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## Participatory Citizenship: Identity, Exclusion, Inclusion

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Ranjita Mohanty and Rajesh Tandon, eds, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2006, 249 pp., ISBN 0-7619-3467-7 (hb), £29.99stg

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Representative, deliberative or participatory democracy? What form of government, or governance, is most suited to the challenges faced by individual citizens, communities and nation states in the globalized economies of the 21st Century? Mohanty and Tandon stress the importance of addressing these issues at a number of levels, drawing on theoretical and practice perspectives within the context of the Indian sub-continent – whilst being mindful throughout that the emerging lessons, debates and thinking presented by contributors to ‘Participatory Citizenship’ have a much wider relevance.

The editors and their contributors never refer directly to community development. This is, in itself, interesting. In the context of ‘developing countries’, does the term still carry connotations of patronage and colonialism and lack the more radical political resonances of its more recent past in Western Europe? Whilst these questions are not addressed directly by the various authors, they do raise important challenges for community development theorists and practitioners:

‘Can marginalised citizens be agents capable of effecting changes? What are the structural barriers to this? What enabling environment is required to make citizens act and engage? How development is to be executed so that it includes and not alienates people?’

Further, each chapter in ‘Participatory Citizenship’ clearly links these issues to the following discussions:

- Concepts of individuality (and individual rights) – why, for example, do ‘the poor have collective identities’ rather than being seen as individual citizens with accompanying rights and responsibilities?
- Challenging simplistic ideas of identity. These identities may stimulate collective action but risk ignoring intragroup tensions, differences or even commonalities between various ethnic, cultural and religious groupings.
- Who ‘claims to represent whom?’ and the potential for grass-roots participation to be ‘hijacked’ by other political and cultural agendas.

- The disputed role of and relationship between governments and civil society organizations in promoting the inclusion of marginalized groups, and the tensions inherent in this interface.
- The potential power or powerlessness of 'global consumers' and the role of multi-national corporations in addressing poverty and exclusion as 'the state vacates the space (they) once occupied for the market to take over'.
- The disjuncture between enhanced social inclusion and participation in political processes. The book also asks whether economic power and influence are benefits of participation in the social and political spheres.
- An analysis of the extent to which empowerment in one aspect of individual and community life (for example, enhanced economic activity) may leave others, particularly gender oppressions, unchallenged (see chapters by Agrawal and George). 'The experiences of inclusion (may be) limited and are not often enough to counter the multi-dimensional exclusion women face.'

Overall the book has a clear structure and focuses on the ambitious questions and challenges raised by the editors in their introduction. It asks, what are the interactions between concepts of participation, inclusion and exclusion when framed within competing versions of individual and collective identities and contested debates on citizenship?

The first four chapters take a series of theoretical perspectives. T.K. Oommen's chapter on 'Identity: Enabling and Endangering Citizenship' is particularly challenging and opens up the potential for new concepts of citizenship. These, he argues, have been traditionally rooted in ideas of the nation state and 'the notion of citizenship is meaningless...without this anchorage'. He questions more recent arguments which aim to identify citizenship within both 'narrower' tribal identities and 'wider' international and ecological frameworks. For example, what are the rights and responsibilities of citizens to each other across nations in terms of environmental protection and damage? Yet, he acknowledges the challenges, ideas of citizenship based on national or specific cultural and religious identity face in a globalized economy. He argues cogently that there is a need 'to unlink citizenship from all primordial identities, including nationality' and value diversity rather than, in the face of globalization, using citizenship as a model for false, or forced, homogeneity and hegemony.

Subsequent chapters in this section (by Gaventa, Mohanty and Shukla) are particularly interesting in their arguments that participatory citizenship highlights inequalities and power imbalances in what is often seen as the apolitical process of development. All citizens may have the right to

participate, but are all voices equal in the process and are those with power exempted from the (additional) responsibilities and expectations placed on 'the poor'? Important questions are raised across these pieces regarding who creates the spaces for participation – the state, NGOs, the private sector – and what is their agenda?

The final five chapters take a more practice and case-study based approach. At their best, they cogently illustrate the theoretical debates addressed in the first section of the book. How, for example, asks Peter Newell can excluded groups address issues of corporate accountability where multi-national companies are 'seeking a short-term return with little long-term interest in a region's future'. Manju Agrawal and Mariamma George both question whether transforming and 'institutionalizing' the voice of women at a grass-roots level can be translated into power and influence at a wider policy and political level. How, wonders Dikshit Sinha, do we ensure that public spaces for participation are created which both recognize and challenge inequities in power and influence between groups?

In a sense, 'Participatory Citizenship' raises more questions than it answers. However, by using diverse case studies, from nomadic communities to women involved in economic development in Bangladesh, the book as a whole builds a picture of shared issues across those diverse contexts. Some chapters are overly complex for the arguments they build and the book as a whole would have benefited from a more careful proofreading and design. Presentation, and in some cases grammar, does not always do justice to the various authors.

This is, however, a minor quibble about production values in a book that challenges international development agencies, politicians and community development practitioners to rethink and critically examine the concepts of participation and citizenship. The authors consistently challenge preconceived ideas about the benefits of participation in a globalized world, and make a powerful plea for ideas of citizenship which acknowledge and value diversity. This is an important contribution to current debates in community development and beyond, raising one final, critical question that is core to community-development theory. In challenging oppressions, how do we ensure that diverse voices are valued, accepted in terms of equity and that, to paraphrase Freire, participation does not replace one set of orthodoxies with another?

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