

# **‘Seeing Like a Citizen: Empowering citizens, Delivering services, Deepening democracy**

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**For copies of studies and further materials:  
*DRC on Citizenship, Participation and Accountability:*  
[www.ids.ac.uk/drc-citizen](http://www.ids.ac.uk/drc-citizen)  
*Logolink (Participation and Local Governance):*  
[www.ids.ac.uk/logolink](http://www.ids.ac.uk/logolink)**

# ***The Context of Participation***

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- ✓ **Around the world a key crisis of legitimacy characterises the relationship between citizens and institutions that affect their lives;**
- ✓ **A key challenge therefore is the construction of new relationships between ordinary citizens - especially the poor and excluded - and institutions, especially government.**
- ✓ **In both rich and poor countries, a number of initiatives are seeking new ways of strengthening citizen participation, on the one hand, and government responsiveness on the other.**

# Constructions of citizenship

- **A neo-liberal market approach – citizens as consumers**
- **A state-based approach – citizens as users**
- **A ‘thin democracy’ approach – citizens as voters**
- **A citizen-centred approach – sees citizens as actors, not as residuals of other institutions. Puts citizen empowerment at the heart of democratic process**

# Participation extends citizenship and deepens democracy

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## Participatory citizenship

Moves beyond passive engagement in elections to engagement in policies and decision-making

## The right to participation

Considers citizens as the 'makers and shapers' of policies, not only the 'users and choosers' of development, or as 'clients' of others

## Citizenship and rights

Are seen as 'attained' through action, not only 'bestowed' by law – as actor based, and as practice based.

# Deepening Democracy through Empowered Participatory Governance

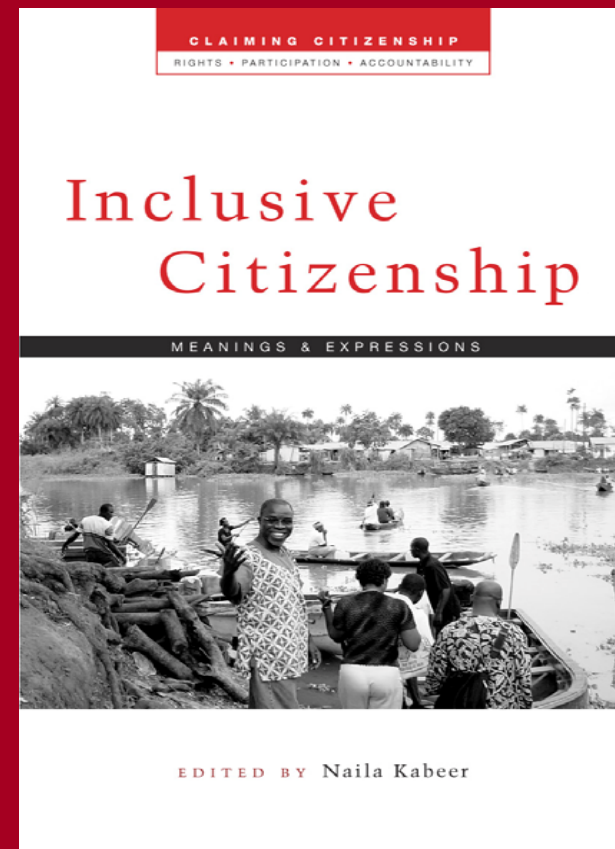
- Links concerns with participation and deliberation to a concern with how such spaces are created and supported by the design of public institutions
- Beyond invitation – participation as a legal right
- Examples:
  - Participatory budgeting and participatory health councils in Brazil



# *An emerging picture: Citizenship as...*

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- ✓ Robust not passive
- ✓ Multidimensional not only political
- ✓ Linked to recognition and identity, and around concrete issues
- ✓ Outside the state but with implications for the state



# Lessons for inclusive participation

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- ✓ **Simply creating new 'invited' spaces for participation does not mean they will be filled with new voices**
- ✓ **Success involves linking:**
  - **institutional design,**
  - **political will,**
  - **civil society mobilisation**
- ✓ **Beyond participation fatigue? Try putting real power and resources on the table**



# Strategies for Accountability

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- Multiple citizen - based approaches to accountability which can interact with and strengthen state-based approaches
- Going beyond technical, 'accountancy' approaches
- Involving empowered citizens as monitors and watchdogs of public services





# Assessing the outcomes: What difference does citizen participation in local governance make to social justice?

- From voice to presence to influence
- Measure both developmental and democracy building outcomes
- Combine community empowerment and government reform approaches



# **Results of linking citizen empowerment with local governance** (from six countries)

- **Increased action by citizens and by newly elected leaders and officials for improved services and accountability;**
- **Some examples of redistribution to poorer communities;**
- **New alliances between citizens, officials and policy makers;**
- **Stronger more inclusive civil society organisations;**
- **Broader changes in government policy above the local level;**
- **Increased respect for cultural pluralism and diversity in political and public life**

# Lessons and implications

- **Go beyond citizens as ‘residuals’**
  - *Put citizens at the centre of the process*
- **Go beyond the ‘institutional design’ approach to empowerment**
  - *Recognise the importance of power, identity and mobilisation*
- **Work both sides of the equation**
  - *Link community empowerment and government reform to strengthen social justice*
- **Understand deepening democracy as constructed through action from above and below, over time**
  - *Find and support the change agents inside and outside government who will help it emerge*

## ***Key Lessons for government***

- **The importance of enabling legal provisions**
- **Working both sides of the equation**
- **Clear rules and roles of engagement**
- **Improved incentives for engagement**
- **Support from non-governmental allies**
- **Naming and addressing power relations**
- **Taking time and going slow**