Introduction: New Democratic Spaces? The Politics and Dynamics of Institutionalised Participation

Andrea Cornwall*

Across the world, as new democratic experiments meet with and transform older forms of governance, political space for public engagement in governance appears to be widening. A renewed concern with rights, power and difference in debates about participation in development has focused greater attention on the institutions at the interface between publics, providers and policy makers. Some see in them exciting prospects for the practice of more vibrant and deliberative democracy (Fung and Wright 2003; Gaventa, forthcoming). Others raise concerns about them as forms of co-option, and as absorbing, neutralising and deflecting social energy from other forms of political participation (Taylor 1998). The title of this *Bulletin* reflects some of their ambiguities as arenas that may be neither new nor democratic, but at the same time appear to hold promise for renewing and deepening democracy.

Through a series of case studies from a range of political and cultural contexts – Brazil, India, Bangladesh, Mexico, South Africa, England and the United States of America, contributors to this *Bulletin* explore the interfaces between different forms of public engagement. Their studies engage with questions about representation, inclusion and voice, about the political efficacy of citizen engagement as well as the viability of these new arenas as political institutions. Read together, they serve to emphasise the historical, cultural and political embeddedness of the institutions and actors that constitute spaces for participation.

1 Spaces for participation

Moves to extend opportunities for citizen participation in governance are inspired and underpinned by the view that to do so makes for better citizens, better decisions and better government (Mansbridge 1999; Warren 1992; Gaventa, forthcoming). Some would cast the move towards more direct forms of citizen engagement in governance as a means of addressing the "democratic deficit" by strengthening liberal democratic institutions: urging politicians to listen more to those who elect them and bureaucrats to become more responsive to those they are meant to serve. For others, it constitutes a more radical reconfiguration of relationships and responsibilities, one that extends beyond citizen–state interactions to encompass complex alliances of actors and networks across permeable institutional boundaries and an expanded vision of the public domain (Fung and Wright 2003; Hajer and Wagenaar 2003).

New arenas for public participation appear to offer all this, and more. One potentially useful way of characterising these institutions is using the concept of *space* (cf. Lefebvre 1991), a concept rich with metaphor as well as a literal descriptor of arenas where people gather, which are bounded in time as well as dimension. A space can be emptied or filled, permeable or sealed; it can be an opening, an invitation to speak or act. Spaces can also be clamped shut, voided of meaning, or depopulated as people turn their attention elsewhere. Thinking about participation as a spatial practice highlights the relations of power and constructions of citizenship that permeate any site for public engagement (Cornwall 2002).

Contributors to this *Bulletin* use the term "spaces" to evoke these dynamics, but also to refer more concretely to two distinct kinds of arenas. One we have come to call "invited spaces", a label that serves to convey the origin of many intermediary

institutions as government-provided, whether in response to popular demand, donor pressure or shifts in policy (Brock *et al.* 2001). Some are more transient in character: policy moments where public space is opened up for deliberation or communication, before being closed again as authorities return to business as usual. Other "invited spaces" are more durable, often taking the shape of regularised institutions modelled on enduring templates such as the welter of co-management committees and user groups that have proliferated in the wake of sector reforms (Manor, forthcoming).

A second set of spaces we have come to call "popular spaces", arenas in which people come together at their own instigation – whether to protest against government policies or the interventions of foreign powers, to produce their own services or for solidarity and mutual aid. "Popular spaces" may be regularised, institutionalised in the form of associations or groups; they may also be transient expressions of public dissent, as passions about the issues that bring people together wax and wane. Boundaries between "invited" and "popular" spaces are mutable, rather than fixed; "popular spaces" can become institutionalised, with statutory backing, and "invited spaces" may become sites for the articulation of dissent, as well as for collaboration and compromise.

Different spaces have different kinds of interfaces with existing political institutions. Transient consultative events have gained popularity with governments, lenders and donors in recent years, whether to take the pulse of public opinion or gather "voices" to secure legitimacy for policies (Holmes and Scoones 2000; Goetz and Gaventa 2001). They can, at times, work to undermine regularised institutions, whether popular or invited; they can also lend alternative avenues for voice, particularly for dissent. Differences in durability matter, as we come to see, when it comes to questions about who participates, and related questions of accountability, representativeness, democratic legitimacy and viability as political institutions.

"Invited spaces" offer the *potential* for reconfiguring relations of rule, extending the practice of democracy beyond the sporadic use of the ballot box. But how this potential is translated into actual changes in governance is contingent on a range of factors. One is the locus of their creation: *conquered* spaces (Marcus Mello, pers. comm.), spaces that exist as a result of successful demands, may be perceived by would-be

participants quite differently to *provided* spaces that are simply put in place at the behest of donors or lenders. Another is the existing governance landscape in any particular context, in which three "ingredients" appear to be critical: ruling party disposition to supporting popular participation; popular mobilisation; and a sufficiently resourced, well coordinated state bureaucracy (Heller 2001; Fung and Wright 2003; Gaventa, forthcoming). Further, related, factors lie in the particularities of context. These include histories of governance and experiences of rule, whether those gained through popular struggle or through decades of being treated as passive recipients of a paternalistic state. They also include prevailing cultures of politics, whether in terms of the ways in which everyday citizens relate to the arena of the political, the meanings and expectations attached to the utterances of politicians or to promise making by the powerful, or the cultural practices of decision making and dissent within any given space for participation. These factors shape expectations, relationships and dynamics at the interface with the state, lending different meanings to apparently similar "invited spaces". It is with some of these differences that the first section of this *Bulletin* is concerned.

2 The dynamics of participation in "invited spaces"

Much is expected of arenas for participation. Yet, as with other "participatory" institutions, the preconditions for equitable participation and voice are often lacking within them. How to involve those who lack presence or voice in conventional political arenas, the resources to engage, and a feeling of belonging, of mattering, of being able to contribute or of having anything to gain, continues to present an enduring challenge. The arenas with which we're concerned may appear as innovations, but are often fashioned out of existing forms through a process of institutional bricolage, using whatever is at hand and re-inscribing existing relationships, hierarchies and rules of the game.

In some cases, "invited spaces" have been transplanted onto institutional landscapes in which entrenched relations of dependency, fear and disprivilege undermine the possibility for the kind of deliberative decision making they are to foster. It is in this kind of setting that Simeen Mahmud's study is located. Focusing on co-management institutions, community groups (CGs), created by donor-driven health sector reform in Bangladesh, it illustrates the

dissonance between ideals and reality. In principle, these institutions are to provide the basis for new partnerships between service providers, users and local government. In practice, Mahmud shows how poor people continue to look to the state as provider and guarantor of rights, whilst experiencing their own agency as limited by the relations of dependency within which they remain locked, as '"lesser" citizens and "unequal" rights'.

Mahmud's analysis points to a combination of factors that conspire to limit the possibilities for "ordinary people" to participate in these new institutions. These are: prevalent interpretations of "participation", many of which do not provide much scope for the exercise of citizenship or recognition of the knowledge and agency of poor or marginalised people; the limited responsibilities "community participants" are given within these institutions, which remain restricted to changing the behaviour of others like them rather than holding the state to account; lack of information about or understanding of the functioning of these institutions or the health service in general; elite capture; a lack of clarity about the purpose and responsibilities of members of the CG; and deeply held reluctance to question the actions of the state. Lacking formal links to other governmental spaces, remaining without official recognition by the Ministry of Health, CGs appear to lack authority as well as accountability.

Given that CGs are essentially a donor-imposed, rather than an organic, institutional form, there are wider lessons to be learnt about the cultural dynamics that complicate the neat superimposition of development blueprints. What did the people Mahmud spoke with think might make a difference in this setting? For them, education and mobilisation were seen as key to individual and collective empowerment, and to gaining voice rather than being silent or silenced by fear. Yet as long as officials interpret "participation" in as narrow and instrumental a sense as in this context, the scope for engagement may remain limited. Without constitutional guarantees or other mechanisms for accountability, institutions like CGs lack political viability and can undermine representative local government, as Manor (forthcoming) argues.

What happens when these spaces are created as *part* of local government? John Williams' account of the city of Cape Town's Area Coordinating Teams (ACTs), set up in the late 1990s as a space for communication, consensus-building and coordination, explores the dynamics among and between three sets of actors who constitute the ACTs: public officials, local councillors and community organisations. The promise of these institutions is considerable, Williams suggests. Officials and councillors see the ACTs as 'an ideal place for interaction and synergy', a forum for civic education and for mobilisation to address shared concerns; the very existence of such a space helps to narrow the gap between officials and local people, and can serve as an arena for transformation.

However, this promise remains largely unrealised. Why? First, Williams identifies a lack of political commitment, which is manifested in irregular attendance from certain officials. Second, he points to a lack of a sense of ownership of the process amongst councillors, and fears about involving "difficult" groups, such as gangs and traditional leaders. Third, he highlights how issues of representation – who speaks for whom, and how claims to represent are made and negotiated – emerge, working to undermine the legitimacy of community organisations. Fourth, he suggests that the non-binding nature of the issues discussed at the ACTs lend the institution little accountability for following through.

This case highlights the significance of links between "invited" spaces and the political machinery of governance, illustrating how the dislocation of ACTs from channels of influence renders them mere consultative bodies with limited clout. Lacking the means by which to enforce attendance by officials and to hold the Council accountable for decisions reached in meetings, procedural weakness undermines their potential for democratising the planning process. Williams' study underscores the significance of institutional design. It also illustrates how provided-for institutions like these can become other peoples' spaces that no-one in particular feels a sense of commitment to, and which remain inert, vacated, lacking in potency.

Enabling legislation can be one tool for strengthening the efficacy and scope of citizen involvement, on 'both sides of the equation' (Goetz and Gaventa 2001). Ranjita Mohanty's article takes a closer look at the invited spaces of forest management, in the impoverished State of Uttaranchal, a context in which the participation of marginalised groups – in this case women, and members of scheduled castes and tribes – is

guaranteed by the constitution through the reservation of seats in local bodies. Her conclusions, like those of Williams, are not encouraging.

Joining Agarwal (1997) and others in exposing the myths of participation that undergird donor/lender enthusiasm for joint forest management (JFM) schemes, Mohanty draws attention to the emergent new forms of exclusion. The promise of including women – the primary forest users – was one of the rallying calls of JFM. And through stipulations and procedures, women have gained a place at the table. But today's forest management institutions have been fashioned out of previous institutions put in place by the colonial state, and remain imbued with traces of relations of power and expectations from former times. Cultural barriers, fear, dependency and lack of self-confidence all conspire to make it difficult for women to use their voice, and be heard. Where women have gained the resources to participate, it has been through the creation of separate spaces within which they can build confidence and learn leadership skills. Mohanty's conclusions attest to the more diffuse changes that are happening:

> … even if the landscape of marginalisation is not completely altered, new leadership is emerging from marginalised sectors of society, from women, from lower castes. By acquainting people with the language of the state and through engagement with state-led rules, JFM has taught people the art of governance.

There is much in these studies to suggest that participation, like citizenship, is something that is learnt through practice. While many invited spaces remain harsh testing grounds for beginners, they are part of a shifting institutional landscape in which longer term changes in the way people perceive and engage with governance may be taking root. The next section turns to two countries in which there has been a significant expansion of invited spaces in recent years, to explore further some of the issues that arise.

3 Engaging citizens? Issues of Representation

At the tail end of the 1990s, "civil society participation" was on every donor's lips. But something has happened in the last few years that has brought a little more circumspection. Harder

questions are being asked about exactly whom "civil society organisations" represent, on whose behalf they speak and to whom they are accountable. One of the characteristics of many of the spaces that we're concerned with here is that "public involvement" may relate less to engaging the general public-at-large in consultation or policy deliberation, but rather the organisations that claim to speak for and about them. The articles in this section reflect on some of the questions this raises about what "citizen voice" comes to mean, as about the legitimacy derived from claims to have involved "the public".

Nowhere has there been greater expansion of opportunities for citizen participation in institutions created by the state for deliberative governance than in Brazil. Daring experiments in participatory governance appear, in some quarters, to have made a significant difference to redistributive outcomes, as well as to a sense of citizenship and political community (Abers 1998; Avritzer 2003). What happens, when all the enabling conditions for citizen participation and influence appear to be present and yet the resultant institutions lack muscle, asks Vera Coelho? Her study of health councils in São Paulo, Brazil's biggest city, explores the question of how such institutions can make a tangible difference to public decision making. Through a close examination of the dynamics of participation within these "invited spaces", and of the rules of access and engagement, Coelho comes to the conclusion that issues of representation are essential precisely because they serve to define these spaces as political institutions, guaranteeing or undermining their legitimacy.

Coelho identifies two features of institutional design that are of critical importance in lending invited spaces such as councils the means to become more effective political institutions. First, she argues, closer attention needs to be paid to the criteria for organising political representation – a far from simple issue when it is to complement, rather than substitute, existing statutory authorities, and to guarantee the presence of organised civil society and groups traditionally excluded from access to state services. Second, she highlights the organisation of procedures for discussion and decision making. This, too, is complex, she argues, as the rules of deliberation call for different dynamics from those used within statutory institutions, where decisions are taken according to acknowledged hierarchies. Noting the often unhelpful role of the chairperson

or executive secretary, Coelho's study emphasises the importance of enabling leadership, as well as the potential use of participatory techniques in facilitating more inclusive deliberation.

Complementing Coelho's study of health councils, Arnab Acharya, Adrián Gurza Lavalle and Peter Houtzager focus in more depth on the question of who – or, as in this case, what kind of *organisations* – participate in these new democratic spaces in the city of São Paulo and what factors increase their propensity to participate. Comparing three kinds of "invited spaces", those of the participatory budget, the deliberative policy councils (of which health is one kind) and other institutionalised forms of citizen participation, their findings point to the significance of three factors: affiliations with traditional institutional actors – in this case, the ruling Workers' Party or the State; institutional design, such as their legal mandate and procedures for participation; and the organisation's form, specifically whether it serves a representative, advocacy or service delivery function. Challenging what they term the "civil society perspective" on citizen participation, they argue that the organisations which engage in Brazil's new democratic institutions need to be situated as *institutionally embedded* actors. To do so is to recognise the connections that those who enter "invited spaces" have with other spaces, and other actors.

Acharya *et al.*'s study challenges one of the key presuppositions of the "civil society perspective": that it consists of autonomous actors who are able to hold traditional political institutions to account. Rather, they show dense linkages between "civil society" participants, the ruling political party and the government, via contracts to deliver services. It is these ties, they argue, that are one of the best predictors of participation in all three of the spaces they studied. It would be easy to draw the conclusion from this that the powers-that-be insure themselves against contestation by packing "invited spaces" with "their" people. But there is another way in which these findings might be read. The new politics of democracy has come to rely on multiple arenas outside the formal "closed" spaces of government for gaining legitimacy or securing consent, whether through liberal or deliberative democratic means. Consultation, even where it only consists of the provision of information, has become part of the very fabric of governance in ways that were barely imaginable even a decade ago. The density of these linkages may in itself represent an increased propensity for participation, manifesting itself in engagement in multiple arenas.

In this context, questions about the basis on which actors – whether individual or collective – participate become ever more important to answer. Angela Alonso and Valeriano Costa take up some of these questions in their study of public hearings for environmental licensing, Aplas, which adds a further dimension to the studies of participation in São Paulo in this *Bulletin*. Unlike the regularised institutions described by Acharya *et al.*, and Coelho, Aplas is a transient space. Alonso and Costa's study looks in depth at who exactly participated in deliberation in the Aplas: who spoke, for how long, and how often. They found that few of the "civil society" contingent that were present were directly affected social groups. Affected groups actually occupied a fraction of discursive space, requesting information rather than expressing opposition to the scheme. It was left to other actors, environmental organisations and social movements, to articulate a position of dissent: one framed in terms that had barely any resonance amongst the local population.

The public hearings became, in their terms, 'ceremonial areas in which participation was ritualised'. Intersections with other invited spaces worked, at the same time, to compromise that of the Aplas. Alonso and Costa describe how government actors created other spaces into which local elites were invited, which served to disarm any potential local opposition and effectively empty the "invited space" of the public hearing of its political significance. Observing that the general public lacked the knowledge, skills and expectations of being taken seriously which might have enabled them to participate, Alonso and Costa argue that institutions of deliberative democracy suffer from the very shortcomings that their advocates level against those of traditional representative institutions.

The articles in this section point to some of the paradoxes of participation at the heart of these "new democratic spaces". And they point to an area in which much more research, and theorisation, remains to be done. These arenas are often intended as a means to change the nature of interactions between those who provide services and resources, and those who are entitled, consume or benefit from them. But quite how those on the receiving end of policies are represented varies enormously, with attendant implications for legitimacy, credibility and accountability. Tensions between representatives of

various kinds make matters more complicated still. Elected officials might resent attempts to bypass them where local government opens up public consultation to the general public; self-selected representatives may come to speak for others without any accountability to, or even communication with, them; those who are put forward to speak about any given group can be taken to be speaking *as*, rather than simply *for*, them – and be subjected to similar forms of discrimination as a consequence, and so on. As Coelho notes, traditional representative democracy just doesn't match what these new institutions are seeking to do; and yet, in these newer spaces, the rules of representation are often unclear and may be improvised to suit the circumstance, leaving a lot to be desired in terms of legitimacy and undermining potential viability as political institutions.

The fourth case in this section is from the UK, again a context in which there has been considerable innovation in recent years, whether in the form of regularised bodies or transient exercises in opinion-seeking or consultation. Marian Barnes, Helen Sullivan, Andrew Knops and Janet Newman highlight some of the complexities of deliberative governance in two English cities. Looking across a range of spaces for participation, their analysis highlights the complexity of relations between those who enter these arenas. Interlocking agendas, tactical alliances and tensions between councillors, members of the public and officers, make for a complicated relational picture, as one example illustrates:

> When councillors felt challenged by members of the public, they took this out on officers; when members of the public complained about lack of resources going into their wards, councillors supported this. Officers regarded councillors as their audience, rather than the public, and this frustrated officer accountability to the public.

Barnes *et al.* consider the tension between different 'opportunity structures for participation', identifying two forms: one that is open to the general public and another that seeks "representation" by enlisting representatives from existing groups and organisations. They argue that these two tendencies are overlaid in complex configurations in practice, leading to further tensions and raising a host of further questions about the nature of representation, with important implications for legitimacy. Where

authorities set parameters for inclusion, groups can choose either to comply or to create their own structures. Indeed, Barnes *et al.* argue, spaces for participation may serve to *create* identities (cf. Hajer 2003); that is, rather than people entering these spaces as members of pre-constituted groups, they gain such identities only when they participate. Attention needs to be given to the potential of these new democratic spaces to produce new forms of exclusion, they argue, as a result. Their analysis resonates with many of the articles in this *Bulletin* in suggesting that citizens also need their own spaces in which they can develop alternative discourses and approaches, some of which might best remain at some distance from arenas which bring publics and their representatives together with officials.

4 Intersections: contesting public policy from "below"

What then, of those who seek to engage in influencing public policy from outside these invited spaces? The last section of this *Bulletin* considers "popular spaces" – arenas within and from which people are able to frame alternatives, mobilise, build arguments and alliances and gain the confidence to use their voice, and to act.

The first article in this section, by Marilyn Taylor and colleagues, focuses on some of the ambivalence with which the voluntary and community sector in England has come to view government-created "invited spaces". Citing a recent policy document that proclaims, 'the freedom of citizens can only be truly realised if they are enabled to participate constructively in the decisions that affect their lives' (Blunkett 2003: 3), Taylor describes the proliferation of new spaces for "third sector" involvement in policy processes under the New Labour administration, highlighting inherent tensions that have been exposed in the process. First, she draws attention to the tension between a desire for diversity and the need for cohesion to win policy space, exacerbated by government preference for the sector to take a single position.

Secondly, she highlights the tension between leadership and participation, and the broader issues of representation and accountability that this raises. Calling for realism about the numbers of people who are likely to engage over time in these new spaces, Taylor argues that more thought needs to be given to different levels at which people are likely to participate and to links between them. She points

out, however, the contradictory reactions of government funders who, on the one hand, accuse voluntary organisations 'of being "obsessed" by process' and on the other hand, 'were the first to complain if they thought that an organisation was not representative'. Thirdly, she highlights the tension between occupying invited spaces and remaining on the outside, noting that 'being invited onto the inside of a policy community can take the sting out of organisations that have been a thorn in the government's side'. Interestingly, the study found that traditional lines were blurring as organisations sought to balance taking up and turning down invitations to participate.

Taylor's article helps shed further light on the interface between popular and invited spaces, and on what happens to actors when they traverse the borders between them. Mixed as outcomes have been, her account gives cause for cautious optimism, if only about the potential of newly opened spaces that would be politically difficult to slam shut again. On the one hand, it is these border crossings that makes "representatives" representative; they enter invited spaces on behalf of a given popular space, bringing with them some of the legitimacy that is sought by those doing the inviting, and taking from it information and other resources sought by those they left behind. But on the other hand, the process of crossing the borders between these spaces, no matter how permeable and contingent they are, also works to change those involved and how they are perceived by others. On the positive side, this may serve to build and strengthen alliances across different kinds of organisations, and make more permeable still the borders between invited and popular spaces. However, those who enter invited spaces run the risk of being regarded by those who choose to remain outside them as having been co-opted: 'they are seen', Taylor notes, 'to have sold out'.

Remaining outside the structures of the state offers a position from which not only to critique state policy, but also to imagine and enact alternatives. Carlos Cortez Ruiz's article describes the case of the Zapatista movement's creation of spaces of resistance in Chiapas, as popular spaces that remain in defiant separation from those of the Mexican government. Counterposing the "invited spaces" of the Mexican state with the "popular spaces" of the Zapatista movement, Ruiz's study highlights the extent to which the political implications of any given space depend in part on the locus of its origins, as well as on its location within a broader configuration of political institutions. In Chiapas, social movements are not uniformly allied with either the Mexican State or the Zapatistas, creating further complexities: they occupy a spectrum of positions from that of resistance, and the refusal of any resources at all from the Mexican government, to collaboration along the lines of their own strategic objectives, to receptiveness to any government assistance going.

Identifying a range of factors that differentiate what participation comes to mean in the "popular" and "invited" spaces of Chiapas, Ruiz explores some of the divergences in experiences in these different sites. He discusses the extent to which participation in "invited spaces" is framed by technocrats, whose interventions produce and limit what is possible. One interesting dimension of his account is in highlighting the difference between the 'rhythm of participation' in government-promoted spaces and in the Zapatista-controlled spaces, which adds another dimension to earlier discussion in this introduction about duration and durability. Ruiz suggests that in the autonomous municipalities, there is a longer-term vision for participation as a means of struggling for the guarantee of rights; in contrast, in the arenas controlled by the government, there is a much more short-term and instrumental view of participation. These are differences in kind, rather than simply in degree, and are significant in framing these different spaces and for what they come to represent to indigenes of the Chiapas region.

Just as the Zapatistas have become renowned for their use of the new media, the transnational campaign tactics of the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) owe as much to the new political spaces emerging with the growth of "network society" (Castells 1997), as to the new strategies for political engagement that TAC has developed at a national level. The struggle for access to treatment for people living with HIV and AIDS in South Africa has made headlines the world over. Steve Robins and Bettina von Lieres' contribution to this *Bulletin* tells a fascinating tale of the conjunction of tactics to contest, and prise open, political space in multiple arenas, and the new "spaces of citizenship" created through the ingenuity of TAC activists. Activists traversed conventional boundaries between the institutions of the state and of public space, waging mutually impinging battles in the courts and in the streets simultaneously. Robins and von Lieres'

analysis points to the significance of the ways in which TAC activists came to animate – and activate – these "new spaces", from township clinics to the courtrooms of South Africa, and through protests that spilled beyond the streets of Cape Town to reach the offices of pharmaceutical multinationals in Europe and America. It is, Robins and von Lieres suggest, in the articulation of these different forms of mobilisation that TAC's significance lies; in the joining together across different sites of identifications between otherwise disparate individuals, brought into concert in their pursuit of an issue-in-common.

TAC serves, in many ways, as an example of the new politics described by Hajer and Wagenaar (2003). Issue-based, often composed of transient interventions characterised more by their intensity and spontaneity than their durability, one of the principal characteristics of such political spaces is their heterogeneity, and their ability to reach across and hold together segments of society that might otherwise have little in common, creating at the same time the basis for new and different ways of relating between them. In TAC, black mothers living with HIV who are surviving on the margins of the economy, and white middle class advocates, queer activists and doctors, are drawn together in a common struggle. Articulated in different configurations in different sites, together they provide a force to be reckoned with. By bringing together experiential and expert knowledge, buttressing normative claims framed in the language of human rights with the language of evidence-based medicine, TAC has become a formidable alliance.

The case of TAC provides an interesting example with which to think more about intersections between different kinds of space, and for the synergies between action in one sphere and in another. In this case, the pursuit of policy change through conventional routes is complemented by active use by TAC of both kinds of "popular spaces" identified earlier. Popular regularised spaces serve to build and sustain the movement, providing a base from which to act and in which to strategise; and popular transient spaces, such as well-publicised demonstrations, lend all-important public space levers. In his contribution to the *Bulletin*, Andy Mott explores the intersection of these spaces further. Drawing on experience with community organising and citizen monitoring in the United States of America, Mott's article describes the terrain of struggle that is "democracy", US-style, and highlights the role of mass mobilisation in claiming and winning political space for those who are poor and discriminated against.

Situating grassroots social movements on the American political landscape, Mott explores the interplay between government moves to open political space for citizen engagement in policy processes and the kinds of alliances that formed as a result, between legal services advocates and poor people's organisations, and between grassroots activist groups and national campaigns. Mott argues that as political space for policy influence began to shrink with conservative forces winning ground within government, poorer people sought to create their own spaces from which to gain strength, and field representatives to fight for greater involvement in decision making. Tactics used to win and expand space range from oppositional to alliance-building, combining attempts to reform the "rules of the game" with creating connections with other actors and processes outside the space, so as to act more effectively to lever open opportunities for influence.

As in the case of TAC, the kind of organising Mott describes has involved work right at the grassroots – going door-to-door to talk to people about the issues concerning them and to encourage them to get involved – and has linked this with national-level campaigns around core issues that affect people's lives. Citizen monitoring is shown to have been an especially effective way of using, and extending, available political space and holding government to account. An emerging emphasis within Mott's account is the centrality of popular spaces – "own spaces" that are created anew, sought and strengthened – as sites in which people can work together to get on top of an issue and develop strategies to have an effect in the public domain.

Mobilisation, and confidence and capacity building in "popular spaces" thus provides a basis for entry into "invited spaces", one that can not only equip those who traverse these spaces with the resources needed to use their voice, but also the legitimacy with which to speak – as representative of constituencies who remain watchful, outside the "invited space", rather than as individuals. This returns us to the questions of representation raised earlier in this introduction, and to the broader issues that our enquiry into spaces and places of participation has raised about issues of voice, inclusion and difference in these new arenas.

5 Conclusion

Many of the institutions described in this *Bulletin* are in their infancy; they are, in many respects, democratic experiments in the making. As they mature, the kind of changes that they promise in political culture, in consciousness and in the quality and depth of civic engagement, may yet become more apparent. Yet even now it is clear that whilst much of their potential as democratic institutions remains to be realised, something *is* happening. From differences in the framing of needs as demands for rights, to changes in the way in which citizens regard the process of governance and their own competence as participants in it, small changes offer the prospect of greater effects. People who have never had anything to do with processes of rule are being brought into arenas of governance and are learning more about how they work: lessons that may stand them in good stead in other arenas. In some contexts, the difference this may make – to people, to political processes, to the way in which government and governance come to be thought about – may be incremental, but it is not inconsiderable. Even where institutionalised participation has little or no policy efficacy, there are tactics to be tried, alliances to be built; and what participants bring into and take from these spaces may have all kinds of possibilities for them as actors in other spaces and, more broadly, for the practice of democracy (cf. Warren 1992; Mansbridge 1999).

But there is clearly still a long way to go before these kinds of "invited spaces" can become genuinely inclusive and equitable institutions. Much can be done by improving institutional design (Fung 2003), especially in the area of representativeness and procedures for democratic decision making. And yet in every case contextual factors come into play, whether, for example, the influence of the sanitarian movement on those engaged in shaping health policy in Brazil or a political culture of non-bindingness in South Africa. The sheer diversity of institutions described in this *Bulletin* serves to underscore the point that the one-size-fits-all development rhetoric about governance and institutions plays out in very different ways across different cultural, social and political settings.

Not only do "invited spaces" need to be understood as embedded in the particular cultural understandings and political configurations that constitute governance in any given context. It is also crucial to situate them in institutional landscapes as one amongst a host of other domains of association into and out of which actors move, carrying with them relationships, knowledge, connections, resources, identities and identifications (Cornwall 2002). Viewed in isolation, they may appear more inviting – and certainly more straightforward – than when they are set on this more populous institutional terrain, where they jostle for policy space with political parties, social movements, religious organisations, kinship and patronage networks, and so on. Development agencies ignore the embedded and situated character of these institutions at their peril.

Situating the spaces with which we have been concerned here on this broader landscape, and exploring the intersections and interfaces with other political institutions, both those of the formal bureaucracy and other kinds of arenas for citizen engagement, transient or regularised, "invited" or "popular", raises a host of further questions. To what extent has the expansion of participation by invitation worked to undermine the place of traditional political institutions like voting and protest, and is this in the interest of marginalised groups or the more articulate and organised professional classes? If the door is always open, what happens to those who choose not to go in – do they get discredited as trouble makers? And what are the reciprocal effects of the enlargement of the public space and the increasing permeability of boundaries between state and non-state institutions? These are questions that remain for future studies of the politics of participation, to which this *Bulletin* hopes to make a modest contribution.

Notes

References

Abers, R., 1998, 'From clientelism to cooperation: local government, participatory policy, and civic organization in Porto Alegre, Brazil', *Politics & Society*, Vol 26 No 4: 511–37

Agarwal, B., 1997, 'Re-sounding the alert – gender, resources and community action', *World Development*, Vol 25 No 9: 1373–80

Avritzer, L., 2003, *Democracy and the Public Space in Latin America*, Princeton: Princeton University Press

Blunkett, D., 2003, *Active Citizens, Strong Communities: Progressing Civil Renewal*, London: The Home Office

Brock, K., Cornwall, A. and Gaventa, J., 2001, 'Power, knowledge and political spaces in the framing of poverty policy', *IDS Working Paper* 143, Brighton: Institute of Development Studies

Castells, M., 1997, *The Power of Identity: The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture, Volume II*, Oxford: Blackwell

Cornwall, A., 2002, 'Making spaces, changing places: situating participation in development', *IDS Working Paper* 173, Brighton: Institute of Development Studies

Fung, A., 2003, 'Survey article: recipes for Public Spheres: eight institutional design choices and their consequences', *Journal of Political Philosophy*, Vol 11

Fung, A. and Wright, E.O. (eds), 2003, *Deepening Democracy: Institutional Innovation in Empowered Participatory Governance*, London: Verso

Gaventa, J., forthcoming, 'Towards Participatory Governance: Assessing the Transformative Possibilities', in S. Hickey and G. Mohan (eds), *Participation: From Tyranny to Transformation*, London: Zed Books

Goetz, A.M. and Gaventa, J., 2001, 'Bringing citizen voice and client focus into service delivery', *IDS Working Paper* 138, Brighton: Institute of Development Studies

Hajer, M., 2003, 'A Frame in the Fields. Policy Making and the Reinvention of Politics', in M. Hajer and H. Wagenaar (eds), *Deliberative Policy Analysis: Understanding Governance in the Network Society*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Hajer, M. and Wagenaar, H., 2003, *Deliberative Policy Analysis: Understanding Governance in the Network Society*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Heller, P., 2001, 'Moving the State: the politics of democratic decentralization in Kerala, South Africa, and Porto Alegre', *Politics & Society*, Vol 29 No 1: 131–63

Holmes, T. and Scoones, I., 2000, 'Participatory environmental policy processes: experiences from North and South', *IDS Working Paper* 113, Brighton: Institute of Development Studies

Lefebvre, H., 1991, *The Production of Space*, London: Verso

Manor, J., forthcoming, 'User committees: a potentially damaging second wave of decentralisation?', *European Journal of Development Research*, Vol 14 No 2

Mansbridge, J., 1999, 'On the Idea That Participation Makes Better Citizens', in S. Elkin and K. Soltan (eds), *Citizen Competence and Democratic Institutions*, University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press

Taylor, L., 1998, *Citizenship, Participation and Democracy: Changing Dynamics in Chile and Argentina*, London: Macmillan

Warren, M., 1992, 'Democratic theory and self-transformation', *The American Political Science Review*, Vol 86 No 1: 8–23