta-based may have produced an exaggerated view of the state's degree of centralisation. Perhaps, too, a disjuncture between centralism and participatory provincialism is not unique to Indonesia. James Ockey has written[39]: 'Throughout Southeast Asia, centralised authoritarian traditions have existed alongside participatory local ones.'

Democracy did not create these particularising pressures, but it intensified them, because candidates for election needed to accumulate campaign funds. Businesspeople used to competition now make up a growing proportion of candidates for office at all levels, including the national. Jusuf Kalla, the 2004–2009 vice-president, is one of Indonesia's more important indigenous entrepreneurs. The social embeddedness of the provincial state is built on loose coalitions between civil servants and business. This makes its agents behave differently from the socially insulated upper class Evers saw at the national level. They engage in populist politics. Dormant under the New Order, provincial politics re-emerged after 1998 in patterns reminiscent of the pre-New Order period. Lacking serious repressive capacities (Indonesia's political party militias are a far cry from Philippine-style private armies), provincial officials and their business partners choose mobilisation, appeasement, and patronage to protect their interests against local rivals as well as against Jakarta 'imperialists'. Ray and Goodpaster described a flurry of new policies under post-New Order decentralisation that reflected local collective interests.[40] Regional governments nationalised large industries (like Padang Cement), banned nonlocal investments in local retail and procurements, placed tariff and nontariff barriers on the interregional transport of agricultural produce, and discriminated in favour of locally dominant ethnic groups for employment and other opportunities. The latter measure in particular brought to light informal patronage networks running into the wider society, often through religious or ethnic organisations.

This analysis more accurately reflects the local elites with 'social and political roots' that appear in the Demos survey than does Evers's notion of an isolated upper class monopolising power. The democracy they practice is embedded in long-term social processes. All observers of the 1950s

political parties saw it. Violent political conflict such as the Darul Islam revolt in the late 1950s and the anticommunist massacres of the mid-1960s involved rival clientelistic networks, pitting poor Islamists against equally poor nationalists or communists. Similar networks lay behind communal violence in the provinces after 1998.[41] The communitarianism inherent in these dependency relationships remains visible in today's voting patterns.

Patronage democracy is a term recently deployed by Kanchan Chandra in her sweeping study of post-independence politics in India. She defines patronage democracies as those 'in which the state has a relative monopoly on jobs and services, and in which elected officials enjoy significant discretion in the implementation of laws allocating the jobs and services at the disposal of the state'.[42] Chandra argues that ethnic parties in a patronage democracy have a chance of winning if the ethnic constituency is large enough so that the party can win if they vote for it, and there is a lot of intraparty competition. Although communal politics in Indonesia are not as deeply institutionalised as in India, Chandra's treatment offers interesting parallels with Indonesia in the periods before and after the New Order. Electoral democracy was then and is now popular in the provinces, but it does not rest on a strong ideological commitment to pluralism or human rights. It is a way of resolving the competition inherent in the fragmentation into numerous particularistic trust networks. In Indonesia in the 1950s, the main division between the parties was communal, for example, revolving in rural Java around different religious practices known as *aliran*. Only four parties dominated the electoral scene, two of them explicitly religious. Intraparty competition, which makes people at the bottom of a weakly centralised party believe they have a chance of rising upward, has also been intense. Herbert Feith noted particularly the diffuse nature of authority within the large nationalist Partai Nasional Indonesia (PNI) and the alliance of modernist Muslim groups called Masjumi in the 1950s. This may have been a key to their success. Recent studies of the dominant party under Suharto's New Order regime Golkar have noted this same diffuseness.[43] Tomsa wrote that Golkar's continued post-1998 success in a province like South Sulawesi can be attributed to its skill in accommodating local notables, people who do not represent Javanese interests and who also have 'a lot of money, a lot of followers and a lot of loyal *preman* (thugs)'.[44] Patronage democracy is thus well-embedded in existing social relations and can be sustainable. It is not a fragile pact between elites. But it is particularistic and excludes those without good connections such as non-trading minorities, non-locals, or the destitute with nothing to offer a patron.

To understand the provincial Indonesian democratic practices mapped by the Demos survey, we need to study a wide set of social forces in

historical context. The combination of local elitism and patronage democracy shifts our attention to social groupings below the national elites that occupied Evers. Even the recently flourishing studies of the consumerist Indonesian middle class do not reach down far enough, because they constitute less than 10 percent of the population, live disproportionately in big cities, and are often as afraid of the masses as upper-class elites. Students of low-quality, unconsolidated patronage democracies around the world have begun to look at the political importance of less prosperous but more numerous collectivities. The loose coalition of the strategic groups of civil servants and businesspersons in Indonesia's provincial towns has class characteristics.[45] In India, similar coalitions have been labelled an 'intermediate class' on the basis of their typical political action. Mushtaq Khan in his study of rents and rent seeking in Asia describes 'urban petty-bourgeoisie, the rich peasantry and other emerging middle classes' who are influential not through their wealth but because they are good at organising. Governments of developing countries try to ensure political stability by awarding these political intermediaries substantial 'transfer rents' in the form of state subsidies[46] like the petty bourgeoisie in the classical studies, they adhere to conservative ideologies – often religious, local, and anticommunist. For Indonesia, this is a new area of interest. Richard Robison was the first to call for research on the 'populist lower middle classes' and the 'indigenous petty bourgeoisie'.[47] The former he described as 'a much-neglected and underrated research category of the middle class… [a] sprawling mass of clerks, teachers and lower-level civil servants which often intersects with the petty bourgeoisie and, in the countryside, with the smaller landowning families. This army of minor officials and private sector clerks has proliferated with the development of modern capitalist society'. About the latter, namely small and medium business, he wrote that they had a 'siege mentality over against the Chinese'.

Industrialisation is not yet far advanced in Indonesia; it is restricted to certain semi-urban areas mainly in Java. A burst of academic work on provincial politics after the New Order has brought to light energetic localism, ethnic mobilisation, and money politics. I suspect – a dearth of provincial studies during the New Order makes it difficult to be sure – that this reflects long-term patterns of social competition in the provinces. The fact that these patterns blossomed into public view at this moment had much to do with the new opportunities offered by the contingencies of elite competition of the kind Crouch had predicted. The competition was triggered by the 1998 economic crisis and more broadly reflected the weakening patronage powers of the central state in a globalising world. But the resilience of democracy cannot be attributed only to a central vacuum. It has deeper roots in the social formations of most ordinary Indonesians.

Members of these intermediate class coalitions are close to the state, which provides both direct and indirect employment to a large proportion of them. Situated simultaneously on the boundary between the formal and the informal economy and between the state and the bulk of the voting population, they are the ideal brokers both for a thriving black economy as well as for political mobilisation. Their cultural affinity with the poor makes them expert organisers and patronage dispensers, able to sabotage the technocratic plans of more cosmopolitan elites should they wish to do so. In view of the typical polycentrism of provincial life, electoral democracy offers them greater opportunities for upward mobility than did internal bureaucratic lobbying under the authoritarian New Order. It also enables them to deploy their superior mobilisational abilities to leverage the pressure they have always tried to exert on national elites who control taxation revenues. (Indonesia's post-1998 decentralisation laws devolve spending powers to the regional levels, resulting in vastly increased local government budgets. But most taxation powers remain in Jakarta.) At the same time, the various coalitions that constitute the intermediate classes only act in similar ways because they face similar structural opportunities. They are hardly coherent enough to act in unison.

A brutally oversimplified history of Indonesia's intermediate classes from which today's provincial elites draw their sustenance and support must start with the formation of the state. The story began at the end of the nineteenth century under Dutch colonial rule and took a dramatic turn with independence following the national revolution of 1945–1949. The colonial state had strong security and surveillance functions, constructed infrastructure to facilitate private capital, and provided limited welfare services such as education, irrigation, and agricultural credit. The bureaucracy was the vast archipelagic nation's largest organisation. The outer islands (beyond the populous central island of Java) were integrated into the national economy only in the course of the twentieth century, and the state played the major role in forcing them to deal with the capital rather than with Singapore.

As agricultural prices continued their historic decline, Indonesia moved away from its agrarian economy throughout the century. The construction of a modern transport infrastructure eased travel. Hundreds of towns all over the archipelago began to fill with peasants looking for work. The civil service expanded to meet its greater responsibilities with every new political leap forward. The army of native government clerks who staffed the lower levels of this pyramid of power became the core of a new class, which came into its own after independence. State socialist ideology infused the nationalist movement and lent civil servants enormous prestige. The state nationalised significant areas of the Dutch-held economy

such as plantations and transport in the late 1950s. At the same time, the strict discipline that had marked the colonial state disappeared. Provincial elites knew that their loyalty, essential to the governance of a geographical expanse comparable to the United States with limited means, carried a price tag.

Informality characterised Indonesia's newly independent 'soft state'. Utopian nationalist fervour inspired high expectations. Amid continual budget crises, extensive patronage networks emerged in the democratic but impoverished 1950s. These developed mainly through the political system that tied far-flung regions to the centre. The privileged intermediaries in these networks were the intermediate classes, whom the state itself had created and who now controlled its instruments. The 1950s placed them at the heart of a modernising and deeply politicised provincial society. Intermediate class members, unlike bourgeois elites, were not afraid of the masses. They produced the political entrepreneurs Herbert Feith called 'solidarity makers'.

Urbanisation and state formation continued rapidly after these seminal years. Four factors combined to force new entrants to the urban provincial labour market into the networks dominated by this state and business-oriented intermediate class during the high-growth New Order. They were the enclave nature of capitalist projects in the outer islands (mining and plantations, with little industry), historically declining agricultural prices, an expanding state bureaucracy, and rising educational levels. Oil boom development funds were redistributed to the regions and greatly expanded the intermediate classes of civil servants and business entrepreneurs there. The bureaucracy has grown faster than the population.[48] Census data on occupation is difficult to interpret in Indonesia, but indirect indicators suggest that the intermediate classes are large and growing. Upward social mobility has greatly increased the size of the semi-educated urban population. Absolute wealth levels have risen enormously, although relative poverty levels increased in urban areas in the 1990s.[49] The percentage of Indonesians who said they worked mainly outside agriculture increased by about half from 36 percent in 1971 to 55 percent by 1998. The proportion of the population with some high school education grew from 26 percent to 44 percent in only ten years between 1994 and 2004.[50] All this must have enlarged the intermediate class and strengthened it politically.

Local public opinion and agendas have always been shaped within the intermediate classes. The very 'Indonesianness' of this large group of town dwellers masks their cultural distinctiveness from the poor, whom they regard as stupid (*bodoh*), as well as from the wealthy, who are *elite* or *Chinese*. For all their statism and social conservatism, provincial towns have been assertive rather than passive. Gerald Maryanov, one of the few

students of Indonesian provincial politics in the 1950s, identified education as the key distinctive feature of the political movers and shakers. He saw all political discourse springing from the large pool of (semi-)educated town dwellers[51]:

> We would suggest that it is primarily from this urbanized group that all significant political action generates and that in addition this group articulates all the responses, though they may at times draw in other portions of the population (in such phenomena as mass rallies, strikes, elections, etc). The definition of problems takes place within this group, and it sets the climate of opinion in which problems are discussed and solved. We would further suggest that the desirability or acceptability of particular policies will be entirely determined here… This… group is characterized [also]… by its distance from the cultural patterns of the ideal type of traditional village community.

Nationalism, a passionate faith in the modern activist state, but also an enthusiasm for ideologies of religion and ethnicity – all these beliefs are anchored mainly in the urban intermediate classes and became hegemonic from there. The historic conflicts between these political beliefs were fierce but masked a more fundamental unity between them. Their modernism distinguishes them from the beliefs of the poor – fatalism and magic, chiliasm, and 'home-grown' communism (as opposed to the disciplined European variety). Their statism contrasts with the cosmopolitanism and market friendliness of the urban professionals and the bourgeoisie. It was this intermediate social layer that produced the experts in organisation and mobilisation that created the mass local support bases for the major parties. In his account of the 1955 elections, Herbert Feith provides evidence that three of the four major parties relied predominantly on intermediate class support.[52] The biggest campaign spender, PNI, led mostly by bureaucrats, obtained its funds by milking the Finance and Economic Affairs portfolios and the prime minister's office, which it controlled, as well as from contributions by (rent-seeking) urban entrepreneurs. The two Islamic parties, Masjumi and Nahdatul Ulama (NU), relied to some extent on small members' fees but mostly on contributions from landowners, rubber growers, *batik* (textile) manufacturers, and so on. Only the communist Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI), another big campaign spender, appeared to obtain most of its domestic income from small contributions, although it probably also received support from Chinese-Indonesian business and from communist governments overseas. The PKI won most of its support in those impoverished areas of Java that had suffered the greatest social dislocation of war and revolution just a few years earlier and from politicised plantation labour in Sumatra. In other areas of Indonesia, the

absence of post-Pacific War revolution had permitted indigenous provincial establishments to grow stronger through the transition to independence. There, religion provided the major electoral cleavages. When the military finally made its move to assert control in late 1965, adherents of Masjumi, NU, and, to a somewhat lesser extent, PNI collaborated with it to destroy the one party that had identified most closely with the 'little people' (*wong cilik*): the PKI.

How has the intermediate class related to other social groups? Peculiar to the notion of intermediate class is that it does not pit capital against labour, because its members typically have some capital while still deploying their own labour. But this does not mean the idea of conflict between unevenly balanced groups is no longer applicable. Intermediate class exploiters have access to assets that earn them rents while the exploited do not. Assets can consist of knowledge (education) or official power.[53] Although they are not particularly rich, intermediate classes in Indonesia have the political skills to act as gatekeepers controlling access to state resources.

The intermediate classes had (and have) class rivals above and below them. Above them in the late colonial period were four groups: Dutch capitalists, Indo-European civil servants, Chinese entrepreneurs, and traditional indigenous aristocrats. Each moment of political transformation, supremely the national revolution of 1945–1949 but also the slow birth of the New Order between 1959 and 1966 and even the reformasi of 1998, has been for them a moment of upward social mobility, allowing them to expand their influence in the state at the expense of organised rivals. The Dutch had long nurtured indigenous aristocrats to staff the rapidly expanding bureaucracy after the turn of the nineteenth century. But bloody social revolutions in several places in the period 1945–1949 saw the aristocrats challenged by political party activists and religious figures from the intermediate classes. Elsewhere, popular republican pressures gradually forced them out through the 1950s. The Indo-Europeans were politically eliminated by the revolution. To the extent that Dutch capitalist interests such as plantations and shipping survived the transition to independence, they were nationalised from late 1957.[54] 'Socialisme a la Indonesia' meant nationalisation of Dutch-held trading, industrial, and plantation agriculture sectors. This produced a large state sector, and this was the beginning of intermediate class hegemony. Many Chinese moved up out of the small towns into positions vacated by the Dutch in the 1950s, but they were politically neutered by anti-Chinese sentiment promoted by indigenous businesspeople in competition with them. Toward the late New Order, provincial establishment elites began to resist technocratic Jakarta agendas favouring market openness and less bureaucracy. Post-1998, their defiance took the form of threats to secede and campaigns

for expensive new provinces and districts carved out of existing ones (*pemekaran*).

Of equal significance for Indonesia's political trajectory have been their exclusionary practices toward the far more numerous rural and urban poor. Sometimes these have been repressive. The vehemence of the anti-communist pogroms of 1965–1966 cannot be explained only as a bloody military coup on behalf of foreign capitalists. The ideological battles often obscured concrete local struggles over land. Intermediate class control over local state instruments as well as local mass media continues to mean that land conflicts, the one issue that always aggrieves the rural poor, are simply ignored.

More important than repression has been patronage toward poorer co-religionists, co-regionists, or co-ethnics. Clientelism has long been an important theme in Indonesian studies. Eisenstadt's classic reinterpretation of Weber drew examples from Indonesia.[55] Its asymmetric but mutually beneficial relationships of power and exchange produce corrupt and particularistic politics. Clientelism is an enduring feature of all politics, but it flourishes in societies where productivity is low and political stakes are high. More recent studies have also emphasised its positive, 'demand side'.[56] Invariably operating alongside more institutionalised relationships, it concretises meaning in communities and offers redistributional channels that make up for the formal failures. It does this at the price of the client's complete autonomy as equal citizens. As Indonesia democratised after 1998, it has 'reclientelised' in a process similar to that in Brazil after the end of military rule in the early 1980s.[57] Informality in the market fosters patronage networks because entrepreneurs engaged in shady activities need protection. The connection between democratic politics and market informality has long been fundamental to the politics of West Bengal, where a strong Communist Party organises protection, for example, for shop owners illegally occupying land.[58]

This raises the problem that John Harriss also discusses in his contribution about India in this volume, and Neera Chandhoke discusses on a more abstract level in her contribution, namely, to what extent middle-class civic organisations can 'represent' the poor. The answer could be that they act for clients' interests precisely as far as their own interests permit, which can be quite a long way in a patronage democracy, and not only through the formal electoral process. The minimal version of this in Indonesia is illustrated by a recent study of educated middle-class activists on behalf of indigenous peoples on Mentawai Island off West Sumatra. When democratisation offered them the chance to run for office, they diverted the money from foreign donations toward their campaign. Once ensconced, they abandoned their indigenous clients and nepotistically

repaid their intermediate class friends with lucrative logging and construction contracts.[59] A more-encompassing version saw elected local officials in Central Kalimantan passing the benefits of illegal logging to their poor constituencies, because they knew they would need their votes in the future, perhaps in the style of West Bengal.[60] The cultural and economic in-betweenness of the intermediate classes makes them expert brokers between the national elites and the poor. All political parties rely on them for their cadres. This does not mean they really understand what it is like to be destitute.

The Future

Local elites are at home in their surroundings because they are patrons to many poor clients. They exercise hegemony through numerous religious, political, regional, and occupational organisations. They have patronage to hand out – particularly bureaucratic jobs – because they control the rents available in provincial towns, which still arise mainly from the state. In exchange, they expect support for their projects, including the development of political parties and the inflow of public and private investment. Just as they do not share the secular and neoliberal interests of their cosmopolitan class rivals above, they have little interest in issues that concern their class rivals below: human rights, land, labour, and anticorruption measures. The parties are not about representing those interests.

Yet democracy activists have much of value to work with in Indonesia's provincial towns. Electoral democracy is enduringly popular. As they strive to move Indonesian democracy in more substantive directions, activists face two long-term challenges. Both will require vision and patience.

The first is the same one facing the formation of an effective state, namely, the polycentrism of the Indonesian polity. The proliferation of political parties following the post-authoritarian thaw, so typical of a patronage democracy, actually hindered democratisation. Chronic funding informality combined with local patriotism and personalism makes it difficult to build coherent, democratic national organisations. The charge of 'Jakarta imperialism' is readily aired. Political parties play only a nominal role in local direct elections – party hopping and coalitions of convenience are rife, and voters choose faces rather than parties. Most parties are auction houses for positions rather than vehicles for popular representation. They do not act as vehicles to articulate aggregated interests. The most successful national organisations working on popular issues, such as the environmental campaigner Walhi and the indigenous peoples' coalition AMAN, have a federal character.

The second obstacle is the patronage relationship itself. Patronage can coexist with democracy, but it is responsible for the democratic deficit because it reflects long-term economic and cultural inequalities. Patron-client relations are likely to remain a major factor in Indonesian democracy long into the future. However, we should not assume they will remain unchanged. Clientelism is a rather subtle 'unequal friendship' between people who are not that far apart on the social scale. Indonesia's Gini index – at 0.34 lower than the 0.41 of the United States and about the same as India's 0.33 – makes us think that the height of the barrier separating the intermediate classes from the poor urban and rural masses cannot be high by global standards. Economic inequalities are actually slightly lower in the less industrialised outer island provinces than in Java.[61] This should caution us against determinism. Nearly 50 years ago, Hildred Geertz made an astute, paradoxical 'yes, but' observation about the social structure of the typical Indonesian provincial town.[62] On the one hand, she had a clear idea of its dominant class, namely, an urban middle class of civil servants, corporate employees, independent entrepreneurs, and professionals. Their values were a mixture of the fashionable 'metropolitan superculture' and the regional culture into which they were born. Their social inferiors were the semiliterate urban proletariat. But on the other hand, she wrote of the 'highly complex class structures' and 'social formlessness' of Indonesian towns and cities.[63] Researchers should explore whether this two-sided observation remains relevant today. In the meantime, democracy activists may view social formlessness as a relatively open opportunity structure for emerging challengers from below. Patronage democracy offers a fluidity richer in opportunities than the New Order ever did.

Advancing urbanisation and economic globalisation throughout the country, meanwhile, are loosening up patronage relationships. They are now more often intra-urban than rural. Absolute poverty has declined (although relative poverty much less), and this too has helped to reduce the influence of traditional deference while increasing the role of money. Popular discussions about what is wrong with Indonesian democracy no longer revolve around 'primordialism' as they did in the 1950s, but around 'money politics'. Such 'neo-patrimonial' relationships have their own pernicious aspects – they are at home in the flourishing black economy – but they are less predictably manipulable for the patron. People protest more; clients are reclaiming their autonomy. Except in those few places where communal violence occurred during the uncertain years, 1999–2002, ethnic and religious chauvinism has declining electoral appeal. Chauvinists generally failed in their campaigns for local power, and where they did succeed, they were often not re-elected once the transitional period was over. A bigger proportion of post-1998 voters chose secular parties than they did

in the 1950s. Although traces of the communal block voting have persisted from the 1950s, the effects are measurably weaker. Voters now often place practical material interests above traditional deference.[64] The increasing use of opinion polls in legislative and direct elections is beginning to concentrate politicians' minds on what voters want, although thus far without producing programmatic platforms beyond the vague right wing populism of the PDI-P (of former president Megawati Soekarnoputri) or of Gerindra (of retired Lieutenant-General Prabowo Subianto).

An open opportunity structure for meaningful democracy makes the provincial towns potentially strategic bases from which progressive groups might build links of real solidarity with the disadvantaged in rural areas. This is in spite of the historic inequalities favouring provincial intermediate classes. Social spaces do exist in the larger provincial towns for the more independent social sectors, which have managed to free themselves from elite patronage. In these spaces, mutual learning can take place between intermediate class vanguards and the poor of the kind that Partha Chatterjee also advocated for India.[65] The proliferation of rights-based NGOs in these towns, some of which are quite exciting,[66] proves that the potential for change is great.

Notes

1. Crouch 1994.
2. Crouch 1986.
3. O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986.
4. Robison and Hadiz 2004.
5. Aspinall 2005.
6. Feith 1962.
7. Bünte and Ufen 2008.
8. King 2003.
9. Robison and Hadiz, e.g., 2004.
10. Priyono *et al.* 2007.
11. Ibid: 75–92.
12. Ibid: 79–83.
13. Ibid: 91.
14. Ibid: 57–60.
15. www.freedomhouse.org.
16. The 2006 change was mainly due to peaceful and mostly free elections for newly empowered regional leaders, an orderly transition to a directly elected president, and the Aceh peace settlement. The poorer rating for political rights was due mainly to military human rights impunity, military influence through its territorial network, judicial corruption, and continued discrimination against ethnic Chinese and against women.

17. Larry Diamond, quoted in Reich 2002: 3.
18. Chatterjee 2004.
19. O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986: 9.
20. Collier and Levitsky 1997.
21. Karl 1995.
22. Diamond 2002.
23. Slater 2004.
24. Robison and Hadiz 2004.
25. Hence labels like "ambiguous regime" (Diamond 2002); and "tutelary" democracy (Merkel 2004). Mietzner (2006b) has argued that the military no longer has veto powers.
26. Bünte 2006.
27. Moore 1966.
28. Ibid: 422.
29. Ibid: 418.
30. Lipset 1959.
31. Przeworski *et al.* 2000.
32. Evers 1973, 1982.
33. After 1998, military representation in parliament was phased out; the police were removed from military control; the number of officers seconded to bureaucratic posts dropped, as did the number of active and retired military officers winning election as regional heads. The military now has no counter-insurgency combat commands. Military ("territorial") garrison commands do remain in place everywhere.
34. Rieffel and Pramodhawardani 2007.
35. Mietzner 2003: 256.
36. Mietzner 2006a.
37. Mietzner 2008.
38. For example, Schiller 1996.
39. Ockey 2004: 172.
40. Ray and Goodpaster 2003: 76.
41. Klinken 2007.
42. Chandra 2004: 6.
43. PNI: Partai Nasional Indonesia, Indonesian National Party; Golkar: Golongan Karya, Functional Groups.
44. Tomsa 2005.
45. I use the term *class* heuristically, aware that class remains latent in Indonesia's mainstream public discourse and aware too that the term homogenises many differences in ethnicity, religion, occupation, and income. Class is not an exclusive term. It simply suggests a macro, loose collectivity with *some* common life chances as well as *some* common material interests that inspire political action.
46. Khan 2000: 35–40. He attributes this idea to the work of Barbara Harriss-White on class in provincial India, lately formulated as follows: "Outside India's metropolitan cities the economy is dominated by the intermediate

classes, a loose coalition of the small-scale capitalist class, agrarian and local agribusiness elites, and local state officials" (Harriss-White 2003: 44, 241).

47. Robison 1996: 88–90.
48. Evers 1987, Logsdon 1992.
49. Booth 2000.
50. www.bps.go.id/sector/socwel/table2.shtml.
51. Maryanov 1959: 63.
52. Feith 1957: 26–27.
53. Inequality between capitalists and labourers is a constraint on the idealised perfect market. Other constraints could also result in an unequal distribution of power over scarce resources. A recent reformulation of class theory by Sørensen (2000) abandons the problematic labour theory of value and replaces it with rent seeking. See critical reactions to this proposal by Erik Olin Wright, John H. Goldthorpe, and Dietrich Rueschemeyer in the Symposium on Class Analysis, *American Journal of Sociology* 105 (4), 2000.
54. Mackie 1971.
55. Eisenstadt 1973.
56. Roniger 2004.
57. Ibid.
58. Sarkar 2006.
59. Eindhoven 2007.
60. McCarthy 2007.
61. Akita and Lukman 1999.
62. Geertz 1963.
63. Ibid: 34–35.
64. King 2003.
65. Chatterjee 2004: 50.
66. Prasetyo *et al.* 2004.

9

Compromised Democracy: Observations on Popular Democratic Representation from Urban India

John Harriss

Introduction: Questions Concerning Representation and the 'Voice' of the Poor

In their study 'Democratic Responsiveness and Leadership in Delhi's Slums', Saumitra Jha, Vijayendra Rao, and Michael Woolcock (henceforth JRW) conclude, 'Urbanization in Delhi does appear to be providing the poor with greater voice in democratic discourse. Slum dwellers benefit from a remarkable access to politicians and other government officials'.[1] Their research, conducted in four slums (selected according to the proximity of the residents' states of origin and the age of the settlement), used 'both qualitative and quantitative evidence to uncover the strategies developed by the poor of Delhi to access government and services'.[2] What they end up showing is that 'a remarkable proportion of slum dwellers interact with elected politicians, though fewer gain access to bureaucrats' and '*Pradhans* [informal slum leaders, who usually claim a democratic mandate even if they have acquired their power through coercion] play a crucial role in intermediating between slum dwellers and formal government (though) this role becomes less pronounced over time'.[3] The 'remarkable access' enjoyed by the Delhi poor is thus mediated via local leaders. Does this amount to 'greater voice in democratic discourse'? What do these findings have to say about popular democratic representation?

JRW's findings correspond very closely with those from another study in Delhi conducted at around the same time in connection with a research project on *Rights, Representation and the Poor* in which a number of us sought to compare patterns of political participation in major cities in Latin America and India.[4] In this research, as I have reported in detail elsewhere,[5] we investigated political participation along the three dimensions of participation in electoral politics and in political parties, of participation in the activities of associations, and of participation in efforts to address significant public problems. The results of the research into this third dimension of political participation – in public problem-solving – yielded empirical findings that are broadly comparable with those of JRW. They also showed up the significance of intermediation by local 'big men' or *pradhans* (who are sometimes women, just as JRW describe), the extent of interaction with elected politicians (JRW report 30 percent in their sample, whereas we found that 29 percent of efforts at problem-solving – across Delhi as a whole, not just in the slums – involved approach to a political party. The proportion of the slum dwellers in the sample approaching political parties was higher), and the limited significance of nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) (only 8 percent of JRW's respondents acknowledged acquaintance with NGO staff; we found only five cases in which an NGO had been involved in efforts at public problem-solving).

In Delhi, more than half of the population, according to our sample estimates, had attempted some action to try to solve the sorts of public problems that are also highlighted by JRW, although those who live in slum areas were significantly more likely to have been involved in problem-solving than others.[6] People rarely tried to problem-solve alone, however (only 7 percent of problem-solving instances), and overwhelmingly took action of whatever kind with friends and neighbours, a pattern that is in striking contrast with what is observed in São Paulo in particular, where people much more commonly try to problem-solve by going to state agencies on their own.[7] In the course of efforts at solving public problems, what was most striking by comparison with both São Paulo and Mexico City was that many more citizens of Delhi took their problems to be mediated or brokered by political parties (especially) and by big men or patrons. They notably called on the *pradhans* of slum areas, who are usually connected with one or other of the major parties, so that problem-solving through political parties and problem-solving through *pradhans* are not very clearly distinguished from each other. (See Table 9.1.)

São Paulo clearly stands out for the importance of its citizens' direct approach to government. We know also that when Paulistas go to government, they are likely to go about it on their own. Mexico City stands out for the importance of collective self-provisioning ('self-help' in Table 9.1).

Table 9.1 Share of problem-solving efforts by channel

	Delhi	*São Paulo*	*Mexico City*
Government	37.0	54.0	33.0
Court	1.2	3.2	4.0
Party	29.0	4.0	9.0
Patron	8.0	6.0	3.0
Demonstration	8.0	8.0	7.0
Self-help	16.0	20.0	42.0
Petition	No data	5.0	2.0
Total	100	100	100

Delhi, where we also know that problem-solving is usually done with others, stands out for the much greater importance of political parties and patrons in problem-solving efforts than in the two Latin American cities.

The different ways of going about public problem-solving that we have distinguished suggest different forms of citizen-state relationships, reflecting on the quality of citizenship and of democracy[8]: direct approach to government, or taking legal action, may be considered as indicating a *direct* relationship of citizens to the state; taking action through parties or patrons seems to reflect the fact that citizen-state relationships are *brokered*; action by means of demonstration or petitioning indicates a *contentious* relationship with the state; while problem-solving through collective self-help would seem to show a *detached* relationship between citizens and the state.

This is a snapshot, clearly, and it is possible that both *contention* and *brokerage* are part of a fight for more directly responsive government institutions. But at this particular point in the history of citizen-state relations in the three cities, they are rather clearly differentiated from each other. Overall in Delhi, citizens have mediated (or brokered) and direct relationships to the state; and the brokered relationship with the state is clearly very much more significant than it is in either Latin American city. The patterns of problem-solving activity in Delhi are also differentiated across social hierarchies: poorer people with low levels of education, those in informal employment, and some others who suffer from particular disadvantage, such as women and Muslims, are relatively more likely to try to solve problems through political parties, through participation in demonstrations, or (in the case of women and Muslims) through big men. Wealthier people, generally, when they do engage in problem-solving activity, and those who are more educated tend to go directly to government (a finding that appears comparable with JRW's findings) to take legal action or to engage in self-provisioning. They are less likely to go to political parties, and much

less likely to take part in political demonstrations or go to big men. These patterns also obtain among permanent, formal (sector) employees. The fit between these patterns and social classes is, of course, far from being exact, but it is fair to conclude that people from the middle class are more likely to have a direct relationship with the state, while those of the informal working class and slum dwellers are more likely to relate to the state via the brokerage of political parties.

What then accounts for the much greater importance of the mediation of citizen-state relations through brokerage by political parties and big men in Delhi than is the case in Latin American cities? Why are parties so much involved in mediating especially the relationships of informal working-class people with the state? A number of factors may be distinguished. The relatively high incidence of problem-solving activity across the city population and among slum dwellers in particular, the frequency of combinations of different approaches to problem-solving by individual citizens in Delhi, and the relatively low level of direct citizenship reflect both the widespread failure of the local state to satisfy people's needs and its relative inaccessibility to them. (We also know that when Delhi citizens do go directly to the government, they very often go with others rather than going on their own, as they do in São Paulo.) Slum dwellers may be relatively more active problem-solvers than other citizens, but it appears that their chances of getting things done by the government are not very good, and ethnographic observation shows that they are frequently disregarded by local officials. Slum dwellers are disproportionately from lower castes, and they are at a disadvantage in their interactions with officials who are commonly from higher castes. Generally speaking, according to ethnographic evidence,[9] poorer, less-well-educated, and lower-status people (with little cultural capital) have a tough time of it in India when they go to a government office, and it is not surprising that they go with others if they can or accompanied by some influential person or with a 'fixer'[10] who knows the ropes. Our data also show that it is those with little or no education who are most disposed to going about problem-solving through the brokerage of political parties.

So what are we to make of the observations of these two studies of local political activity in Delhi? What do they suggest about democratic representation and the role of political parties? JRW argue that they show that the urban poor have 'a greater voice in democratic discourse', whereas my own interpretation evokes Partha Chatterjee's distinction between 'civil society' and 'political society' and supports the view that they show that the poor who constitute the majority of urban people in India are 'only tenuously rights-bearing citizens'.[11] I suggest that the findings seriously call into question the idea that the urban poor of Delhi have much voice in

democratic discourse or secure what can properly be described as democratic representation through the intermediation of *pradhans*. They seem rather to indicate dependence and precisely the lack of that political equality between citizens that is quite fundamental to the democratic ideal.

Our observations in Delhi recall the distinction made by Chatterjee when he argues, 'Most of the inhabitants of India are only tenuously… rights-bearing citizens in the sense imagined by the constitution. They are not, therefore, proper members of civil society and are not regarded as such by the institutions of the state'.[12] People like those of the informal working class of Delhi relate to the state (as they do to many NGOs) as defined populations, such as that of slum dwellers, which are the targets of policy and to be controlled by the state. The people who are thus defined take action that is quite often technically illegal, such as squatting on public land or stealing electricity, and in so doing effectively make claims on the state for the realisation of what they believe to be their rights to welfare. Their relationships with the state are generally mediated via local political leaders or those who head informal organisations. This is what Chatterjee refers to as 'political society', as opposed to 'civil society'.

The 'denizens' as they may be called – the word means 'inhabitants' – to distinguish them from the 'rights-bearing citizens' of this political society are in fact also more active in party politics, as they are in Delhi, than are middle-class people.[13] This is generally the case in India, which stands out among parliamentary democracies because it shows an inverse relationship between wealth and social status and electoral participation.[14] The point is made quite vividly by Sukhetu Mehta in his account of power in Bombay in *Maximum City* when he observes, 'From the wealthy section of Malabar Hill, the *legal* residents of the district [added emphasis here], the turnout is twelve percent; from the squatters in the slum colonies, for whom the issue of who comes into power means the difference between living in four walls or on the street, it's eighty-eight percent.'[15] Political parties increasingly mobilise their electoral support among slum dwellers (as JRW say, 'Delhi slums are… "garrisons" for politicians'[16]), often, in Delhi, operating through local influentials, the *pradhans*. Party politics, generally, is oriented toward the denizens of political society, rather than the middle-class citizens of civil society.

'The Burden of Indian Democracy': Democracy without Social Transformation

One view of the problem of democracy in India is that anticipated by Ambedkar, speaking in the closing debate of the Constituent Assembly

in 1949, when he said that with the introduction of the constitution of India:

> We are going to enter into a life of contradictions. In politics we will have equality and in social and economic life we will have inequality. In politics we will be recognising the principle of one man, one vote, one value. In our social and economic life we shall, by reason of our social and economic structure, continue to deny the principle of one man, one value. How long shall we continue to live this life of contradictions? How long shall we continue to deny equality in our social and economic life? If we continue to deny it for long, we do so only by putting our political democracy in peril[17]

Recently, the political philosopher Pratap Bhanu Mehta has argued in the same vein in his analysis of *The Burden of Democracy*.[18] He writes that although the nationalist movement and the impulse of social reform that 'sometimes accompanied it' delegitimised the more extreme forms of oppression of Hindu society[19]:

> The structure of what we might call India's ancient social regime, survived into democracy relatively intact. That whole ensemble of different rights, privileges that stratified Indian society and produced some of the vilest forms of social distinctions known, was carried over into the democratic framework. The contradiction, between proclaimed political equality on the one hand, and deep social and economic inequality on the other, was too obvious to go unnoticed. But this feature, in part, constituted the uniqueness of the Indian experiment. Rather than political democracy following at least a social transformation of sorts, ultimately it was going to be the instrument of this transformation.

It is not inconceivable that political democracy should be the instrument of social transformation, and the experience of certain regions of India – notably, but not only, that of Kerala – shows that it has been. But with regard to India as a whole, as Mehta notes perceptively, 'The irony is that the more unequal the background institutions and practices of society, the more likely it is that politics will be a struggle to displace the holders of power rather than an ambition to bring about social transformation.'[20] This point aptly reflects differences across India and the character of politics in the Hindi heartland as opposed to parts of the south and the west.[21] As a number of writers have argued, formal political democracy has generally proven to be a limited instrument of social transformation in modern India – Kerala, West Bengal, and perhaps Tamil Nadu being exceptions to the general rule. Barrington Moore, in his classic *Social Origins of*

Dictatorship and Democracy, argued that the particular pattern of political development of India has to be explained as the outcome of the establishment of formal parliamentary democracy in the absence of a bourgeois revolution. The forces brought together in the nationalist movement, he suggests, gave rise to political democracy, 'but (to) a democracy that has not done a great deal toward modernising India's social structure.'[22] More recently, Sudipta Kaviraj and Partha Chatterjee have both referred to Gramsci's idea of 'passive revolution' in explaining the process of social change in modern India and have shown how social transformation was in the end sought to be brought about from above through state-bureaucratic agency.[23] Kaviraj presses the argument too far[24] but he surely makes a very important point when he refers to the failure of the political elite of the new Indian state in the 1950s and 1960s to develop a 'common political language' shared with the masses. And what marked out the emergence of new political elites, like that – notably – to which the Dravidian Movement in Tamil Nadu gave rise, was precisely their ability to create such a common language, a long way though the celebration of the mytho-history of the Tamil people undoubtedly was from the rational-scientific aspirations of the Nehruvian elite.

In the context of Indian society in the first 25 years of independence, the Congress 'dominant party' system operated through a structure of clientelistic relationships extending from local levels both urban and rural up to the apex of the pyramid of power. Those who were locally powerful – commonly the larger landholders, the dominant rich peasants – functioned as critical brokers, mediating between the mass of the people and politicians.[25] This changed, to an extent, after Indira Gandhi broke the old Congress Party and was then successful at the beginning of the 1970s, as observers noted at the time, in reaching voters 'over the heads' of the local notables.[26] The Congress organisation remained broken, as Atul Kohli[27] showed when he revisited in the 1980s the constituencies studied 20 years earlier by Myron Weiner (who had found that the Congress Party had local organisation and some semblance at least of internal party democracy). And what political scientists have described as the 'deinstitutionalisation' of Indian politics extends to most other party political formations, which are little more (if at all) than loose followings of more or less charismatic political leaders. The exceptions that prove the rule are the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (the CPM) in Kerala and West Bengal; the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), still (even if only just) in Tamil Nadu; maybe the Telugu Desam Party in Andhra Pradesh; and perhaps the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in some parts of the country.

In these circumstances, as Sunil Khilnani has put it, democracy has come to mean little more than 'elections,' and although democracy has

reconstituted social identities in modern India, identities of caste and religion have also 'bent the democratic idea to their own purposes.'[28] These paradoxical trends are clearly reflected in what Yogendra Yadav has memorably described as 'the second democratic upsurge' of the 1990s that has empowered certain historically subordinated communities from among the Other Backward Classes and even some of the Scheduled Castes, yet behind political leaders and party political groupings that are far from being democratic in their own functioning.[29]

The compromised character of Indian democracy now, therefore, is that while representative electoral politics do represent the means whereby the mass of the people can hope to realise the self-respect that is, as Pratap Mehta argues, democracy's deepest aspiration, these politics provide for only the most limited kind of agency on the part of poor people. There is by now strong evidence for the first proposition in the work, for example, of Javeed Alam[30] and in the ethnography of Mukulika Banerjee,[31] while Janaki Nair, writing of the priorities of the urban poor in Bangalore, says that 'there is an overwhelming anxiety to claim citizenship *and voting rights* by getting onto the voters' lists' [emphasis added]. She goes on to say: 'The last [voting rights] was seen in many cases as critical to the survival of the poorest groups in the city, as politics is often the only resource in a system which may deny the benefits of policy decisions or legal remedies to the poor.'[32] This seems most eloquently to reflect what Chatterjee refers to as political society. Yet electoral politics provide for only the most limited kind of agency on the part of poor people if they actually have to enter into relationships of dependence with powerful intermediaries to secure their entitlements as citizens of the country. Neera Chandhoke has argued that the potential and the possibility of politics involve 'activity that is empowering inasmuch as, when ordinary people engage in political activity they acquire agency, they recover selfhood, and they earn self-confidence.'[33] I agree. Yet I cannot help but question the extent to which electoral politics makes it possible for ordinary people to acquire agency, if in the end they can only secure their rights through dependence on the intermediation of those who are locally powerful. In Indian cities, efforts among slum dwellers to organise locally, independently of local big men and of political parties, so they can tackle those problems that are of greatest concern to them – rights to housing and rights to livelihood – are usually broken up by the politicians or by landlords (who may, of course, be the same people). The slums are, after all, the 'garrisons' for politicians.

The question then arises, as to whether there is the possibility, championed by quite a number of writers, of reinvigorating democracy, or of creating substantive democracy through a kind of 'new' politics grounded in organisation in communities rather than in workplaces and involve a

whole range of civil organisations and social movements rather than political parties or the 'old' social movements such as trades unions, especially. This is what Olle Törnquist in his introduction to this book refers to as the 'direct democracy approach.' Such a politics, it is argued, is more truly democratic than representative party politics. It addresses the problems of the 'chain-of-popular-sovereignty approach'[34] such as those that I have drawn attention to in the preceding discussion of JRW's claim that 'urbanisation in Delhi does appear to be providing the poor with greater voice in democratic discourse.'

Civil Society Activism and Democratic Representation

How far then or in what ways does the kind of civil society activism celebrated by the protagonists of such 'new' politics address the problems of democratic representation? Here I have in view Pratap Bhanu Mehta's strong suggestion, 'In the name of democratic empowerment, we have focussed on the side issues of representation rather than effective public policy. [The middle class is not] an unalloyed carrier of virtue… but we are underestimating the degree to which this class is the wave of the future and is now struggling to articulate new conceptions of social justice.'[35] Our surveys on political participation in Delhi showed that it is very largely wealthier and better-educated people – middle-class people – who are active in more formal associations, while research on associational activity conducted both in Bangalore (by Sudha Narayanan) and in Chennai showed that it is distinctly stratified and largely dominated by organisations of middle-class people.[36] Are they articulating 'new conceptions of social justice'? What are their implications for political representation?

In Delhi, Bangalore, and Chennai, the metropolitan cities in which I have done research, there are large numbers of very significant associations that are quite clearly part of their 'corporate economies' – the term used by Solomon Benjamin[37] to describe those parts of India's cities that are the arenas for industrial, bureaucratic, and IT sector elites. The large numbers of residents' welfare associations (RWAs), for example, range from organisations that are no more than committees of management of apartment buildings and condominiums responsible for employing security guards and ensuring that such common functions as elevators and water pumps are in good order to associations mainly in older colonies that have extensive civic functions (Arabindoo, nd). These RWAs are found mainly in those parts of the cities that can be identified with the corporate economy.[38] In each city, particularly in Bangalore, there are prominent and

influential organisations, established by individuals who are unquestionably from the dominant fraction of the middle class, that are concerned with problems of public policy and issues of citizenship. And the corporate economy gives rise, too, to burgeoning numbers of service-providing NGOs, many of which – like their forebears of the later colonial period as they have been described by Carey Anthony Watt[39] – are distinctly paternalistic in their style of operation as they deliver welfare to the poor of the local economies of the cities. It is fair, I suggest, to describe the activities of such organisations – which deliver rather comparable packages of interventions described in terms of 'community development,' including micro-finance initiatives, skills training (so often the ubiquitous tailoring classes for women), classes for school dropouts, and health camps – as being concerned with bringing order to the 'wild' that is constituted by the slum areas of the cities. In the disarmingly honest statement of one such organisation in Chennai, they are concerned with 'dispensing drops of charity' to the needy.

Associational life in what Benjamin describes as the local economies of the cities – the diverse and complex parts of them that provide most of the population with their accommodation, work, and livelihoods, often in circumstances in which property rights are uncertain – is more patchy. There are any numbers of trade associations for merchants or small manufacturers in particular lines of business or for those whose operations are in a particular market area. There are some local community associations, although these are commonly fragmented along caste lines. Today there are large numbers of women's self-help groups promoted by state governments in association with NGOs. And there are a few mobilisational movements that are taking up issues that are critical for poorer people from the informal working class. Chennai offers the *Penn Urimai Iyakkam*, the women's rights movement; the Unorganised Workers' Federation; *Nirman Mazdur Panchayat Sangh,* the construction workers' union; and the Tamil Nadu Slum Dwellers' Rights Movement. Bangalore has the *Karnataka Kolageri Nivasigala Sanyuktha Sanghatana* (KKNSS), a federation of slum dwellers' organisations, and Women's Voice. They take up the connecting issues of rights to housing, rights to livelihood, and women's rights. The first two – rights to housing and livelihood – are almost completely ignored by the influential policy advocacy organisations and the service-providing NGOs that are based in the corporate economies of the cities.

The following passage, which elaborates these points, is taken from Sudha Narayanan's report on her research in Bangalore:

> Perhaps the most telling feature of associational space in Bangalore is the sharp stratification of organizations. On the one hand, there are

associations and movements that are distinctly elitist, run typically by the upper middle class people (often those with strong corporate ties and in some cases NRIs) that even geographically are clearly confined to middle and upper class neighbourhoods. These initiatives commonly build on pre-existing neighbourhood or residents' welfare associations. These are organizations that adopt the formal language of citizenship and speak of participation in budgeting and transparency and accountability in local government (*Janaagraha*, Public Affairs Centre, etc.). Indications are that these entities, owing to their faith in the notion of partnership with the government, are often non-partisan, ensuring that they have good relations with the ruling party. Many of these organizations are run with large budgets with a high degree of 'professionalism' and have a reputation for being media-savvy. Their attempts at broad-basing the movement have not quite materialized.[40] On the other hand there are others that typically originate with or are focused on lower class people that mobilize and organize people to make demands on the state (KKNSS, Women's Voice, AVAS, Mahila Milan etc.). The focus of their work is typically the slums and much of their effort is directed at securing basic rights for the people.

Noteworthy is the contrasting manner in which they choose to engage with the government. The former have adopted the paradigm of 'public-private' partnership and champion 'collaborative change'. The idea is that the synergy between citizens and government is essential to bring about change. As a network of such organisations puts it, their entity 'provides a synergistic opportunity for government and citizenry to join hands and demonstrate that public money is being used for public good'.[41] This is a vocabulary shared by this realm of associations. On the other hand, mass movements such as the KKNSS have consciously adopted 'protest' and see their methods as being highly successful in protecting the rights of the poor and marginalised. There are several entities that adopt similar modes of engaging with the state. A 'partnership' with the state is inconceivable to most organisations in this group.

There is also a minor and heterogeneous 'Third Front' comprising entities such as CIVIC and Mahila Milan. These two organisations merit attention for special reasons. CIVIC, an informal forum originating with the middle class, is sympathetic to the poor. It is probably the only, certainly the biggest, organisation that tries to be representative of all sections of Bangaloreans. Theirs is an effort to bridge this poor-elite crevasse. Mahila Milan is part of the Third Front for a different reason. Affiliated in national alliance with SPARC in Mumbai and the National Slum Dwellers' Federation, Mahila Milan works in partnership with the state, although in a way very different from the elite organisations. As Appadurai puts it, the alliance 'has consciously decided to opt for partnerships of a variety of

sorts with other powerful actors, including the various levels and incarnations of the state, to achieve its goals which are to gain secure housing and urban infrastructure for the urban poor… taking a risk that the hard-won mobilization of certain groups of the urban poor (as political capital) is best invested in partnership arrangements rather than in the politics of confrontation or mass violence.'[42] Mahila Milan thus negotiates the polarity by being of and from the poor. However, it negotiates (rather than partners in the way, say, *Janaagraha* would) with the state, unlike other organisations of similar origins. Steering clear of party affiliations, local Mahila Milan associations have managed to empower women to secure, for instance, land rights.

It is the elitist organisations with their ties to the corporate world that tend to select themselves to be part of most citizen-participation or public-private partnership ventures of the state government across the board. This self-selection has, it appears, undermined the ability of a whole stratum of civil society organisations that represent the interests of the poor to partake of political processes. (Narayanan's point is that the elite organisations 'crowd out' those that are of the poor and, as I go on to explain, fail to address the problems that are most salient for them.)

I have described a comparable kind of stratification of associational activity in Chennai, also distinguishing discrete networks in South Chennai, where the 'global city' is most in evidence, that are principally organised and led by Brahmans, and in North Chennai, where they are led mainly by Christians. I have sought to show how this evidence, like that from Bangalore, calls into question claims that are made in the contemporary discourse on governance. Contrary to the expectations, for example, of the World Bank when it speaks of NGOs and of voluntary associations as 'expressions of voice and participation' that are 'on the rise',[43] many of them are not membership organisations, and their representational claims are weak. Participation in associational activities is quite heavily skewed toward more highly educated and wealthier people, and they provide little space for active participation on the part of poor people from the (massive) informal working class. Civil society activism has opened up new opportunities for representation, no doubt. However, although the upper stratum of professional advocacy organisations and policy research outfits in Chennai and Bangalore are able to exercise influence on the actions of governments, such opportunities hardly extend to the informal working class or the urban poor. The paradox that increasing opportunities for participation may actually increase political inequality stands against claims of protagonists of new politics, such as those advocated by the World Bank. Most importantly, civil society activism largely denies political agency to poor people from the informal working class.[44]

Conclusion

In conclusion, I want to briefly recapitulate arguments about the concepts of civil society and political society and about the compromised character of Indian democracy. As I have written elsewhere,[45] I was particularly struck by the statement made to me by a leading civil society activist in Chennai. He said that 'politics is a dirty river' that has to be dammed up or diverted by the activities of organisations like his own, one that is highly regarded, very professional, and definitely from what I have described here as the upper stratum of organisations associated with, and largely located geographically within, the corporate economies. He was originally in international banking, and it was the experience of living in Singapore that started him on his quest to clean up (literally) his home city. What he proposed is a kind of anti-politics in line with the suggestions of authorities such as the World Bank about the possibilities for a new politics rooted in organisations of civil society rather than political parties and based to a great extent in neighbourhoods rather than workplaces. This is activity that is located in civil society as defined, in line with European political philosophy, by Partha Chatterjee. It is concerned with rational problem-solving and with modernising cities and society rather than with democratic rights. I recognise here what Chatterjee talks about when he speaks of measures and actions that mean 'walling in the protected zones of bourgeois civil society and dispensing the governmental functions of law and order and welfare through the "natural leaders" of the governed populations [what so much of the activity of NGOs and other civil society organisations is about] . . . (in a) strategy (that) seeks to preserve the civic virtues of bourgeois life from the potential excesses of electoral democracy.'[46] The masses who, exactly as Chatterjee argues, are 'only tenuously rights-bearing citizens', are in a sense 'left with politics'. To claim their rights as citizens, they very frequently have to do so through the mediation or brokerage of local big men and political parties. Then, as Chatterjee argues elsewhere, these agents 'mediate between domains that are differentiated by deep and historically entrenched inequalities of power . . . between those who govern and those who are governed'.[47] It is a mode of politics that (*pace* JRW's views on the politics of the Delhi slums) is a denial of citizenship among equal members of a civic community.

Chatterjee also writes, however, of another response to the awkward dilemmas of the politics of most of the world, one that 'does not abandon the project of enlightenment, but attempts to steer it through the thicket of contestations in . . . political society (and) . . . the zone in which the project of democratic modernity has to operate, slowly, painfully, unsurely'.[48]

This is a point that has not, I think, been very much picked up, perhaps because Chatterjee has not elaborated on it very much himself. I think again of organisations like the *Penn Urimai Iyyakam*, the Unorganised Workers' Federation, and the *Nirman Mazdur Panchayat Sangh* in Chennai, and of the Tamil Nadu Slum Dwellers' Rights Movement.[49] They are all organisations (like the KKNSS in Bangalore, too) founded by middle-class people – the same, remarkable Brahman woman, a former teacher of physics, was involved in the establishment of all the Chennai organisations – but they are movements in which poor people from the informal working class are active participants. Through these movements, they develop political agency of their own[50] – as I witnessed among the remarkable, poorly educated, poor women who are active in *Penn Urimai* – that is not mediated by local big men and political parties. These are instances, I believe, of organisations and of activities that are directed at achieving democratic modernity. Their existence, I suggest, qualifies the distinction that Chatterjee makes between civil society and political society. It shows that there are efforts being made to establish the principles of civil society – the rights and responsibilities of equal citizenship, which is both the foundation for, and the end of democracy – in the sphere of political society. And these movements may be assisted, in some ways and in some degree, by certain of the organisations that I identify with the upper stratum of organisations of the corporate economies of the cities. One such organisation is *Catalyst*, in Chennai, directed by a former Indian Administrative Service officer who is passionate about extending local democracy through the *panchayats*, and who is concerned especially to fight for the extension of *panchayat* democracy to the city. It is not that there can be any expectation that *panchayat* democracy necessarily leads to some form of 'empowered participatory governance',[51] but it may help to open spaces in the way that it has, in some degree at least, in Kerala. The 'project of enlightenment' has not been entirely given up by the new middle class, even if many members of this class pursue the track of exclusion.

It is also important, however, to recognise the relative weakness of these organisations that are of poor people. They must not be romanticised. Popular organising among the poor is easily broken, as we have seen, by local power holders and by political parties for which the slums are the garrisons of support. There is no substitute for the kind of politicisation of which Olle Törnquist writes in the introduction to this book, when there develops the sort of synergy between popular organising and a political party driven by a socially transformative ideology seen, for instance, in the earlier history at least of the Workers' Party in Brazil and the Communist Party in Kerala.

Notes

My notion of *compromised democracy* derives from a reading of recent unpublished work by Nandini Gooptu of St Anthony's College in Oxford in which she describes the urban poor of Kolkata in the context of economic liberalisation as "reluctant entrepreneurs" and "compromised democrats."

1. Jha, Rao, and Woolcock 2007: 244.
2. Jha *et al.* 2007: 231.
3. Ibid.: 244.
4. The research program investigating "Rights, Representation and the Poor in Global Cities of India and Latin America" (RRP) was funded by the Centre for the Future State at the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, and by the Department for International Development, and involve large-scale survey research on the different dimensions of political participation and studies of associational activity in São Paulo, Mexico City, Delhi, and Bangalore. The project was directed by Peter Houtzager, Adrian Gurza Lavalle, and myself, in partnership in India with Neera Chandhoke at Delhi University and K Nagaraj at the Madras Institute of Development Studies. The research in Chennai that is also described in this paper was my own, but it was substantially influenced by the RRP program. It was conducted with the support of the Economic and Social Research Council as part of a wider program of research in which I collaborated with my colleagues from the Department of Anthropology of the London School of Economics.
5. Harriss 2005, 2006.
6. See Harriss 2005.
7. In São Paulo in 48 percent of problem-solving instances, the person acted on his or her own, and in 44 percent, she or he drew on the support of acquaintances or family; in Mexico City, the comparable figures are 28 percent and 76 percent; in Delhi, they are 7 percent and 77 percent.
8. The terms employed here were first suggested by Peter Houtzager and Adrian Gurza Lavalle.
9. See, e.g., Corbridge *et al.* 2005.
10. Manor 2004.
11. Chatterjee 2004.
12. Ibid: 38.
13. See Harriss 2005.
14. See Alam 2004.
15. Mehta 2004: 75.
16. Jha et al. 2007: 238.
17. Quoted in Khilnani 1997: 35.
18. 2003.
19. Mehta 2003: 52–53.
20. Ibid: 48.
21. See Harriss 1999, on differences in political regimes across Indian states.
22. Moore 1966: 316.

23. See Chatterjee 1993, Kaviraj 1984, 1988.
24. See Corbridge and Harriss 2000.
25. As F. G. Bailey (1963) showed, seminally, in his work on the politics of Orissa.
26. Marguerite Robinson (1988) is one commentator on this in her observations of rural politics in Andhra Pradesh.
27. 1990.
28. Khilnani 1997: 59.
29. Yadav 1996: 100.
30. 2004.
31. 2007.
32. Nair 2005: 336–337.
33. Chandhoke 2002: 46.
34. Törnquist's introduction, this volume.
35. Mehta 2006.
36. Both studies were conducted using the same methodology. There is no way of defining the universe of associations in an Indian city for sampling, for it is very clear that official registration of "societies" is erratic and incomplete. In these circumstances an accepted way of proceeding is by snowball sampling, which is what we did in both Bangalore and Chennai, from starting points in different parts of each city that were identified by consultation with different local informants. In the course of the survey, the aim was to achieve a "closure" so that the snowball technique yielded organisations that were already included in the sample. It also became apparent that the snowball technique with the initial entry points did not quite capture the richness of associational activity in cities. For these reasons, a second track of sampling was done, involving the use of citywide directories of voluntary associations (*Bangalore Cares* [2001], and in Chennai the *Sahaya* register) and in part through observation. In the Chennai study it was remarkable that I was able to identify rather few associations started and run by people from leading non-Brahman communities, other than Christians. This must give rise to questioning the reliability of the methodology of the study, yet I believe that there are good grounds for thinking that it is an accurate account of social reality.
37. 2000.
38. In Delhi the Bhagidari ("partnership") scheme established by the Delhi government to develop "joint ownership" by citizens and the government of "the change process" in the city (according to the government Web site), in practice involves very largely RWAs found in Planned Colonies and does not extend to the *jhuggi jhopris*.
39. 2005.
40. As Ramesh Ramanathan (2007) of *Janaagraha* concedes.
41. http://www.janaagraha.org/campaigns/proof_paper.htm.
42. Appadurai 2004.
43. *World Development Report 1997.*
44. These arguments are elaborated in Harriss 2006a and 2007.

45. Harriss 2006a, 2007.
46. Chatterjee 2004: 50.
47. Ibid.: 66.
48. Ibid.: 50.
49. Briefly described in Harriss 2006a and 2007.
50. They acquire political agency themselves in a way that is quite comparable with what Arjun Appadurai describes in his study of the SPARC-NSDF-Mahila Milan alliance, which he constructs in terms of the development of a "culture of aspiration" (2004). At this point, there seems to be some convergence between Appadurai and Chatterjee.
51. Fung and Wright's term, 2003.

10

Trade Unions and Popular Representation: Nigeria and South Africa Compared

Björn Beckman

Trade Unions as a Source of Popular Representation: The Argument

Scholars (primarily, but not only, from Europe) are naturally enough preoccupied with the historical role of labour movements and their ability to sustain their political influence on state power through the close link between unions and the political wing of the movement, whether social-democratic, socialist, or communist. Are working-class-based and trade-union-backed political parties the solution to the 'democratic problem' in much of the world today? Some of us feel that we have good reasons to think so. The notion of a labour movement seems to break out of the straitjacket imposed by those who want us to choose between parliaments and civil society. By allowing itself to be located at the very centre of the political society, it dissolves the state-society division that has been popularised by liberal and neoliberal theory.

I argue in this chapter that trade unions, at least potentially, are a democratic force capable of providing an element of popular direction to the institutions and processes of formal political representation, even when the latter are dominated by ruling-class politics. The way to go is, in most cases, quite long, and the frontiers look very different from place to place. I pay particular attention to the role of alliance politics, the ability of unions to offer leadership and direction to a wider range of popular democratic forces. I stress the role of unions in basic democratic institution

building as an ultimate baseline for popular democratic advance. It seems to me that what unions may contribute in that respect does in fact bridge the apparent disjuncture between parliamentary politics and civil society. The argument draws primarily on the experiences of trade unions in Nigeria and South Africa. In the Nordic countries the claim to political representation is linked to the historical role of an industrial working class. Can African trade unions raise similar claims? Swedish trade unions are currently panicking because they are losing members on a massive scale. The losses seem to fit in an ominous trend globally where trade unions are on the retreat. Or are they? It is argued in a recent contribution to the *South African Labour Bulletin*[1] that unions are growing, not shrinking. In any case, it is clear that we are witnessing an unprecedented growth in the global working class. In most African countries, however, the wage-earning population is small, especially compared with the mass of traders and producers in the informal economy. I argue in this chapter that, despite their smallness, African trade unions are centrally placed in providing the basis for popular representation due to the centrality of wage labour in the resuscitation of the 'national project'.

Can popular representation be achieved in a context of neoliberal globalisation and the fragmentation that it causes in state power and the national project? The shift has certainly undercut the scope for nation-state-based development projects. It affects welfare-state policies at the Nordic end[2] but, even more importantly from a third-world perspective, it undercuts nation-state strategies to counter the regressive logic of an imperialist-dominated world order.[3] Access to advanced technology and social and technical skills is vital for breaking out of that order. It is suggested that trade unions, because of their strategic location, are in a critical position to ensure a popular democratic content to the development process. Unions have a special place in the defence and promotion of national development policies because of the way in which wage labour is located at the very cutting edge of technological transformation of society. They are capable, I argue, of defending a national development project in opposition to neoliberal globalisation. In particular, I discuss their role in infusing the project with a popular democratic content.

Nigerian and South African Unions: An Empirical Focus

The argument is explored primarily in the light of experiences from Nigeria and South Africa, including two leading national union centres, the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), and two major manufacturing unions,

the National Union of Textile, Garments and Tailoring Workers of Nigeria (NUTGTWN) and the Southern African Clothing and Textile Workers Union (SACTWU). While focusing on unions, the chapter has relevance, I believe, to a wider body of actors in Africa's civil society.[4] NLC was established by military decree in 1978.[5] Although the state has failed to subordinate it on a consistent basis, it has been twice banned during the years of military rule that preceded the general elections in 1999 when the most recent ban was lifted. NUTGTWN played an important role in organising union resistance to military control.[6] From 1999 to 2007, Nigeria's civilian government was led by former General Olusegun Obasanjo. Structural adjustment policies of the World Bank type had been introduced in 1986, although trade liberalisation, the deregulation of petroleum prices, and the privatisation of public services were stepped up during Obasanjo's administration. Decades of military rule and mismanagement have exacerbated sectional grievances and undermined popular commitment to the national project.

How do Nigerian experiences fare in comparison with South Africa? There are obvious structural differences, including the wider economic context and, in particular, the vitality of a large informal economy in the Nigerian case. Nigerian workers continue to have viable links to the rural economy, while in South Africa, these links have been virtually destroyed by apartheid with important consequences for strategies of alliances and social policy. Differences in political experience are also obvious with South African trade unions having emerged into their current role as a result of their vital role in the anti-apartheid struggle. The alliance with the ruling party, the African National Congress (ANC), ensures political access and influence, and labour legislation is union-friendly while unions assert autonomy vis-à-vis state and ruling party in opposition to government policy, for instance, on privatisation, HIV-AIDS, and Zimbabwe. But who depends on whom? The achievement of South Africa's unions is contested.[7] How much popular democratic representation are they capable of delivering to the post apartheid order? Have they been sidetracked by other forces such as big business and a prospective black bourgeoisie? How much protection do the labour laws provide against massive unemployment? As in Nigeria, unions resist aspects of the reform policies of the state, and they certainly cannot be reduced to mere mouthpieces of the government. But are they a force of popular representation? For some critics, the ultimate test of democratic relevance is the ability to give voice to the marginalised masses, a 'new social movement unionism'. Whose interests are they voicing: those of a 'labour aristocracy'?

Can Trade Unions Overcome the Disjuncture between Parliamentary Politics and Civil Society?

Both the concern with parliamentary processes (elections, political parties) or, alternatively, with 'deepening of civil society' (for example, 'empowered civic participation'), although no doubt legitimate in their own right, tend to miss out on a fundamental disjuncture in both perspectives: the failure of ordinary people (however empowered in their civil society context) to have a significant impact on the management of state power.[8] Can trade unions provide such a missing link? Trade union leaders in Nigeria are dismayed by the process of parliamentary politics as they know it. The overwhelming numbers of politicians that it brings to power are out to feather their own nests, not least to recuperate the heavy outlay on electioneering and to ensure a return on their 'investment'. Politics in Nigeria, as reported in the media, is largely about the excesses in which politicians, once in power, are prepared to go in these respects. Unionists are convinced that unions are more credible institutions of popular democratic representation. In practice, however, their interventions in the parliamentary process are limited. Electoral politics continues to be the realm of moneyed elites with a very limited popular democratic content.

So what are trade unions supposed to do to overcome the disjuncture between parliamentary politics and civil society? Nigerian unions over the years have engaged in a wide variety of strategies both at the individual and organisational level. Individual union leaders have opted for elected office within the parliamentary system, hoping to draw on union support in influencing the direction of politics. As will be discussed below, there have also been repeated efforts to make an impact on party politics, as in General Babangida's 'transition' of the late 1980s and through the launching of a new Labour Party in 2003.[9] In the Nigerian case, however, the union impact on the parliamentary scene continues to be marginal. Must it be?

The South African case suggests a different scenario. In recent times, trade unions have played a decisive role in the bitter contest over the leadership of the ANC (and presumably the government). Despite allegations of the corrupt and self-seeking behaviour of some politicians and despite major disagreements over economic and social policies, COSATU as well as major industrial unions have mobilised in support of the ANC at the time of general elections. Of course, it could be argued that the choice was limited, that the alternative was worse, both in terms of neoliberal commitments and anti-union positions. Yet, the parliamentary involvement of the unions is clear, and the criticism of the unions as a vehicle

of popular democratic influence is rather the opposite. By being seen as excessively close to the ruling party and the state, COSATU fails, it is argued, to respond to the democratic aspirations of a wider popular constituency, originally mobilised into a range of social movements and action groups, both as part of the anti-apartheid struggles and in response to the demand for radical transformation that were precipitated by the demise of the old system, including the Anti-Privatisation Forum, the Anti-Eviction Campaigns, the Landless People's Movement, as well as other local and national groupings.[10] Trade unions overcome the disjuncture between parliamentary politics and civil society to the extent that they reach out, support, and give voice to these wider movements. Their failure to do so confirms, in this view, that unions have either been effectively incorporated into ruling class politics or are in the hands of a labour aristocracy that is preoccupied with its own material interests and fails to involve the population at large.[11]

African Trade Unions: A Marginal Source of Popular Representation?

The labour aristocracy argument seems to come naturally in an African environment where only a small minority of the population belongs to the organised wage-earning classes. This is true of the South African case, despite its relatively high level of industrialisation, and even more so for the rest of Africa, including Nigeria. Unionised workers are in most cases a drop in the ocean of peasants, traders, and other petty-commodity producers. But let us not be deceived by numbers; even in much of Europe, the rise of the labour movement to political prominence took place at a time when popular classes were dominated numerically by agrarian producers. The political significance of a particular social category is primarily related to its mode of insertion in the development process, not necessarily to numbers. It is the logic of that process that assigns a particular role. In Africa the significance of organised wage labour is linked to the efforts of these societies to transform and modernise themselves. Popular aspirations to modernity, education, health, electricity, and water, for example, are central to that process. This explains, in our view, why organised workers play a key role as a potential source of popular democratic representation. Modernity is a package where advances in the provision of social and economic infrastructure are closely linked not only to rising productivity and the transformation of the economy but also to the emergence of institutions and organisations capable of offering a coherent direction. The centrality of unions is due to the capacity of

wage-work to generate processes of organisation that are critical to institutional development, especially in context where society cannot draw on the experience of strong state institutions. In view of their popular roots, unions also stand a better chance than existing ruling elites to deepen the democratic content of political representation.

The centrality of unions in these respects does not, of course, make it less important to reach out and mobilise other segments of popular society that are less centrally placed, more fragmented, and less prone to seek collective or institutional solutions to their aspirations. On the contrary, what is suggested here is that the privileged position of organised labour in the development process gives it the opportunity to offer leadership and direction to a wider range of popular democratic forces. Moreover, because of its minority status, labour is vulnerable to state repression, and its alliances therefore also serve as protection. As suggested elsewhere,[12] however, such alliances become more effective if they take their point of departure in the specificities of the production relations of respective allying party. The textile workers union, for instance, in the Nigerian case, in its efforts to ally with the associations of tailors needs to recognise that the latter are made up of small entrepreneurs with their own family workers and apprentices.

Alliances in South Africa: A Parliamentary Road?

Unions are capable of offering leadership and building broad alliances and thus asserting a wider popular democratic influence on ruling class politics. The avenues open to them, however, are historically and structurally determined and, as we shall see from the wider comparisons below, African unions have engaged in a range of distinct strategies in this respect. The South African-Nigerian comparison suggests at least two major roads to democratic influence, both premised on alliance politics, where one (South Africa) seems committed to the parliamentary road, the other (Nigeria) primarily concerned with alliance-building in civil society. In South Africa, the role follows from the central place of unions in the struggle against apartheid and, in particular, the role that they were able to play in a civil society that was mobilised in support of the liberation struggle. With the suppression of the political opposition by the apartheid state, unions were uniquely placed in offering leadership on the home front. But is this still the case? Critics of COSATU maintain that the failure to influence the direction of the economic policies in a post apartheid context suggests that it has been incorporated into the national agenda of the ANC at the expense of its ability to reach out to a wider segment of civil society. The critics suggest that unions have

been marginalised politically, failing to be a source of popular democratic representation.[13]

The evidence is contradictory. Is not the successful outmanoeuvring of Tabo Mbeki and his group from the ANC leadership in 2007–2008 evidence that COSATU continues to maintain an autonomous influence on politics, including a capacity to offer leadership to a wider range of social forces in society beyond the labour constituency? Or can COSATU's 'victory' in Polokwane, the site of the contest over the ANC leadership in December 2007, be dismissed as failing to suggest a different political agenda? Was it primarily a contest over personalities? Much depends, of course, on the nature of the orientation that may emerge. In any case, COSATU's political influence cannot be easily dismissed even if the organisation is seen as being in agreement with the basic traits of ANC policies, including Black Empowerment and world market adjustment. The undoubted marginalisation of some of the popular democratic movements, like the Anti-Privatisation Forum of Gauteng,[14] does not necessarily suggest that South African unions have been incorporated into a bourgeois nationalist agenda, abandoning their democratic aspirations. Other features, such as the wider popular support for the union-led anti privatisation campaigns, the role of unions in the 'people's budget', their demand for a more expansionary economic policy, the rejection of the monetarist policies of the Central Bank, and union dissent on specific issues of government policy over Zimbabwe and HIV-AIDS, to take some examples, suggest both a degree of autonomy and a responsiveness to a wider range of social forces in civil society. It is the substance of the institutions generated and the policies pursued by the ANC government that are contested, not the Alliance as such. Unions and party may disagree on particular strategies but they are united, although precariously, by a common vision of a liberated South Africa, respected and successful in global society and capable of bringing welfare to its people.

For COSATU, the alliance with the ANC is a key source of political representation in the arena of parliamentary politics. Recurring consultations over policy between the members of the alliance provide avenues for COSATU to make its voice heard and confront the government over polices that it disagrees with. Divisions over policy are often open and dramatic. Unions have been central in institutionalising consultations over policy within the structures of the National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC) and in ensuring a system of labour legislation that protects labour's rights. Unlike the Nigerian case, the organs of the state are actively invoked by the unions as, for instance, in joint factory raids in the non metro areas of the clothing and textile industries.[15] However, this close involvement, often conflicting, in the parliamentary

politics of the ruling party and its stake in state institutions do not exhaust the role of COSATU in the balance of forces in society. By representing a working-class perspective, it reflects divisions not only within the alliance but within the ANC itself. Without suggesting that there is one working-class perspective – there are several – this structural insertion in the political economy provides a different view of government policy, interest rates, the Central Bank, fiscal policy, balanced budgeting, privatisation, and employment as well as world-market-oriented adjustments in general. Not least is COSATU suspicious of the development of class forces within the ANC, including what Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) should actually mean. Of course, COSATU itself is by no means homogenous in this respect. Individuals from the labour movement have made spectacular careers as financial managers and private capitalists. However, unions continue to be significant elements in South Africa's political economy. While at one level being politically represented through COSATU's alliance with the ANC, they simultaneously operate as key contestants in the struggle over the direction of government policy, basing their democratic claims on the class organisations of the workers. Although some policy issues, like the 'people's budget' and 'basic income', involve broad coalitions with other organisations of civil society, COSATU operates primarily on its own and within the context of the alliance with the ANC. It is disturbed by the inability of the government to respond effectively to growing mass unemployment. It blames the neoliberal economic policies of the government and keeps pushing alternative solutions, including greater government expenditure on transfer payments and an active policy of economic development. In doing so, however, COSATU operates primarily as an organisation that is allied to the government. Unlike in Nigeria, as discussed below, it does not take the lead in a coalition of civil society forces *in opposition* to the state.

Alliances in Nigeria: Civil Society Against the State

The Nigerian situation is different.[16] Here unions see themselves as offering an alternative basis for democratic representation in opposition to what they consider an elitist, corrupt, and illegitimate ruling class that is demonstrably incapable of delivering welfare to the people. Unions are prompted into spearheading popular democratic alternatives by the failure of a fictitious democratic process to generate popular influence on policy as well as credible state institutions. Alliances in civil society are therefore important as a way of confronting an ineffectual and undemocratic state both in mutual self-defence and in ensuring a popular impact.

This view draws support from a preoccupation with civil society as an arena of democratisation that has informed much of the development discourse since the crises and collapse of state-led development strategies, especially in Africa.[17] Some of it may be part and parcel of the neoliberal project itself: an effort to roll back a state that is seen as playing an excessive role at the expense of markets and private entrepreneurship. Foreign support for organisations and NGOs that claim to speak on behalf of civil society has generated suspicions that it is part of a conspiracy to shift the balance of forces in society rather than to offer a route to democracy. Although this may also fit some NGOs at the Nigerian end, it is apparent that there has been a multiplication of groups with a motive force of their own that are concerned with confronting the authoritarian logic of ruling-class politics.[18] Nigerian unions offer leadership to such groups. The latter are also anxious to ally themselves to the unions because of their assumed superior organisational reach as well as their ability to provide protection against state repression.

A key arena of such broad alliances in civil society has been provided by the repeated confrontations with the state over the local price of. Nigeria is a major exporter of oil, but with its 140 million (or so) inhabitants, it also has a large domestic market. Historically, domestic prices of petroleum have been fixed by the federal government on the advice of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, which has licensed both producers and distributors, including foreign ones. Local refineries have facilitated differential pricing where exports have been priced by the world market and domestic prices have been administratively regulated. The difference has occasionally been substantial, and the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, which have played a crucial role in Nigeria's economic policy since the beginning of massive foreign indebtedness in the 1980s, have seen the world-market adjustment of domestic prices as a key frontier of their involvement. They have argued that 'under pricing' is a major source of distortion in the local economy, causing local overconsumption, blocking genuine comparative advantages, reducing export earnings, and encouraging massive smuggling to neighbouring, nonpetroleum-producing countries. Those in favour of differentiated pricing have argued that Nigeria's population should be allowed to benefit from the natural competitive advantage of Nigeria being an oil producer. The non-functioning of the domestic refineries over the past decade, despite government claims of having invested massively in repairs, has suggested to the unions that the government has no serious commitment to make the differential price policies work. As a result, the NLC and its allies in civil society, in recent years through the Labour Civil Society Coalition (LASCO), have organised in opposition to the repeated state-initiated price hikes on local petroleum products.

Since the return to civil rule and the elections of 1999, the petroleum price issue has dominated an increasingly antagonistic relationship between the state and the trade unions. The early post-1999 government was anxious to be seen as accommodating, committing itself at first to consultations over future price hikes. However, as the Obasanjo regime got more firmly entrenched (through increasingly foul means), its hostility to the NLC became more pronounced, accusing it of having constituted itself into an 'alternative government'. A high point in the struggle between the unions and the state came in 2004 when courts suspended a price increase, the judge demanding that the parties revert to the old level to facilitate orderly consultations.[19] When the government refused to abide by the court ruling, NLC, in conjunction with its allies in civil society, embarked on a strike. Gas stations, at least in major cities and at least for the time being, felt sufficiently obliged (intimidated) to revert to the old prices and, after three days, the strike was called off. Important aspects of the 'workers' triumph' was the ability of the unions not just to mobilise its allies but also to use both the court system and the media in supporting its case. Moreover, divisions within Nigerian ruling-class politics were important in protecting labour from the full resort to state repression. The National Assembly, however problematically 'elected' and grossly manipulated by the state, reflected such ambiguities and provided inroads.

Labour's victory in June 2004 reflected an uneasy balance of forces. The determination of the government (and its international supporters) to enforce world-market petroleum prices locally had not been abandoned. The state reverted to a strategy of undermining the unions by forcing a revision of the labour laws in an attempt to cripple the use of the strike weapon for political purposes, that is, for other issues than wages and workplace conditions. A major revision of the Trade Union Law was pushed through in 2005. The state was only partially successful, and some of the most damaging aspects of the new law were watered down, partly due to divisions within the National Assembly, partly due to the mobilisation of labour itself.[20] Although some senior staff associations had chosen to form their own central body, the Trade Union Congress (TUC), they soon adjusted to the role of a marginal but supportive junior partner of the NLC. Yet, the trade union reforms underscored the vulnerability of labour to state legislative intervention and its dependence on broad popular support in its confrontations with the state.

In resisting another increase in local petroleum prices in September 2005, rather than proclaiming another nationwide strike, the NLC chose to organise a series of rallies in different parts of the country under the auspices of LASCO.[21] The purpose was to mobilise popular opinion against the

increases and bring about a reversal. Although no reversal was obtained, NLC and LASCO could still claim some achievement. In response to popular mobilisation, the regime felt obliged to promise a moratorium on further increases up to the 2007 elections. It was a victory for labour also in that it confirmed the responsibility of the government for the level of petroleum prices, rebutting its earlier claims that prices were set by the market and not by government.[22] The issue of political representation is not adequately captured by the state-civil society dichotomy. Labour's alliances with civil society groups in Nigeria are part of a multifaceted pattern of interaction that contains social forces both within and without the formal parliamentary system as well as segments of the state itself, including the courts.

Nigerian Trade Unions and Political Parties

Is political representation enhanced if trade unions are more directly linked to a political party? In the South African case, the Alliance has provided the COSATU unions with two: the ANC, the party of the government, and the South African Communist Party (SACP), the third member of the Alliance, often seeing itself as a workers' party with many key unionists as its members. Nigerian unions have a long tradition of party involvement, including attempts to form political parties of their own. An early ill-fated effort (1988) was blocked by the Babangida regime that decided to incorporate labour as a minor segment in a presidentially prescribed two-party system.[23] The repeated confrontations with the Obasanjo regime have confirmed the view among Nigerian labour leaders that existing political elites are incompetent, greedy, and venal and that organised labour is superior not only in mobilising popular support but also in offering competent leadership. A new Labour Party was launched in 2004.[24] Although there was an attempt to activate the party in conjunction with the April 2007 general elections, its failure to have a significant impact contrasts with the very substantial political involvement of its chief political sponsor, the Nigeria Labour Congress. Why has the NLC been unable to translate its undoubted political clout into party politics? The paradox seems helpful in understanding the problems of popular political representation in an African context.

As the Abacha dictatorship collapsed in 1998 and the NLC was reconstituted, Nigeria experienced a wave of international goodwill, including a major grant from the European Union for the reorganisation of the Congress, channelled through the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FEF).

The democratic credentials of the Obasanjo regime and its parliamentary institutions were weak, lacking a credible constitutional basis. Party cohesion and claims to representation had been further weakened by the repeated interventions and manipulations of successive military rulers. The political parties that emerged were loosely assembled groupings of aspiring individual politicians with money to buy themselves into party caucuses. In contrast, the NLC could point to a series of successful popular campaigns, including the repeated confrontations with the state over petroleum prices discussed above. A Civil Society Pro-Democracy Summit was convened in Agura Hotel, Abuja, in February 2001.[25] A decision to go ahead with a political party was taken by the Central Working Committee of the Congress, reviewing labour's past involvement with 'non-labour' parties and why they had betrayed the working class: 'Nigeria's progressive and popular masses' will no longer rely on 'surrogate third parties' but will themselves 'seek to be the government in power'.[26] Unions were expected to play a leading role in forming the party while keeping their own organisations separate and autonomous. The NLC leadership was anxious to retain full control of the process. The registration of the new party was met with strong official resistance, but the Electoral Commission (INEC) was finally compelled by a court decision to do so.[27]

The new Labour Party held its inaugural convention in Abuja in February 2004, an impressive occasion with more than a thousand accredited delegates.[28] Although perceived as a party of the working class with unions providing the backbone, it aimed at a broad alliance of class forces.[29] It was expected to attract intellectuals, professionals, and 'patriotic businessmen' committed to the uplifting of the nation and the common people.[30] The party chairman was a former leader of the bank workers' union who had long since abandoned unionism in favour of the law profession. The secretary general of the party had just been thrown out of office in the local government workers' union. The choice was not necessarily a recipe for failure, but it certainly contributed to stacking the cards against success. The Labour Party did not really take off. No one was prepared to pay for it. While reluctantly being compelled in court to register the party, INEC was supposed to provide all registered parties with funding under the Electoral Act. In the case of the Labour Party, it only did so after the 2003 elections when the Obasanjo regime had consolidated its power position through massive fraud. The amount actually released by INEC was not much: N9m or roughly US$65,000 by the 2006 exchange rates of roughly 140 naira to one U.S. dollar. Only a few unions were prepared to help out. Although the NLC State Councils had played a role in establishing the party in the states of the federation, most

unions chose to refer to the Trade Union Act (1978) that prohibited them from making political contributions.[31] Moreover, Nigerian political parties have no tradition of collecting membership dues from ordinary members. On the contrary, people have been accustomed to expect parties to bring gifts when they came to woe the electorate for support. The more credible a party or a candidate, the more substantial would be the 'gift'. The Labour Party decided, therefore, to 'play down the issue of membership dues in order not to scare the members away'.[32] In some states, for instance, Ebony and Delta, governments had made donations according to the party secretary. The electoral impact was marginal. 'It is a party in theory but not in practice', said Ejiofor,[33] the union leader who had most energetically pushed the party idea. The criticism was strong at a NLC Leadership Retreat in Lokoja in April 2005. Most embarrassingly, the NLC president, who himself contested for the governorship in his home state Bendel in 2007, chose to stand for another party. The Labour Party was too weak to offer itself as a credible platform.

Something had gone terribly wrong. What can the failure tell us about the preconditions for labour's venturing into party politics? The NLC tradition was ambiguous. On the one hand, the commitment to a party was there, inherited from the socialist traditions of Europe, both east and west. On the other hand, there was a nonpartisan tradition, not least due to the manipulation of union politics by successive military rulers. The partisan urge was boosted by the success of the anti-petroleum price campaigns and the popular support that they aroused. But what was a Labour Party expected to achieve? Was it to be an ideological alternative to an unprincipled and corrupt political class or was it to secure access to the corridors of power by linking up with powerful individuals – people with proven influence? One area of ambiguity was in the nature of the relationship between the party project and the labour-civil society network. At an early point, much weight was attributed to civil society. In practice, the formation of the party was treated as a matter for the NLC alone. The effort to integrate a civil society agenda was discontinued after its high point in the Agura Summit of 2001. Despite this tendency of going it alone, NLC's own commitment was half-hearted. It was not prepared to put resources into the party project or to prompt the industrial unions to do so. The contest for control over the party was won by those who had the least historical commitment to forming it. Both the internal pro-party tradition and the Left contenders in civil society were sidelined. A basic problem, according to Salihu Lukman, a deputy secretary general of the Congress and the chief organiser of the Agura process, was labour's lack of capacity to sustain its political intervention. Although individual labour leaders may have held strong views, the collective commitment was weak. There

was no collective momentum, and key decisions were taken by individuals with little accountability.

The political record of the NLC was impressive. To many, it was 'the only viable political opposition in the country'.[34] So why was it unable to transform its achievement into party politics? There were two central assumptions behind the party project: one, that only labour is sufficiently national, in the sense of bridging regional, religious, and other communal divides; the other, that only labour has a sufficiently broad popular base to be able to transcend the dominant pattern of the elite and patronage politics. The NLC, it was argued, was therefore obliged to assume its political responsibility and offer political leadership. Was the achievement itself precarious? It was preoccupied, according to Lukman, with external threats like the upward revision of petroleum prices and the Labour Amendment Bill. While being repeatedly compelled to take to the streets, the capacity to influence the direction of policy was limited.

What lessons can be learned? What role can labour movements play in party politics in societies where capitalist relations of production are largely unconsolidated and dominated numerically by small independent producers, traders, and other service providers? Can trade unions be expected to play a significant role in parliamentary politics in societies where the working class is numerically marginal? Nigeria may be a capitalist society with its development geared to the logic of global capitalism, but it is only very partially penetrated by capitalist relations of production. The oil companies are big, but they have few employees. Although 'primitive accumulation' is rampant, the capitalist class proper is small and unconsolidated. Much of what is accumulated is invested in property and additional consumption. This is reflected in the organisation of party politics. Political parties are only marginally organised on the basis of ideological positions related to different locations in terms of class or strategy. The electorate is certainly deeply involved in influencing the demands placed on politicians, and there is intense competition between communities, regions, and ethnic and religious groups over access to resources. Does a Labour Party have a place in such scheme of things?

Conclusions

Trade unions have a key role to play in overcoming the disjuncture between parliamentary politics and civil society and in ensuring a democratic content to popular representation. The structural insertion of the working class in the logic of modernisation and industrialisation provides it with a unique capacity to organise and for representing a wider

range of social forces and demands, despite its numerical inferiority. It provides the basis for building alliances and for pursuing a national agenda in opposition to neoliberal globalisation. Historically, the labour movement, although even more minuscule at the time, was closely allied to the anti colonial movement. Colonialism, in its views, held back the growth of a modern national economy based on commodity production and social welfare. In the present conjuncture, it identifies ideologically with the opposition to the hegemonic pretensions of the neoliberal position. Everywhere, organised labour is confronted with the problem of non-functioning basic public infrastructure such as water, electricity, and communications that are crucial for the survival of wage employment itself, including the manufacturing industry. They are also the focus of wider popular aspirations. Unions generate demands on the state and its capacity to protect the interest of the nation. To some, unions provide an alternative basis for national development.

The Nigerian and South African experiences raise two sets of issues: the role of unions in intervening directly in parliamentary politics and their role in building wider political alliances in civil society. African societies are characterised by key institutional weaknesses, including those of the state institutions themselves and, not least, the electoral systems though which state power is supposed to be reproduced. The failure of Nigeria's Labour Party, while having its own peculiar causes, relates primarily to its inability to provide meaningful inroads into a system of party formation marked by the prevailing clientelism of bourgeois politics. Few voters would trust the ability of the Labour Party to deliver in the highly competitive political struggle over access to resources. The logic of the political economy suggests, in the Nigerian case, that it is easier for organised labour to mobilise mass support for particular positions than to build a mass-based political party. As demonstrated in the South African case, this does not exhaust the potential for unions playing a role in parliamentary politics. In the context of global capitalism with its highly skewed balance of economic, political, and military power (imperialism), organised labour has a special stake in national development as opposed to the neoliberalism of dominant actors. National development as an alternative agenda has a wide latent appeal also within the framework of existing parliamentary institutions.

In concluding the argument, I wish to draw attention to a third area of relevance to the issue of political representation: the role of unions in promoting political rights and constitutionalism. The evidence of this can, in the first place, be seen at the level of the workplace with major implications for the development of capitalism itself. By ensuring institutional legality and predictable rules at work, unions contribute to the maturing of

capitalist relations of production, as demonstrated in the Nigerian case by the spread of a 'union-based labour regime'.[35] How can such institutional legality be diffused to the rest of society? Popular representation, as demonstrated by the failure of the Labour Party in Nigeria, is not just an issue of a hostile, political environment setting insurmountable barriers to the political aspirations of the unions. It is as much the failure of the unions to establish credible democratic links to their wider popular political constituency. This, of course, they know. The potential of unions as a source of popular representation is that the workplace itself is turned into a laboratory of democratic self-education, against which other political failures and achievements can be judged.

Notes

1. Hall-Jones 2007, 62–64.
2. Wahl 2007.
3. Lindström, Wärn, and Beckman 2007, Beckman 2007.
4. Cf. CRD, CDRT, and PODSU 2006.
5. Hashim 1994.
6. Andrae and Beckman 1998.
7. Freund 2007, 199–228, Webster and Bhulungu 2004.
8. Törnquist, this volume.
9. Beckman and Lukman 2009.
10. Ballard, Habib, and Valodia 2006.
11. Pillay 2008.
12. Andrae and Beckman 2007.
13. For reviews of the arguments, see Adler and Webster 1999, Buhlungu 2006a, Webster and Adler 2001, Webster and Buhlungu 2004.
14. Buhlungu 2006b.
15. SACTWU 2001, 2004, 2007.
16. The section on Nigeria's Labour Party draws heavily on a joint paper with Salihu Lukman, at that time a deputy general secretary in the Nigeria Labour Congress (Beckman and Lukman 2009).
17. Beckman, Hansson, and Sjögren 2001.
18. CRD, CDRT, and PODSU 2006.
19. NLC 2004a.
20. NLC 2004b.
21. NLC/LASCO 2005.
22. Oshiomhole 2006.
23. Beckman 1995.
24. Beckman and Lukman 2009.
25. NLC 2001a, b.
26. NLC 2001c.

27. Jamilu 2006.
28. Adebola 2004, 36.
29. Ejiofor 2006.
30. Aye 2006.
31. Jamilu 2006.
32. Ibid.
33. 2006.
34. Ozo-Eson 2006.
35. Andrae and Beckman 1998.

11

Popular Politics of Representation: New Lessons from the Pioneering Projects in Indonesia, Kerala, and the Philippines

Olle Törnquist, P. K. Michael Tharakan (with Jos Chathukulam), and Nathan Quimpo

Although it is true that the world-renowned postcolonial attempts at popular representation in Indonesia, the Indian state of Kerala, and the Philippines suffered from the subordination of democratisation to the cold war, anti-imperialism, and top-down politics,[1] the setbacks and new contradictions generated democracy-oriented groups against statism, violence, clientelism, and coercive accumulation of capital for civil rights and public action on concrete issues.[2] In Manila in 1986, a peaceful people-power movement removed Marcos in spite of Maoist predictions that nothing but armed revolution would do. Indonesia, a few years later, witnessed the growing movement against Suharto. In Kerala, participatory politics took a similar direction although in different form with social, environmental, and educational activists initiating campaigns for literacy, group-farming, and alternative development based on participatory mapping of local resources.[3]

A common challenge in each case lay in how to build cooperation between the rights-bearing middle-class civil society activists and broader groups facing marginalisation, exclusion, and rights deprivation; how to build alliances uniting quite disparate groups across social and physical spaces; and how to give such alliances an organised political base in

parties, elections, and eventually government. The Philippine groups were fragmented in many ways and their movement vulnerable to capture by sections of the elite, including celebrities such as Corazon Aquino and Cardinal Jaime Sin. The Indonesian campaigners were short of organised constituencies and marginalised from elitist politics. The Kerala activists could not follow up their campaigns when even leftist parties and related movements failed to support genuine decentralisation.[4]

These problems were not unique. On a general level, the dilemmas may be identified with a figure illustrating the distressed relations between civil society organisations and popular movements on the one hand and organised politics on the other (Figure 11.1). As emphasised in this book, the major challenge along each of the axes is to develop democratic representation to foster scaling up of issues, groups, communities, and workplaces. The conventional approach is to work through state, party, and ideology, but where these are already part of the problem, they had to be reformed and supplemented through more genuine democratic representation from below.

The year 1996 was the starting point for three exciting projects that tried to tackle these challenges. In the Philippines, nongovernmental organisation (NGO) campaigners, social movement activists, socialists, communists, and former Maoists built a citizen action party called *Akbayan*. In Kerala, activists in a people's science education movement in particular mobilised broad backing for decentralisation and participatory local development and gained left-government support for a state-wide People's Planning Campaign. In Indonesia, democracy activists tried to build broader following on a political level in confronting the Suharto regime.

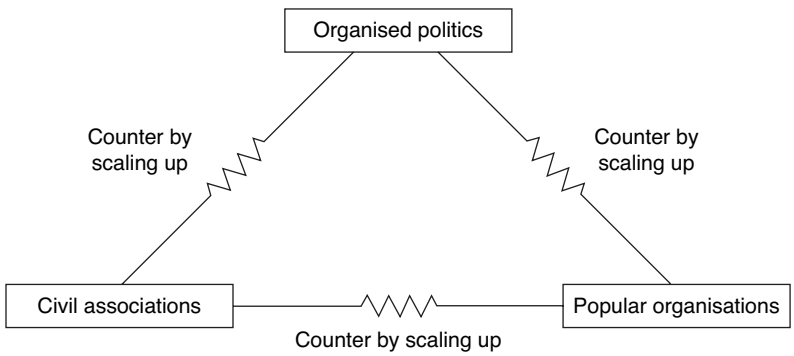

Figure 11.1 Scaling up issues, alliances and spatial links by improved representation, to counter the distressed relations between civil society associations, popular movements and organised politics.

Subsequently, the *Akbayan* project became a model for bringing scattered activists and movements together politically in a democratic way.[5] The Kerala People's Planning Campaign became the Asian version of Porto Alegre's participatory budgeting, in the context of extensive old civil society groups, social movements, and radical parties.[6] The Indonesian democracy movement demonstrated the political potential of civil society and student activists.[7] As a supplement to the authors' previous individual analyses,[8] this chapter seeks to draw some comparative lessons from the most recent phases.

Actions and Dilemmas in the Philippines

At the turn of the millennium, the prospects for the emergent parties and groups of the democratic left appeared promising. In 1992–1993, a few years after the split of the national democratic (ND) movement led by the Maoist Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), former NDs, together with some independent socialists and social democrats, formed several new political parties and movements, including *Akbayan*, *Partido ng Manggagawa* (Workers' Party), *Sanlakas,* and *Anak-Mindanao*. This democratic left vowed to transform the country's elite democracy into a more participatory and egalitarian democracy and to replace the patronage politics of the *trapos* (traditional politicians) with new politics based on the issues of peasants, workers, urban poor, women, and other marginalised sectors, including human rights, U.S. military presence, constitutional reform, and other major national issues. They held their own vis-à-vis the Maoists, sometimes even outnumbering the latter in major mass mobilisations. The alliances built created a significant organisational base of engaging in political action in support of agrarian reform, improved labour legislation, reduced prices in basic commodities, and improved conditions for Manila slum dwellers. Anak-Mindano worked for peace advocacy and peace building among Christian, Muslims, and indigenous peoples in war-affected Mindanao and *Akbayan in particular* worked for greater people's participation in decentralised local government. Venturing into electoral politics, the emergent left forces fielded or supported candidates in village and municipal elections. In the 1998 elections, *Akbayan* and *Sanlakas* scored a breakthrough in national electoral politics, winning one seat each in the lower house of Congress through the newly introduced party-list system (to encourage minor parties against traditional politicians and their machines). When President Joseph Estrada was accused of receiving payoffs from *jueteng*, an illegal gambling racket, the new left forces joined a very broad array of organisations

and persons in a campaign for his removal that culminated in a peaceful popular uprising in January 2001 that forced his resignation 15 years after the first people-power toppling of Marcos.

Since People Power II, however, the Philippines has been rocked by a series of dramatic events that have shown just how politically unstable and resistant to reform the country is. The events include the uprising of pro-Estrada forces in May 2001; the failed military mutinies in July 2003, February 2006, and November 2007; the fraud- and violence-marred elections from 2001 to 2007; the campaign to oust the new President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo for electoral fraud and corruption; and armed clashes between government troops and Muslim and communist rebels. Through all these, the patrimonial features of the Philippine state have deepened considerably. Thanks in large part to the rot in the government, military rebels and the Maoists have once again come to the fore, and the new left forces have been pushed to the sidelines with the intensified resort to patronage, manipulation, and deceit by the corrupt Arroyo regime; violence and harassment by the CPP and its guerrilla force, the New People's Army (NPA); and problems resulting from an outdated strategic framework of the new left itself.

Coping with CPP-NPA Violence and Harassment

The Maoist organisations benefitted greatly from being in full force in the 'Oust Estrada' mobilisations, thus managing to break out of the doldrums they had fallen into since several groups and leaders left them in the early 1990s. Partly in appreciation of the Maoists' role in helping topple Estrada, incoming President Arroyo agreed to resumption of peace talks with the National Democratic Front (NDF), the united front organisation of the Maoist Communist Party. The NDF scored a diplomatic coup of sorts when the government arranged for the Norwegian government to become the official facilitator of the talks. Then, in the May 2001 party-list elections, the ruling coalition endorsed the newly organised, open, and legal national democratic party, *Bayan Muna*.

During the 2001 electoral campaign, the Maoists intensified their extortion and intimidation activities, including tactics involving the NPA guerrilla units who campaigned for *Bayan Muna* and harassed members and campaigners of other left groups. Although the *Bayan Muna* thus topped the party-list ballot to the national parliament, the new left parties Akbayan, PM, Sanlakas, and Anak-Mindanao still performed well. However, the extortion and intimidation were repeated during the July 2002 *barangay* elections, and by 2003, the Maoist's relations with the new left forces had

taken a critical turn with a series of killings, some high profile (though largely unreported in national media) targeting the democratic left, in particular, former members of the NPA who had joined it.

Despite the violence, the emergent left parties and groups persevered in their engagements in mass movements and development work. For instance, the Freedom from Debt Coalition opposed the privatisation of power and water supply industries, showing that the services provided by these industries were deteriorating while the rates were skyrocketing. The new left parties participated in the campaign for the enactment of a bill providing suffrage for overseas Filipinos, and they helped thwart moves of *trapos* in Congress to perpetuate themselves in power through constitutional change by Congress itself. And far from being cowed by Maoist violence and intimidation, the emergent left forces strongly denounced the killings of non-Maoist leftists and mobilised national and international support for their position. In the May 2004 elections, the new left groups vigorously campaigned for free and honest elections, hitting hard against the Maoist extortion and harassment, and they managed to retain their five seats in Congress. Shortly after the Maoist killings, moreover, the emergent left forces exposed a hit list, which included prominent leaders of the new left, putting the Maoists somewhat on the political defensive. On the whole, the emergent democratic left has thus managed to defend itself – through political means – from Maoist violence and intimidation, but the defensive measures expended much time, energy, and resources.

Confronting a Corrupt and Repressive Regime

Political corruption and violence have become endemic problems. Paul Hutchcroft describes the Philippines as having a patrimonial oligarchic state, a weak state preyed upon by different factions of the country's politico-economic elite, who take advantage of a largely incoherent bureaucracy.[9] To Alfred McCoy, the country has descended into an 'anarchy' of powerful political families that have increasingly resorted to 'rent-seeking' and political violence to maintain their hold on wealth and power.[10] John T. Sidel depicts *bossism* as a common phenomenon in the Philippines, describing bosses as strongmen who achieve monopolistic control over both coercive and economic resources in certain areas and often resort to mafia-style methods.[11]

When President Estrada was toppled by people power in 2001, many Filipinos thought that corruption in the government would diminish. These hopes were soon thwarted as news about the diversion of sweepstakes funds, the importation of rotten rice, and other scandals hit the

headlines. In July 2003, some units of the Philippine military staged a mutiny, decrying massive corruption within the armed forces and the government as a whole. Later, more scams were unearthed, with close relatives and friends of new President Arroyo being implicated. The president's husband and relatives were alleged to have been involved in *jueteng* – the same illegal numbers game that had caused Estrada's fall – and in electoral fraud, diversion of fertiliser funds, and money laundering. Then, in June 2005, Arroyo herself was implicated in the 'Hello Garci' scandal, sparked by the release to the public of the recording of a telephone conversation between her and an election commissioner on the rigging of the 2004 presidential elections.

As in the Oust Estrada campaign, the emergent left forces immediately went all out in participating in an Oust Arroyo drive, which quickly drew large numbers from virtually all classes and sectors. Fortuitously, the campaign took off just as the new left forces were in the process of launching a strategic alliance, *Laban ng Masa* (LnM) or Fight of the People, an 'independent counter pole movement of broad progressive forces'. Upon its formal launching, LnM alliance called for an end to the Arroyo regime and an end to elitist rule and for the establishment of a truly broad-based 'transitional revolutionary government'.

The Oust Arroyo campaign got a big boost when ten members of Arroyo's cabinet resigned, but then the tide turned. The Catholic Church hierarchy that had backed the removal of Marcos and later Estrada were divided on Arroyo. Unlike in 2000, the opposition in the lower house of Congress failed to muster the votes for her impeachment. By September 2005, therefore, the campaigners shifted to the 'parliament of the streets'. But people-power fatigue had set in because many people felt that similar past exercises had not really put an end to corrupt oligarchic rule. Yet, the Oust Arroyo forces, including both the Maoists and the new left groups, did not abandon their fight. When rumours of an impending coup swept the country in late 2005 and early 2006, they prepared for another people-power upheaval. Virtually all major opposition forces, including church leaders and businessmen, held clandestine meetings with leaders of various rebellious factions in the military. The twentieth anniversary of People Power I in February loomed as the critical moment. On the eve of the anniversary, however, the armed forces' top generals got wind of plans for a military revolt and had the rebel leaders arrested.

In July 2006, opposition congresspersons once again moved for Arroyo's impeachment but mustered even fewer votes than in the previous year. When military rebels staged another attempt at a 'participatory coup' in November 2007, their call for popular support went unheeded. In the May 2007 elections, the new left parties suffered major setbacks: their seats in

Congress shrank from five to two (one *Akbayan* and one *Anak-Mindanao*), and they had fewer winners in the local elections. An immediate cause of the setback was that the ruling coalition had gone all out to secure an overwhelming majority in the lower house of Congress and to prevent a third attempt at Arroyo's impeachment from succeeding. Even the party-list system was no longer spared from *trapo* manipulation. New government-backed parties proliferated and some even won party-list seats.

Errors and Shortcomings of the Emergent Left Forces

The outdated strategic framework of many of the new left forces themselves has also contributed to their being pushed to the margins since the fall of Estrada. Within the LnM alliance, the majority still appears to adhere to the classic Jacobin concept of revolution that privileges a single foundational moment of rupture. They envisage a left-led people-power uprising as possibly constituting such a foundational moment. Only a minority within LnM view people-power uprisings as merely part of a long process of radical transformation involving both gradual changes and ruptures.

The majority's position has posed problems. First, the insistence on a 'transitional *revolutionary* government' during the Oust Arroyo campaign precluded the formation of a broad coalition of the new left parties and groups in alliance with the middle class and the anti-Arroyo elite. According to political analyst Ramon Casiple, business leaders and middle forces were willing to ally with the new left forces, but balked when they heard of LnM's call for a transitional revolutionary government. Although LnM clarified that Corazon Aquino had also set up a revolutionary government after People Power I, the new associations were with the Maoists and sounded too radical, and the new left had little time to plan and carry out more and bigger joint protest actions with other forces.

Second, in trying to build toward another people-power uprising against Arroyo, the emergent left groups tended to neglect engagement in local elections and governance toward a political base from below. The setbacks suffered by the new left parties in the 2007 party-list elections are a clear indication that their efforts at political-electoral base building have proceeded too slowly and could not counter the *trapos'* resort to patronage and dirty tricks. One of the main reasons why it has been very difficult to dismantle the politics of patronage and patrimonialism in the Philippines is that *trapo* parties control 99 percent of the country's local governments. People power may topple a corrupt president, but the *trapo* parties, with their virtual stranglehold on local politics, can easily put another *trapo* to

replace him or her. The emergent left forces were seeking to emulate the success of the left in Latin America but failed to grasp that this success in electoral victories was based on painstaking efforts engaging in local political engagement throughout the 1980s and 1990s.

Third, there has been a growing imbalance between engagement in contentious politics and engagement in governance and development work, and between engagement in urban and engagement in rural work. Engagement in contentious politics, especially the Oust Arroyo campaign, has tended to draw the attention, energy, and resources of the new left forces away from governance and development politics that characterised *Akbayan* and allied popular and civil society organisations in participatory local governance in the late 1990s. Because contentious politics usually gravitates toward the national capital region and other major urban centres, the new left forces' focus has also shifted away from rural areas and secondary urban centres where they may actually have good chances of contending with and breaking *trapo* control.

The new left forces' neglect of local politics has resulted not only from the outdated strategic framework but also from putting too much emphasis on the party-list vote. The modest victories of the new left parties and groups in the party-list system helped them tremendously in reaching out to a national audience and in gaining national projection. The party-list system, however, has always had great limitations. The party-list seats in Congress that are supposed to be reserved for representatives of poor and marginalised sectors are limited to just 20 percent of the lower house seats. In practice, less than half of the 50-odd party-list seats get filled. For the new left parties, focusing solely or mainly on the party-list vote would thus not have dented *trapo* control over Philippine politics. Their main electoral approach should have been to build the political-electoral base from below by accumulating electoral victories at the local level and then moving upward. Unfortunately, the new left parties have allowed themselves to become much too preoccupied with the party-list vote to the detriment of their engagement in local electoral politics. The political space in the party-list system may be shrinking. Now that *trapos* no longer regard the party-list system as sacrosanct, the new left forces may find it difficult to win even a single party-list seat in the next election – that is, unless they pay much more attention to their political-electoral base building at the local level.

Unresolved Problems in Kerala

Over the last three decades, special ground has been gained in Kerala for decentralised participatory development, with supporters ranging from

leftist ideologue E. M. S. Nampoodiripad of the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M), civil society organisations like the Kerala People's Science Movement,[12] and even followers of Mahatma Gandhi.

While the early development of these efforts has been analysed elsewhere,[13] our focus here is on the last decade. By 1996, the Left Democratic Front (LDF), consisting of the two mainstream communist parties and other socialist and democratic parties under the leadership of CPI-M, had returned to power. The campaigners had most imaginatively combined research, popular education, and pilot showcases to mobilise support for decentralisation and popular participation and thus reinvigorate the celebrated Kerala rights-based model of development. Furthermore, the Indian Parliament had amended the constitution, enabling states like Kerala to empower local governments. Hence, the LDF government could kick-start decentralisation by participatory planning. This was introduced in a campaign mode to mobilise support: the People's Planning Campaign (PPC).[14]

The PPC required an elaborate scheme of specified functions for local self-governments (LSG). These in turn called for necessary functionaries and financing according to recommendations made by government-appointed committees. Meanwhile, the state government earmarked 35 percent of funds for planned investments to all levels of local government, a remarkable increase from next to nothing. In addition, training and capacity building of both elected and nonelected personnel would be handled by institutions such as the Kerala Institute of Local Administration. Most importantly, there was an elaborate support system and the dynamics of the campaign mode.[15]

Eleven years have passed since the beginning of the PPC. The campaign gained attention throughout India and internationally. Various attempts have been made to analyse the pros and cons of the campaign,[16] but little have been done on the basis of the more comprehensive experiences. This is partly because the conditions for contextual critical research have not been the best, and an evaluation of quantitative data is almost impossible. The State Planning Board that oversaw the PPC, along with the Local Self Government Department, gave broad directions on the spending of the funds, but the quality of the projects, transparency of its execution, and level and direction of its impacts cannot be understood by the amounts spent. Therefore, we have instead made assessments on the basis of intensive interviews with 45 selected activists who are known to be supporters of the PPC but also close and critically reflecting observers. They included activists from political parties, government officials, activists from civil society organisations, and social scientists; for instance, we chose people who worked as key resource persons for the PPC, the director of the

Institute for Local Administration, the former secretary of the Local Self Government Department, and the chairman of the committee appointed to study decentralisation experiences. The interviews were conducted on the basis of 26 talking points that were chosen after elaborate consultation with known social scientists and persons with experience on the campaign.[17]

Early Successes and Stumbling Blocks

Initially, the PPC was executed without much criticism. In spite of this, the interviews point to problems already between 1996 and 2001 under the LDF government, not just later on. A basic initial problem was that the campaign suffered from the strong party politicisation.[18] The PPC was conceptualised as a top-to-bottom State Planning Board program with wide popular support and full backing by a front of political parties as a bipartisan scheme. However, given that public opinion on almost every important matter is highly polarised in Kerala, the program was never accepted as being truly bipartisan. Although the opposition parties of the United Democratic Front (UDF) were in general agreement with the concept of decentralisation, they were sceptical of the intentions of the LDF and the priorities of the PPC. This was aggravated by the fact that local politics in Kerala is often discussed and reported in the media in the context of broader state-level issues and conflicts. Hence, the consensus on the PPC, including cooperation between several stakeholders, was missing even at the beginning of the campaign.[19]

Devolution of functionaries to the local level had to face the inevitable bureaucratic delay. Many of those who got redeployed worked under different command (the local government and the state-level line departments, respectively), and the state government officers had difficulty adjusting to the local command. Moreover, the transfer of rights or functionaries to the local level was often contested by politically related regional, community, caste, and sub-caste identities and interest groups. These remain strong in Kerala because the modernisation process was carried out through socio-religious reform movements based on castes and communities.[20] Furthermore, the elaborate PPC training programs were insufficient, and the suggestions to upgrade the quality as well as the qualifications of the secretaries to the Village Councils (*Grama Panchayat*) were never implemented. As a result, highly qualified engineers, doctors, and headmasters found it difficult to work under these secretaries.

Another important early defect was the persistence of corruption and financial misappropriation. Because this was expected, decentralisation was

accompanied by several arrangements through which corruption could be prevented, detected, and pursued by the participants and the wider public, but many of these opportunities were not made full use of. One possible reason is the dominating culture of litigation even with regard to rather minor problems and conflicts. As a result, the instances of corruption or misappropriation that were found by the auditing authorities got exceptional public attention, which strengthened the idea that all or most Village Councils were corrupt, and this created a serious dent in the credibility of decentralisation.

In addition to these problems, the campaign mode of the PPC seems to have slowed down by the end of 2000 and early 2001. Thirty-two out of the 45 interviewees felt that by then the initial excitement had already given way to a certain amount of routinisation. Maybe campaign fatigue had set in among the PPC activists. Some of them were also active in a cultural campaign initiated by the LDF called *Manaveeyam,* and several had been working already with the Total Literacy Campaign during 1989–1991.[21]

Additional Obstacles with the Change of Government

On Top of these early problems, the supportive LDF parties suffered losses in the local and state elections in 2000 and 2001, respectively. It is true that incumbents in Kerala tend to lose and that many additional reasons for the losses were not related to the PPC. However, the elections also revealed tensions between PPC participants, on the one hand, and old popular organisations and many politicians, on the other. For instance, in many local electoral constituencies where the LDF lost, conventional politicians were fielded rather than leaders (including several women) who had gained positive reputation by being involved with the campaign.[22]

After the elections, moreover, there was widespread apprehension on the part of the PPC supporters about the future of the campaign because the winning political front, UDF, had been critical of many aspects of the PPC and now changed its name to Kerala Development Programme (KDP). In fact, some negative changes did take place. The UDF limited the operating space of the Ombudsman, the quasi-judicial body in which complaints about LSGs could be registered.[23] The funds given to the LSGs that were earmarked for the welfare of Tribal people, one of the most marginalised groups, were returned to the state government functionaries. The old bureaucratic agency on the district level that was working parallel to the new LSGs (and that was thus supposed to be merged with the latter) was allowed to continue. The development funds allotted for the members of the Legislative Assembly that they could spend according to their own

preferences were increased. Most importantly, the bureaucratic elements in the decision making and development of project proposals from local levels were strengthened over and above the popular elements.

All these changes, in addition to institutionalisation in ways that strengthened the feeling of routinisation, reversed the trends set in the earlier phase of the campaign. For instance, S. Palaniappan, former joint commissioner of education, who after his retirement served as the chairman of the mid-district level body created by the campaign, put the blame for most problems squarely on the UDF policy.[24] Moreover, the decisions regarding development projects by Village Councils in cooperation with committees with popular participation were now to be 'guided' by the bureaucratic head of the district administration. In short, the general feeling among the interviewees was that, from 2001 to 2006, when the UDF was in power, bureaucratisation of decision making increased, and there was a sharp decline in the quality of decentralisation and participatory development.

The Legacy of Initial Political Problems

However, the basic structure of PPC was not altered by the UDF government.[25] Important policy measures continued, like the transfer of some 35 percent of planned funds, and so did most administrative and legislative changes that had been brought about in the wake of the PPC. *The Hindu*[26] acknowledged that both the UDF Chief Minister and the Minister of the LSG 'were careful about keeping the decentralisation bandwagon on track and had played their bit in ensuring that the initiatives launched in 1996 did not fail'. In our interviews, the PPC associates support this conclusion in general but retain their specific complaints. Hence, one has to ask why the positive institutions that were sustained did not deliver according to expectation. These rules and regulations included the constitutional amendments that increased considerably the representative density of the Indian Polity[27] and empowered the LSGs. Furthermore, all the LSGs had seats reserved for women, marginalised groups such as excluded castes, and tribal people. State-level legislation had also created specific institutions for smooth functioning of decentralised bodies, and Kerala emphasised planning from below as the main instrument of democratic decentralisation. To this end, the common Indian Village Assemblies (*Grama Sabhas)* were given special importance. All voters of the locality could participate in the deliberations on policy prescriptions and project proposals. The Village Assemblies decided who should get what benefits from the developmental and welfare projects. To supplement

their work, smaller Neighbourhood Groups were also formed, and adequate participation was crucial. To audit the decisions and monitor their implementation, moreover, there were transparent discussions among all stakeholders regarding actual performance and social impact. A Charter of Citizen's Rights was also disseminated in addition to the Ombudsman system through which complaints against the LSGs could be voiced. Finally, Self-help groups with their own micro-financing facilities and productive ventures were encouraged, particularly among women, and the Kerala Women's Commission, with the help of LSGs, organised special Vigilance Committees. The crucial point is that, if these specific institutions had at least been working reasonably well – which our informants say they did not – a number of democratic deficits such as exclusion of marginalised groups from local decision making and governance could have been rectified and the mainstreaming of gender issues could have been achieved. Similarly, transparency of public decision making and accountability could also have been ensured at the LSG level. This in turn may have increased the also-not-fully utilised capacity of the PPC to foster production.

So how shall one explain the poor performance? In 2004, a Capacity Development Programme for Decentralisation in Kerala facilitated a focus-group discussion with field-level activists at Eranakulam in Central Kerala. The activists listed about 25 negative experiences with regard to the functioning of the Village Assemblies ranging from factionalism to lack of transparency in decision making.[28] For instance, there was not only meagre attendance at the assemblies, but those who did come (along with elected and nonelected officials for whom attendance was compulsory) were mainly women and other marginalised sections of the population that might become targeted beneficiaries of the various welfare handouts. Thus, decision making in the Village Assemblies could hardly have led to universally acceptable programs and participatory projects. Similar shortcomings were found in a case study conducted in coastal areas of two districts in 1998–1999, much before the state government had changed.[29] Forty-three out of 45 of our informants confirmed this trend. In fact, they also pointed to a number of other negative experiences from related institutions, such as committees that assigned beneficiaries to monitor projects as well as sub district-level expert committees assigned to review project proposals. In fact, the social audit still does not even seem to have passed the testing ground, as certified by persons interviewed as well as the current LDF state minister of finance T. M. Thomas Issac, who was the leading theoretician and initiator of the PPC. In a recent circular to activists,[30] he admitted that the 'social audit which was expected to be indicator of societies' verdict over transparency could not proceed further from its experimental stage'.

In short, it is true that the decentralisation and participatory development program was bureaucratised after 2001 when the UDF government took over the responsibility, but the necessary popular spark that was required to mobilise and use the positive LSG-level institutions that had already been initiated was found missing. This was in spite of some bold initiatives by a few bureaucrats in the Local Self Government Department and NGOs committed to streamlining the functioning of the partially defunct institutions.

Leftist Factionalism Demoralises the Activists

In the meantime, civil society participation itself got into serious trouble. A significant number of the civil society activists who were active in the PPC came from broad leftist persuasions, and with the defeat of the LDF in the 2001 elections, some of them indicated that the PPC had been a stumbling block. Already by 1996 and earlier, when the PPC was developed, there were murmurs of dissent within the LDF and more importantly within its leading party, the CPI-M.[31] This was not surprising given the different views on how to promote development and that the CPI-M's internal decision making was (and is) guided by democratic centralism. Such basic problems were, however, rarely discussed in the open – and neither were the real problems of the PPC. Powerful critics only put forward very different issues that had little to do with the PPC.

The background was that the Government of India supported decentralisation in 1992, immediately following the 1991 acceptance of the World Bank/International Monetary Fund (IMF)-inspired liberal economic reforms. Hence, many leftists became suspicious of decentralisation in general, and the PPC was only accommodated due to the personal charisma of the CPI-M leader E. M. S. Namboodiripad. However, by 2001, he was no longer on the scene, and the debate within the CPI-M itself emerged with no holds barred. During the latest phase of UDF rule between 2001 and 2006, the intensity of the debate gathered momentum, especially as the Kerala unit of the CPI-M became involved in inner party elections. Entangled within personal and group ambitions and factionalism, it threatened to become an open fight, and the national leadership of the party had to intervene. These developments were devastating. In fact, the debate itself had nothing to add to a critically constructive evaluation of the PPC but rather prevented it and made it difficult for well-intentioned civil society participants and committed political cadres to engage in projects of decentralisation and participatory development. As a result, the much-needed synergy that could have developed out of

partnership between popular action, official initiatives, and leadership of elected representatives at the LSG level was found missing.

Return to Power by LDF and the Route Ahead

In the 2006 Elections, the UDF government that had done miserably even by its own standards lost out, and the LDF came back to power. Leading figures among the PPC activists are back in positions of influence. On August 15, 2007, the second phase of the campaign (once again named the PPC) was inaugurated. The faction fight and ideological debate over decentralisation have quieted to some extent, but they are not fully contained. Yet there are very few indicators that PPC is going to be anything beyond a state-run program of limited developmental and welfare significance.

Our interviews of activists and observers of the PPC – a number of them former or current leading activists of left political formations – elicited only negative responses. One of the interviewees felt that by exploiting the faction fight within the left, a strong ideology of anti-decentralisation had become rampant in Kerala. Another felt that no political party had actually accepted the PPC or decentralisation as part of its agenda. Another thought that there was hardly any communication between the organisational leadership of political parties and elected people's representatives on PPC or decentralisation.

Similarly, after collecting data in the context of LSG elections in 2005, the Centre for Rural Management, a Kottayam-based NGO, concluded that political support for the PPC not only at the state level but more importantly at the LSG level is necessary if it shall resume its original character, Because Kerala has no civil society organisation (including the People's Science Movement) that is capable of initiating an effective and independent campaign to mobilise the people behind decentralisation and participatory planning for development, the field for such action is left to organised political parties.

In spite of this, there are some promising developments, such as the fact that the CPI-M has instructed its local branches to interact with their parliamentary groups at the LSG level and monitor their activities. On the one hand, the chances look bleak as long as the political parties continue to dominate the public discussion in addition to popular organisations and civil societies and do not show any genuine interest in reviving comprehensive and democratic decentralisation. The unfortunate leftist debate was due more to particular problems within the CPI-M than anything else. On the other hand, it could also be argued that NGOs and other civil

society activists should enter into dialogues with parties and elected representatives at the LSG level if they are interested in promoting the original objectives of the PPC again. The SDC-CapDeck Programme, for instance, worked through 19 separate organisations, NGOs, and voluntary organisations that were ready to enter into partnership with 71 Village Councils of different political alignments from 14 districts of Kerala. The civil society activists thus accepted the control and direction of elected representatives, and together they have made some significant interventions in different aspects of strengthening LSGs. They are working in areas such as representation of marginalised groups, strengthening the Village Assemblies, mainstreaming gender, and building up support for LSGs from among community-based organisations. In spite of the then-raging controversy over decentralisation and NGO involvement, the Village Councils accepted the partnership of such organisations. This might be one model through which support for the principles and intentions of the PPC could be built anew. Yet it is too early to say anything definite about the wider potential of the experiment.

Indonesian Democracy Activists between Movement and Party

In Indonesia, popular politics continue to suffer from the devastating elimination in the mid-1960s of the broad popular movements that had developed under the reign of Sukarno and the influence of the reformist Communist Party. The democracy movement that emerged much later against Suharto was mainly student- and middle-class driven and poorly organised, yet it rode a wave of structural problems undermining his rule. Hence, by mid-1996, a crackdown on dissidents made wider sections of the population realise that it was impossible to reform the regime. A year later, international investors opted to leave because they became nervous about overrated financial markets and the possibility of earning extra profits through political and military protection. It is true that Suharto was still in command of the people, the bureaucracy, and the military, but his ability to command the market had been undermined by the informalisation and privatisation of the economy. As the economy collapsed, the not-very-democratic middle classes realised that their privileges and options were also at stake. This paved the way for the student demonstrations, which substituted for the lack of a mass organisation and tipped the balance. As in the birth of most new democracies, however, it was at first Suharto's own men that saved their fortunes by abandoning him, accommodating moderate dissidents, and jointly following up with top-level agreements on basic freedoms, rule of law, privatisation, quick elections,

and decentralisation. Meanwhile the pro-democrats were taken by surprise and were both ideologically and organisationally unprepared to make a difference in the elections. Although many individuals dropped out, others joined the elite and yet others opted for principled civil society and social movement activity 'to build genuine democracy from below' while lobbying dissident celebrity politicians.[32]

Four years later, most civil society and popular movement activists agreed that this extra-parliamentary road map had proved insufficient. Case studies showed that many groups and activists were alive and kicking but remained fragmented and unable to establish a firm social base and advance politically.[33] The civil society groups were specialised along 15 front lines of democracy work and various 'territories' and approaches. Previously Suharto had prevented dissidents from organising on the ground to thus turn the people into a 'floating mass', but now it was the pro-democrats themselves that were 'floating' without contacts and roots.[34] Meanwhile, it was rather the elitist parties and groups that captured the political momentum by incorporating ordinary people from top-down. These results were confirmed in the wider framework of two national democracy surveys from 2003 and 2007.[35] Some of the impressive freedoms, elections, and civil society engagements were being undermined; the basic social and economic rights were insufficient; the operational instruments of rule of law and public governance remained poor in spite of some improvements; and, worst of all, political representation was deteriorating. Basically this was because organised politics had been monopolised – not just by the old oligarchs but also by a limited number of powerful groups with roots in state, business, and communal organisations.[36] Meanwhile however, the pro-democracy organisations had also isolated themselves in civil society and lobbying activities, not trying to enter into organised politics with a sufficient base.[37] The obvious conclusion was that the democrats must establish firmer links with social movements to enter into mass politics. The only question was *how*?

The political opportunity structure remains unfavourable to popular participation and representation. With the exception of Aceh, participation even in local elections calls for a national presence, with branch offices in 60 percent of the provinces, 50 percent of the regencies and municipalities, and 25 percent of the sub-districts. Hence, it is almost impossible to build parties from below without access to huge funds. Similarly, only big parties or extensive coalitions may nominate candidates for elections of presidents, governors, mayors, and regents. Aside from the elections of individual representatives from the provinces to an insignificant national assembly (DPD), the openings for independent candidates are only for the well endowed. Finally, the labour classes and women in general are de facto

excluded. Candidates must have comparatively advanced formal schooling. Participation even in village elections calls for male-dominated networks and huge resources. And there are almost no democratic arrangements for interest-based and direct popular representation in public governance – only privileged contacts and top-down selection of individuals and groups. It is true that international organisations that used to focus on elections have now acknowledged the problem of representation. Their priority, however, is to foster functional elitist parties that 'pick up demands from society and bundle them'; popularly controlled representation is deemed 'normative' and 'idealistic'.[38]

Because popular representation is a basic democratic dimension, the scholars and activists that had carried out the previously mentioned democracy surveys initiated in 2007 two special studies on pioneering attempts to foster it. One study focuses on empirical observations of popular and civil society groups that try to engage in organised politics. Most efforts are extensions of existing localised projects and actions. This is in contrast to elite-driven priorities but has sustained the fragmentation. Meanwhile, the attempts to broker alliances and coalitions have not been attractive enough for specialised groups as compared to lobbying or 'good contacts'.[39] Another study[40] draws on theoretical and comparative perspectives over time and space to identify major ways of scaling up issues, groups, communities, and workplaces through improved representation. Early results point to ten partially overlapping models that share a number of dilemmas but also one major option.

Ten Road Maps

The first model is rooted in *civil society and popular interest politics.* Increasingly, many citizen action groups relate to popular movements and assist involvement in organised politics. An interesting example is the environmental umbrella organisation *Walhi's* support for the *Insan* fisher folk association in South Kalimantan in its struggle against a transnational cement factory that devastated the fishing waters. Another is activist lawyer Handoko's (with supportive civil society groups) promotion of a democratic peasant movement in North Central Java to reclaim state-expropriated land and enter into local elections. Although the experiments foster genuine organisation with great potential, there are problems of scaling up the work beyond specificities and personalities to provide representation beyond their own groups and thus win majorities in elections.

The second model is *dissident community politics.* Community work to improve vulnerable people's social and economic conditions was a crucial

entry point to foster political change under Suharto, and it continues to serve as one basis for political engagement (especially outside Java). It has been difficult, however, to broaden the movements beyond core issues and competing specific approaches. Similarly, many minority groups have drawn on and even reinvented customary rules to protect their natural resources, culture, and religion against centralistic and coercive profit-driven development. One example is the indigenous people's alliance AMAN and supportive civil society groups such as *Baileo* in the Moluccas aimed at vitalising customary institutions to gain basic human rights and help people sustain their livelihoods. Unfortunately, however, the communitarian bases tend to undermine political equality if the demands are for special benefits rather than for equal civil or human rights and protection of the environment for the sake of the people in a country or region as a whole.

The third model is *direct political participation.* One reaction against the deficits of the political system is to bypass so-called rotten politics through direct participation. Initially this was done through involvement by people facing specific problems, such as human rights violations, corruption, and environmental destruction. Polycentrism, however, proved difficult to combine with democratic representation because it is unclear what people are supposed to control what parts of public affairs as political equals on behalf of whom and in a responsive and accountable way. This negated the need to scale up issues, people, communities, and workplaces to enable the pro-democrats to make a political difference.

Internationally, the most innovative way of responding to the critique has been by institutionalising new forms of direct representation in sectoral public councils and participatory planning.[41] For example, women activists and the Corruption Watch try to foster social audits and participatory budgeting with more universal participation. Remarkably, however, there are few attempts to substitute democratic representation of organised interests for Suharto's state-driven corporatism. Civil society groups have rather facilitated informal contacts between sections of the people and executive government. One particular form has been that of citizen forums (*Forum Warga)* for direct deliberative links, conflating citizens and the Muslim community. A more common solution is that of the elected independent candidates in Aceh to cater to 'their' clients, thus sustaining patronage politics.

The fourth model is *politics of public discourse.* A major middle-class constituency within the democracy movement against Suharto was composed of journalists and related intellectuals, acting both for the general principle of freedom of speech and their own opportunities to do a good job. Many pro-democrats still try to scale up through alternative research

and information and by fostering public spheres for the deliberation of crucial matters for ordinary citizens, beyond censorship and the resourceful elite. However, many of these efforts have been undermined by the limited reach among ordinary people, lack of public resources, commercialism, extensive reliance on foreign funding, and elitist focus on think tanks, setting aside the tradition of popular education in the nationalist movement.

The fifth model is *political contracts.* Because of the monopolisation of the party system, the most common alternative to participate (beyond lobbying and good contacts) has been to negotiate political contracts on policy commitments with individual politicians and parties. One example involves the groups behind pro-democracy-oriented candidates such as Wayan Sudirtha in Bali. Another is when civil society groups and popular organisations foster political alliances or when a number of similar organisations, such as those working for the urban poor, formulate minimum demands and ask candidates to commit themselves to support them. Many of these arrangements are limited, however, by general agreements in narrow fields. Furthermore, the civil and popular actors lack sufficient bargaining power to enforce the deals. They are typically short of crucial campaigners, unable to deliver a substantial number of votes, and without sustainable organisations to keep successful politicians accountable after the elections. Hence, there is an obvious need for both more solid and autonomous organisation on the part of civil society and popular groups when engaging in politics. It is true that the December 2006 elections of new local executives in Aceh are an inspiring example of the benefit of independent candidates. However, it is often forgotten that the successful candidates were not so independent but rested on (nationalist) movements with (more or less democratic) command-structures.[42]

The sixth model involves *fronts from within.* The obvious alternative to the often-defective political contracts have been either to 'capture' local chapters of small national parties that are eligible to run in local elections even where not really present or try to reform or make an impact within the 'least worst' of the major parties. However, the progressive activists have suffered from these parties' poor reputation and have had to pay for their own campaigns. Among those working within big parties, moreover, even dynamic individuals with middle-class and NGO constituencies have been short of power to make decisive headway. And the attempts by socialist nationalists like Budiman Sudjatmiko to gain power in Megawati's PDI-P by organising popular constituencies run the risk of ending up in a similar catastrophe as those among the Philippine Popular Democrats who tried much the same behind President Joseph Estrada but became the prisoners of elitist populism.

The seventh model is the *trade union party.* As in many other parts of the Global South, there have also been attempts to build parties based on trade unions. Two major problems have invalidated the experiments. The first is the uphill task of expanding the agenda beyond sectoral interests by drawing on labour perspectives and organisation to cater to the society at large. In Indonesia, there are few viable links between trade unions, other similar popular organisations, and radical civil society groups, not to mention attempts at forging compromises with growth-oriented capital to boost development in return for social security and unemployment guarantees. The second problem is the union divisiveness and importance of strongmen. This is partly related to poor trust in representatives. Better-organised labour is likely to play a decisive role in democratic politics, but not without broader agendas for cooperation.

The eighth model is the *multi-sectoral party.* Popularly oriented civil society activists have also tried to build a party-political vehicle (PPR) for local organisations and movements. To prove their trustworthiness, party leaders would not even run themselves, only representatives of people's own movements, primarily among farmers, fisher folks, minorities, and urban poor. This perspective worked well in a province like Bengkulu where the party grew out of dynamic civil society and popular organisations and served as a coordinator without immediate competitors and ambitions to dominate. In many other cases, however, the initiators have either been less-well-grounded NGOs and organisations or established groups with their own agendas and contacts. Hence, both these actors have been reluctant to give full support because they would not benefit until (at best) Election Day and had to invest a lot of time and resources in building up the party and getting accepted by the authorities. Actually, it was less risky and costly to relate to already-established politicians and parties that could offer something immediate in return for votes. In addition, many groups hesitate to link up with any party at all for the risk of being divided and abused. Although the initiators were widely appreciated, PPR thus failed to get reach the formal requirements in terms of local offices around the country. Moreover, although a success might have turned the party into a vital arena for debate and cooperation, several questions would have remained to be solved, such as how to agree on a solid platform, select candidates, and keep them accountable to all organisations not just their own.

The ninth model is *a national ideological party.* This classical road map is modelled on the thesis that there is a need for a common ideology and a well-functioning national organisation. To broaden the framework, the leftist cadre party PRD was de facto transformed into a national united front called *Papernas*, combining the old leftist 'front from above' tactics

(between established organisations) and 'front from below' idea (between groups and people behind ideologically derived minimum demands). However, the attempts to enrol additional organisations or parts of them rather than individuals caused additional fragmentation and political disengagement in the democracy movement. Moreover, in contrast to the Philippines with its national party list system and ideological organisations, the Indonesian political space for new ways of organising is even more related to basic issues and alternative governance on the local level.

The tenth model refers to the building of *local political parties.* This model comes in two varieties. One is the attempt to form several local parties and then build an all-Indonesia alliance to meet the formal requirements for participation in elections. This strategy was close to the eighth road map of the PPR and seems to have run aground. Another is to expand on the special rights in Aceh to form local parties that are eligible themselves to run in elections on the provincial level. This model has become increasingly popular because the Aceh experiment has so far countered the mainstream argument that local parties would foster more separatism and identity politics. It is important to remember, however, that the enforcement of local parties in Aceh rests with the dynamic of the struggle against the dominance of Jakarta and that several of the crucial factors are not relevant in other provinces, including territorial rather than ethnic and religious political identities, temporary international containment after the tsunami of the otherwise dominant primitive accumulation of capital, and a peace agreement in favour of political- and democracy-oriented conflict transformation that boosted the democracy-oriented sections of the Aceh nationalists, some of whom in turn were capable of utilising the new opportunities and even win elections. This is not to argue that other dynamics with similar outcomes cannot evolve elsewhere. However, to simply export the idea of local parties would be another example of naïve crafting of democracy. In fact, Aceh is not about liberal peace but more social-democratic-oriented peace, based as it was on strong politics, regulation of big business, the transformation of conflict within a democratic framework, and people's capacity to use and improve the new institutions. To sustain these factors, there is an urgent need to foster more equal citizenship, protect Aceh from integration into the normal Indonesian symbiosis of politics and capital and develop genuine representation beyond quick transformation of combatant and activist organisations into political parties. Already in the most recent elections, it was only the powerful and patronage-oriented local party with a basis in the old rebel movement command structure that made it to the provincial parliament. Hence there must also be counter patronage-driven direct forms of representation through alliances and campaigns toward *democratic* institutions for direct

access and participation beyond parties and elections only as well as to renew the party system.[43]

The Need for Intermediate Political Blocks

In brief, no single pathway or combination of them seems to offer a viable solution for how to include people in politics through improved representation. The conclusion is rather that all of them need supplementary organisation for joint agendas on an intermediate political level between parties and specific groups at all central to local levels where there are political elections. Efforts toward such democratic political blocks should be of interest *as a supplement* to the activists of all the road maps. The civil society and popular interest politics need to combine issues, alliances, and workplaces by way of cooperation on a more aggregate level, without having to subordinate themselves to top-down parties and politicians. Progressive community, religious, ethnic, and customary groups need cooperation with democrats on more comprehensive agendas where it is possible to relate communal demands to equal civil and political rights and environmental protection for the society at large, thus avoiding fragmentation and identity politics. The activists in favour of direct democratic participation in relation to public planning and services need joint agendas and organisation to put pressure on politicians to institutionalise such measures on broad scale. Intellectuals within media, culture, research, and education need exciting and meaningful public spheres to relate to. Political contracts are not viable without firm and permanent organisation among popular and civil society groups to formulate demands, offer powerful support to positive politicians, and put pressure on defectors. Democrats trying to alter existing parties from within need firm backing from outside without being accused of factionalism. Sectoral political party groups based on trade unions or farmers must relate to wider efforts and demands. Political machines allowing various popular movements to launch their own political candidates need to consider more people, agendas, and priorities. National ideological parties will remain marginal without trustworthy relations to the much wider sections of independently cooperating civil society and popular organisations. Local political parties as in Aceh need to foster supplementary forms of democratic participation beyond elections to curb rather than turn victims or prisoners of old command structures and renewed clientelism. All this calls for intermediate political block organisation and joint agendas. Gradually, politicians who are prepared to promote the block agendas consistently may well generate a more representative party. There are international experiences to draw

on. Generally, this is how Scandinavian social democracy first organised and then became hegemonic.[44] And similar dynamics were at play when the Brazilian Labour Party grew strong, won local elections, and facilitated participatory budgeting and more.[45]

Conclusion

On the one hand, it is of course difficult to draw any firm conclusions from the similarly oriented efforts in the Philippines, Kerala, and Indonesia to combine civil society and popular movement and make a difference in organised politics, given that both the organisations and the contexts were different. On the other hand, if similar attempts face similar problems under quite different conditions, these challenges might be of more universal relevance.

In brief, there are four points to be made. First, although the freedoms remain, it has become increasingly difficult for independent civil society and popularly oriented groups to affect public affairs. Many public affairs have been depoliticised to technocrats, the market, and patronage-dominated communities. There is a shortage of institutionalised channels for interest and issue group participation beyond clientelism and good contacts. Even popular representation in formal government is held back by elitist control of party and electoral systems. It should be possible to gain broad support for giving priority to these problems.

Second, the elitist and centrist elements of the traditional left have been a hindrance too: in the Philippines, by way of Maoist violence and harassment; in Kerala, through the subordination of issues of popular participation in governance and development to destructive party competition and factionalism; in Indonesia, as part of persistent attempts at unifying scattered groups and movements through competitive top-down leadership. The importance of creating more independent and democratically institutionalised spheres for public discourse needs to be reemphasised, along with non-party-dominated politics behind basic agendas.

Third, these hindrances in turn have spurred extra-parliamentary actions and litigation and the participation of special groups and targeted populations in the handling of specific matters of their own concern. There is nothing wrong with this, although it is democratically insufficient and comes at the expense of scaling up civil society and popular work behind concrete proposals and programs in relation to both popular representation and direct participation in local governance.

Finally, the pioneering attempts in this direction have suffered from poor political facilitation. In addition to political struggle for representation to

thus enable participation, the facilitation needs to be firmly in favour of democratic principles of political equality, impartiality, and unbroken chains of popular sovereignty. In the Philippines, insufficient priority has been given to broad work for alternative local governance agendas. In Kerala, there has been inconsistent leftist support and lack of organised backup through non-party formations. In Indonesia, civil society and movement activists 'going political' have not managed to generate basic agendas and organisations in between specific groups and populist leaders.

Notes

1. Cf. Quimpo 2008, Törnquist with Tharakan 1995, Törnquist 1984, 1989, 1991.
2. This chapter is a collective effort. Although Törnquist has served as the coordinating editor and lead author of the comparative and Indonesia sections, Tharakan has been the lead author of the Kerala section and Quimpo of the Philippines section.
3. Törnquist 2002.
4. Ibid.
5. See, e.g., Rocamora 2004 and Törnquist 2002.
6. See, e.g., Törnquist *et al.* 1996, Isaac *et al.* 2003.
7. See, e.g., Törnquist 2000, Lane 2008.
8. See, e.g., Rocamora 2004, Quimpo 2008, Tharakan 2004, Törnquist 2004, Prasetyo *et al.* 2004.
9. Hutchcroft 1998.
10. McCoy 1993.
11. Sidel 1999.
12. *Kerala Sasthra Sahithya Parishath* (KSSP).
13. See, e.g., Tharakan 1998, 2004a, Törnquist with Tharakan 1995.
14. Tharakan 2004a, Törnquist 2004, Isaac with Franke 2000.
15. Ibid.
16. See, e.g., Tharakan 2004a, Törnquist 2004, 2007.
17. The "questionnaire" was canvassed by Jos Chathukulam, and the data were analysed and presented by P. K. Michael Tharakan. Support and comments were provided by Olle Törnquist, the University of Oslo.
18. Tharakan 2004a.
19. Ibid.
20. Tharakan 1998.
21. Tharakan 1990, 2004b.
22. Cf. Törnquist 2004.
23. Mohan and Jayaraj 2006.
24. Interview on October 28, 2007.
25. Chathakulam and John 2002.
26. 2006.

27. de Souza 2003.
28. Manmohan 2005.
29. MTGPK 2003.
30. October 7, 2007.
31. Törnquist with Tharakan 1995, Törnquist 2004.
32. Törnquist 2000.
33. Prasetyo *et al.* 2004.
34. Törnquist 2003.
35. Priyono *et al.* 2007, Samadhi *et al.* 2008.
36. Cf. van Klinken, this volume.
37. Samadhi *et al.* 2008, Törnquist 2009.
38. IDEA 2007: 7.
39. Nur 2009.
40. Ongoing by Törnquist.
41. Cf. Baiocchi and Heller, this volume.
42. Törnquist *et al.* 2009.
43. Ibid.
44. Cf. Esping-Andersen 1985, Berman 2006.
45. Cf. Abers 2000, Baiocchi 2003, 2005.

12

From Research to Practice: Towards the Democratic Institutionalisation of Nodes for Improved Representation

Neil Webster, Kristian Stokke, and Olle Törnquist

Democratisation and democratic institutionalisation are not peaceful processes. The heterogeneity of the demos, the inequalities that are present, and the divisions emanating from practices of exclusion all serve to ensure that conflict and struggle are intrinsic to democratic transition as demands for participation and representation are formulated, articulated, and opposed. In the introductory chapter, Törnquist made a theoretical argument about the stagnation of democracy in post-colonial states, emphasising the depoliticisation of public affairs and the problems of flawed representation. This is also the most apparent message to emerge from the case studies in this book. They also carry many separate messages and lessons to be learned, practices to be considered. Rather than seek to summarise these lessons and experiences in this concluding chapter, we wish instead to build on them by asking what role can policy play and what role can those who advise, formulate, and implement policy play with regard to popular representative democracy? Our proposition is that the right policies can facilitate a particular direction in development in that they can shape a more enabling environment for popular representation and they can moderate the level and form of conflict that characterises such change. The same proposition has as its antithesis that the wrong policies or the right policies wrongly implemented can have undemocratic outcomes as in strengthening the authorisation of the representative while reducing her accountability.

If history could demonstrate that a given sequence of political and economic reforms could open the way to democracy, the work of policy makers and their advisers would be simple. Perhaps fortunately it does not, history being used in diverse ways to demonstrate different paths to democracy. So while institution building, a culture of citizenship, economic growth, electoral reform, political parties, and enhanced popular participation can be seen as some of the more important building blocks of democracy, how and in what order they work remain uncertain. Thus, attempts to develop a coordinated approach to policy between a government, political and civil society, and multilateral and bilateral donors with the aim of building and strengthening democratic governance have had difficulties in achieving their intended outcomes, and it must also be accepted that much has failed.

Research and Policy

Although the chapters in this book have been driven by the agendas of researchers rather than those of policy makers, their focus has been to a considerable extent on policy practice and its outcomes. The introductory chapter set out to explore the theoretical concerns that researchers have with understanding the role of the polity in political development and the ways and means that its engagement can bring about a more effective and, in particular, accountable form of politics. It led to a focus on how representation and participation can be combined analytically,[1] the experiences of which are explored in the subsequent country case studies. The theoretical discussion raised the structural problem that democracy as a project has faced in the global south; this is due to liberal democracy having been introduced ahead of the kind of industrialisation and modernisation that in Europe and the northern Americas provided the necessary conditions for the rise of liberal constitutional states. Here democratisation can be seen as an outcome of economic growth and its impact on populations. The right to representation was contested as different interest groups mobilised, applied whatever leverage they had over those in power, and not least dared to think that they should also be active participants rather than passive subjects in the system of governance. Hence, we witness the emergence of political demands on the basis of being taxpayers, small farmers, agricultural labourers, factory workers, women, ethnic minorities, and others. Although there may have been many paths to democracy in these countries, the logics were primarily, though by no means exclusively, driven from within.

In the global south, democratisation has more complex roots in colonial and post-colonial histories. Exogenous demands and expectations

have repeatedly been placed over those emerging from within the developing democracies and economies of the region. Politics and policy are deeply influenced by different interpretations of a country's history and of the problems it faces propounded by actors with strong vested interests, for example, donors seeking to promote good governance, politicians seeking to anchor their legitimacy, businesses seeking to restructure the regulation of their markets, and non-governmental organisation (NGO) leaders claiming a development role for their organisations. There are also others less prominent as actors in their own right, but whose presence has a significant effect on the politics of setting a policy agenda: the poor, marginalised minorities, women, migrant workers, the illiterate, and unorganised labour.

Given such complexity and diversity in contexts and experiences, it would appear self-evident that there is no one historical path to democracy, or correct sequence of policy initiatives to be adopted, or any fixed formula for success. However, it should not be concluded that the development of democracy cannot be pursued as a policy objective in the global south or that this cannot draw on others' experiences. The significant successes found in Brazil, Kerala, South Africa, India, and elsewhere demonstrate that there are short-cuts to be taken by way of democratic struggles and supportive reforms, that the price in suffering and repression paid to achieve democratic progress can be lessened, and that authoritarian regimes are not a necessary stage on the way to a more democratic political system.

What the case studies in this book have demonstrated is that democracy in the global south does face a number of challenges, some similar to those faced by the early democracies, others linked to the changes and policies that arise out of the subsequent impact these early democracies have had and continue to have in the global south whether as political ideas, policy prescriptions, donor interventions, or similar factors. Today, democratisation in the individual country is no longer a national project but a global one. From the perspective of this book, the need for policy at the country level is to review the past, understand its consequences for contemporary democratisation in the south, and thereafter intervene in ways that strengthen the progressive democratic forces at work and counter or marginalise those opposed to such change. At the global level, the need is to draw on the history of democracy to facilitate this national process, but not to direct it.

One important theme to emerge in this volume has been the elitist character of the early period of democratisation in the global south with a strong tendency for political power at the national level to be rooted in communal, patronage, and network-based groups, often in symbiotic

relationships with vested business interests. For example, the role and condition of elite politics in Indonesia,[2] the potential danger in political party-based networks in West Bengal,[3] and elitist civil society organisations in Chennai.[4] At the time of independence, bureaucratic, political, landowning, and military elites often found themselves in elevated positions of power in relation to the newly established state and government. Their legitimacy was rooted in diverse claims, including their role in achieving independence, their importance to establishing and defending the new nation-state, their status as traditional authorities, their links to international elites, and similar roles. The political leadership did not possess a legitimacy based on popular democratic processes anchored within a constitutional framework; significant sections of the populations were yet to be enfranchised, many remained socially and politically marginalised, and widespread poverty with its associated dependencies reduced the participatory role of many more. Several decades later, there may well have been economic growth and the rise of a strong business elite and nascent middle class, yet the elitist character of politics and society more often than not remains.

If the polity has not witnessed a significant change in political representation in the face of elite domination and in many cases outright repression, it must also be stated that the growth of civic and popular organisations, while significant in itself,[5] has also to take a share of the responsibility for this failure. They have not been able to scale up their approach to the issue; often they have remained working at the local level of governance or acting as advocates on behalf of populations rather than securing the popular representation of these populations institutionally to state and government.[6]

If one accepts the discussion so far, then any strategy for democratisation needs to address two key issues: first, the elite domination of politics and the state in particular and the consequences of this for policy and its implementation and second, the weak condition of representative democracy with strong tendencies for these to be more exclusive than inclusive, hierarchical rather than promoting political equity, and lacking in transparency and accountability. A central element in a response to both these problems is the promotion of a more inclusive politics with a strategy to strengthen representative governance by means of an active civil society of popular organisations together with political parties and civic experts that can also mediate between a people and their government. Recent experiences across a number of countries suggest that the policies and approaches to date have not been so effective and need serious reconsideration.

None of the foregoing case studies has presented a story of failure, however. What they have pointed to are weaknesses that stem from deficits in conception, design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

Collectively, they indicate the need for a radical shift in the ways we approach democratisation, radical in that it involves adjustments at all points of this cycle. Such an extensive set of changes requires a significant shift in the underlying ethos of the approach to representative democracy; it has to be radical to ensure that governance based on popular representation is firmly anchored in the state institutions that provide the framework for the politics of policymaking and implementation as well as culturally fixed in the politics of the expectations and practices of the demos.

Drawing on the conceptual chapters as well as the case studies, three areas can be singled out as particularly important for popular representation[7]: popular capacity building, popular organisation building, and a government prepared to commit itself to the facilitation of popular representation. Supporting development and change in each of these in a coherent manner can facilitate and promote democratic practices that demonstrably lead to change, such that governments are seen to pursue a reform agenda that brings change, economic growth brings measurable benefits to the demos as a whole, and those previously marginalised in the political system begin to have a genuine sense of owning that system and the outcomes it brings. The case studies do not provide a recipe for more effective and efficient government based on greater accountability and increasing equity, but they do provide strong arguments as to what might provide a basis for better policies and programmes in support of democratisation.

Popular Capacity Building

For representative politics to function, it requires that the population can be active citizens. Several of the case studies have demonstrated quite specific activities at the local level that require an active agency on the part of individuals, whether it is to engage in direct democracy (for example, local government meetings, participatory budgeting, local civil organisations) or representative democracy (for example, knowing how to vote, assessing who to vote for, monitoring and engaging with representatives). Such agency requires basic capacities and skills including being able to read and understand a plan and the accompanying budget; being able to link a set of accounts to a budget; being able to organise themselves, engage in exercises whereby resources are identified and placed against a set of prioritised needs, and thereby formulating a basic plan; knowing how to access information and where to access it from; and being aware of political and administrative officials' roles and responsibilities and not just where their offices are to be found. Some aspects of this knowledge

are present and practiced in different forms of everyday life; it is organic knowledge in the Gramscian sense, part of the means for managing daily, seasonal, and annual patterns in peoples' livelihoods. At the same time, it is difficult for ordinary people to move such practices into the more formal institutional realm of organisations that involve, for example, participatory budgeting, working on a local health clinic or school management board, and engaging in local village or ward planning exercises. In many instances, the principal barriers are information, access, and time: information as to what can and cannot be done, access to the forums in which these capacities can be used, and time in one's daily life to engage in these forums. Behind these lie poor service provision, lack of resources, cultural practices, and, not least, poverty.

Policy has focused on the importance of capacity building for a number of years now, but the suggestion here is that there is a need to focus more on enhancing the political agency of the individuals with respect to their representatives. The former should be targeted and resourced such that they can contribute to and work with a project plan, formulate a proposal, be aware of the potential in making a legal case, formulate a grounded critique, and access and use a database or a handbook of government responsibilities and information on those responsible. In this way, they develop a portfolio of tactics with which to approach those mediating on their behalf with the state and government.

Powerful and deeply embedded structures of class, gender, caste, ethnicity, and the asymmetric relations and patterns of behavior that these give rise to will need to be addressed and overcome. Changes in civic and political education, health, and institutionalised credit are just three of the many ways that such relationships can be changed as dependencies are weakened and new horizons for their aspirations are established.

Popular Organisation Building

From the case studies, two main types of popular organisations emerge as important agents for promoting and facilitating popular representation in governance: first, organisations that emerge from within the demos, emerging from associational activities that take on at some point an organisational form, and second, organisations that are established from above, but that can be made popular organisations whether or not this was the original intention. Examples of the former would comprise those falling within the collective action sector,[8] that is, membership-based organisations that seek to manage and promote the interests of their members. These include trade unions and peasant organisations,

political parties in some instances where rooted in popular movements, but also co-operatives in the agricultural sector, irrigation and water management associations, small producer associations, housing and tenants' associations, taxi and rickshaw puller associations, and broader types of organisations such as women or minority group associations. Examples of the second type of popular organisation would include institutions and organisations created under government programs: forest protection groups, school management and health clinic boards and committees, local project committees, participatory planning and budgeting groups, ward and village development forums.

There is a third set of exogenous participatory organisation, namely, NGOs and other civil society organisations (CSOs) established in the name of or on behalf of particular populations. Time and the accompanying experience with these organisations has led to a more pragmatic and critical assessment of their nature and role, many having fallen far short of the expectations that accompanied their rapid growth in scale and numbers in the 1980s and early 1990s. Within this set is a group that seeks to engage marginalised groups within the demos and to change their relationship with the state; for example,social mobilisation groups in India, Indonesia, and the Philippines,[9] Brazil,[10] and Senegal.[11] In Kabeer's terms,[12] these can be seen to promote a more inclusive citizenship, mirroring this book's call for a radical shift in the ways we approach popular representation.

What are the policy needs for promoting and working with these popular organisations? What should donors, governments, civil society organisations, NGOs, and other actors address in their work? Drawing on the foregoing chapters and building on the needs for popular capacity building identified above, the needs can be summarised as being:

1. A recognition of people's abilities to organise, their willingness to organise, and the ways and means by which these are manifested in their lives
2. The identification of the constraints that stand in the way of such organising practices including lack of resources, lack of time, lack of information, lack of recognition by relevant authorities, and lack of democratic channels to influence public policies
3. The securing of a leadership in popular organisations that can overcome fragmentation, facilitate cooperation, develop common agendas, and work for particular interests without necessarily being themselves defined by these same interests[13]
4. The establishment of institutional channels through which these popular organisations can mediate with the state at central and intermediate levels, not just local levels

5. The encouragement of a perception within the demos that popular organisations can be an important part of governance

There is a dilemma, however, as Törnquist, Chandhoke, Houtzager, and Lavalle point out in their chapters: what to do when the representatives prove not to be very democratic and organisations that claim to work for the deepening of democracy are not very representative of the demos? If we take the five needs in the previous paragraph, they are all undermined if the organisations involved fail to be popular, accountable, and democratic. It must also be acknowledged that authoritarian and elitist governments have clear vested interests in seeing popular organisations failing to play the mediating, monitoring, correcting role required of civil and political society toward state and government. But they do not stand alone in this; donors are also responsible for what has occurred.

The dominant tendency among donor organisations to use civil society organisations as an alternative instrument for delivering aid has often served to depoliticise civil society and weaken the politics of popular representation. To promote this 'third' sector as a place of employment and opportunity is often at the expense of the public sector, and, not least, has given rise to a new elite group that claims to act for the majority of the demos, but in practice is not representative of its political will and lacks the instruments of accountability that could make it so.

Popular organisations have to be seen according to their political status in relation to the state on the one hand and to the demos on the other. Partnerships with international organisations have to work within this perspective, and, in particular, the internal practices of these popular organisations must promote and sustain the popular basis of their existence.

A Government Committed to Popular Representation

At the heart of the volume lies the discussion of popular representation. The rethinking of popular representation in chapter 1 took its starting point in Hanna Pitkin's relationship between the representative and the represented as rooted in authorisation and accountability. Questions were asked as to how these could be secured, what sections of public affairs the specific elements in the demos should have control over, and how it could be developed in ways that secured sustainability and political equality.

Strengthening the capacity of the demos to participate and build popular organisations that can aid, mediate, and monitor the demos's engagement with the state is one area of intervention for government

and donor policy. The other lies with the need for political representation that can mediate between the demos and the state in public affairs that should be subject to popular control in a democracy. Here it is important to recognise that popular representation requires the support of political and bureaucratic elites, for example, in the design and implementation of the necessary reform agendas. Although it is crucial that popular organisations and politicians represent popular aspirations, for example, in rights-based development and welfare measures, for such demands to be realised requires that elites also support the requisite reform polities and their implementation. Though they tend not to be representatives and thereby subject to processes of popular authorisation and accountability, they may well have interests that coincide with popular aspirations.[14]

Why do national governments devolve responsibilities and resources to local government? Why do they move toward a more corporate approach to governance involving trade unions, professional organisations, farmer associations, and the like in policy formulation? Why do they secure the rights of marginalised groups such as women, ethnic minorities, the elderly, and refugees? As we have already indicated, providing answers to such questions is made difficult by the complexity and range of factors that give rise to these policies and shape their implementation. To restate, there is no simple model based on antecedents to draw on. Yet there are examples in the case studies of forceful popular politics from below that have led to top-down interventions designed to promote both direct and representative democracy, with improved popular representation being an outcome. Here we would point to Scandinavian experiences where pressure for inclusion in government generated top-down reform agendas promoting corporatist governance in addition to a number of institutions for direct participation. These measures were more societal-based and democratically rooted than the East Asian examples of Japan and South Korea. Here it can be argued that corporatist intermediation served as an institutional apparatus for sustaining the political stability between the assertive challenge of democratic forces and the institutional drag of the developmental state.[15]

The decentralisation reforms in Kerala and West Bengal are examples of direct policy action by governments to promote participatory representation. In promoting participatory budgeting in Brazil, the government was supporting a form of direct democracy that not only is radical, but also has major implications for popular representation and thereby the allocation of services and resources. These attempts are shown to be not without problems, especially when state agencies and powerful politicians gain an upper hand as the Mozambique case study illustrates. Elsewhere

in the cases studies from South Africa and Nigeria, organised labour generated important openings and favourable compromises with government and business.[16] In Indonesia, the popular enforcement of a reform agenda only tacitly accepted by the government has generated greater space for progressive initiatives best illustrated in the promotion of peace in Aceh through a democratic decentralisation in which dissidents gained opportunities to build local political parties.

It should not be forgotten that local politics is an important training ground for future national politicians as well as an arena for the demos to learn how to engage with politicians, whether local or national. Note that a common thread through the case studies is the capacity of the demos to aspire and the power that arises from its aspirations. In some of the cases, this has been directly responsible for change, in others, it is pointed to as being a potential yet to be harnessed. The argument is common however: when these aspirations are firmly and inescapably placed on the shoulders of its representatives, when the mediating links such as political parties or member-based associations are bound by a popular and representative base, then a force for radical change has been developed. The importance of the contribution of top-down approaches that can both shape and frame this capacity and the realisation of its potential should not be underestimated.

We would argue that the aim of policy interventions should be to introduce nodes for popular representation, spaces and sites that are conducive to popular representative democracy being practiced. We know from experience in Scandinavia, Kerala, Brazil, and elsewhere that successful demands for democratic clustering and institutionalisation of opportunities to gain influence and various rewards will strengthen and focus civic and popular organisations as well as individual civic rights in opposing the dominance and symbiosis of statist actors pursuing business, communal, and other exclusive agendas. We have seen how political patronage and social networks can introduce institutional drag and elitist distortion into the politics of development. Nodes of popular representation can counter this tendency. However, the type, quality, and scope of such nodes are crucial. One type of node needs to open up access to information and knowledge, which relates to the previous discussion under popular capacity building. A second type of node needs to address the provision (and regulation of) democratic political financing to counter existing dominant actors and to promote political equality. A third type relates to the creation of various institutionalised spaces for popular (individual and collective) participation in policy formulation, but even more importantly in the various spheres of the executive; here one thinks of participatory planning and budgeting, use of education, health, and other councils, public

commissions, and similar instruments. It should also include public efforts to facilitate popular influence in privatised and informalised sectors by way of public regulation. Yet another type of node relates to the facilitation of rights-based sustainable growth through pacts between capital and labour, while a priority to be addressed by all the nodes is the specification as to what aspects of public affairs should the demos control and whether this is by popular participation (direct democracy) or representative democracy. Finally, a crucial task for building and securing this representative democracy is to facilitate and institutionalise popular participation by providing rules and norms, to uphold universalism and prevent fragmented polycentrism, and at the same time to govern and regulate governance on levels where popular participation is not viable.

In conclusion, it is apparent that ordinary people today have a nascent, but limited trust in their ability to promote a more inclusive and representative governance given the democratic deficit they face. Therefore, it is to be hoped that the right policy support will help them to generate more substantial and representative democracies and through this a rights-based sustainable development. This may also enable the transformation of a range of contemporary conflicts (for example, ethnic, religious, and class) from being battlefields to being fields for democratic political engagement. Of course, it may well continue to prove hard for business and middle classes to find sufficiently broad alliances within the demos to foster their agendas without returning to authoritarian and technocratic solutions. However, such anti-democratic solutions will also continue to have negative consequences for the global north, which is a powerful argument for building alliances for policy change that have an international and not just a national character. Such alliances can work toward developing these nodes of representation, primarily by increasing the political capacity of individuals, civic and popular organisations, and political parties to open and use representative democracy and secure national reform agendas for direct and representative democracy that control a more widely defined field of public affairs.

It is increasingly being acknowledged that elitist crafting of legal, political, and civic institutions in favour of liberal democracies has failed to foster popular aspirations for rights-based development and that demands have often been for radical structural change by more authoritarian means often in symbiosis with market and communal interests. In the face of this scenario, there is a clear and urgent need for a new path, for policies that seek to upset the apple-cart of exclusive and unaccountable political power by improving popular representation and participation. We would suggest that the experiences presented in this book do offer some cause for optimism and indicate directions that such a new path might well take.

Notes

This chapter is indebted to Lars Engberg-Pedersen for valuable comments on an earlier draft.

1. Törnquist; Houtzager, and Lavalle; Chandhoke; Stokke and Selboe, this volume.
2. van Klinken, this volume.
3. Webster, this volume.
4. Harriss, this volume.
5. Beckman, this volume.
6. Törnquist, Tharakan, and Quimpo, this volume.
7. This would include political parties as most of the studies have pointed to their central role for popular representation.
8. Uphoff 1989.
9. Harriss, Törnquist *et al.,* this volume.
10. Baiocchi and Heller, Houtzager and Lavalle, this volume.
11. Stokke and Selboe, this volume.
12. Kabeer 2005.
13. For example, CSOs and NGOs with a leadership is educated and middle class working for the interests of the poor.
14. Here we would draw parallels to the Department for International Development (DfID) in the United Kingdom and its "Drivers of Change" analyses or Swedish Sida's "Power Analyses."
15. See Taekyoon 2008.
16. Beckman, this volume.

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