

WORKING PAPER **276**

# Mobilising Citizens: Social Movements and the Politics of Knowledge

Melissa Leach and Ian Scoones  
January 2007



Citizenship DRC



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Citizenship DRC Synthesis Paper

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## **Mobilising Citizens: Social Movements and the Politics of Knowledge**

**Melissa Leach and Ian Scoones**

### **Abstract**

This paper reflects comparatively on a series of case studies of citizen mobilisation in both north and south, arguing that the politics of knowledge are now central. The cases focus on issues ranging from genetically-modified crops, vaccines, HIV/AIDS and occupational health, to struggles around water, housing, labour rights and the environment. In different ways, each has asked: who mobilises and who does not, how and why? How are activist networks constituted, involving what forms of identity, representation and processes of inclusion and exclusion? What forms of knowledge – including values, perceptions and experiences – frame these movements and how do citizens and ‘experts’ interact? What resources and spaces are important in mobilisation processes? The paper offers a synthesis of some of the major theoretical perspectives, lines of argument and issues emerging from the case studies’ responses to these questions. In the first part, it engages social movement theory with theories of citizenship. It draws out four overlapping perspectives on processes of mobilisation which are all important to understanding the cases, and which point towards an understanding of ‘mobilising citizens’ as knowledgeable actors engaged in a dynamic, networked politics across local and global sites. In the second part, the paper explores three key emergent themes: knowledge and power; cultures, styles and practices of activism, and the increasing array and complexity of arenas in which citizens press their claims, including legal spaces and the media. We argue that if contemporary processes of mobilisation and their implications for citizenship are to be understood there is a need to expand and enrich debates about social movements from a diversity of literatures. Today’s dynamics of public controversy, debates about risk, and the forms of mobilisation and

protest arising requires putting the politics of knowledge centre-stage in our attempts to recast democratic theory and notions of citizenship, especially in today's global context.

**Keywords:** citizenship, knowledge, mobilisation, social movement, identity, network.

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# Preface

This Working Paper is part of a series of synthesis papers from the Development Research Centre on Citizenship, Participation and Accountability (DRC). From 2001–2005, the Citizenship DRC was funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) to carry out research around four main themes: meanings and expressions of rights and citizenship; realising rights and claiming accountabilities; spaces for change; and citizens and science in the global context. The synthesis papers were commissioned to draw together the findings of the past five years work; speak to, challenge and critique existing literatures and assumptions; articulate and communicate policy implications of our work; and pull out key questions to inform our work in the future. The DRC is continuing to work for another five-year phase of research, with new themes relating to deepening democracy in states and localities, local-global citizen engagements and violence, participation and citizenship.

# 1 Introduction

Contemporary debates about the role of citizens in processes of development have often focused on institutionally-orchestrated forms of participation. Thus there has been an explosion of efforts to involve citizens in policy and decision-making, ranging from classic consultations to more innovative forms such as citizens' juries, councils and participatory appraisal. A large literature has emerged reflecting critically on these initiatives (Hickey and Mohan 2005) and the issues of power and representation that shape who actually influences agendas and how (Cornwall and Schattan P. Coelho 2004; Stirling 2005). However, it is evident that many instances of citizen engagement take place outside these institutionally-orchestrated spaces, through more spontaneous forms of mobilisation. These have been the subject of extensive scholarship on social movements, whether around classic struggles for material resources and political power (so-called 'old' social movements; e.g. Oberschall 1973; Tilly 1978) or around emergent issue or identity-focused struggles (so-called 'new' social movements; e.g. Habermas 1981; Eyerman and Jamison 1991; Slater 1985; Touraine 1985; Melucci 1989, 1995; Offe, 1985; Scott 1990; Laraña *et al.* 1994).

This paper offers a comparative reflection on a series of cases studies of citizen mobilisation undertaken under the auspices of the Development Research Centre on Citizenship, Participation and Accountability.<sup>1</sup> They cover examples from both north and south, encompassing both the more local and the more global. A number of themes are explored, including global mobilisations, with local sites, around genetically-modified (GM) crops in India, South Africa and Brazil (Scoones 2005) and more local struggles around particular rights, as in the case of mobilisation around housing rights in Mombasa, Kenya, highlighting the diverse strategies employed by council tenants in opposition to land grabbing and redevelopment (Nyamu-Musembi 2006). Environmentally-focused cases include environmental activism in Brazil, which looked at the profiles, career trajectories and styles of activists campaigning around a variety of natural resource and pollution issues (Alonso *et al.* 2006), and mobilisation around protected areas in Mexico, highlighting the contrasting visions of conservationists and local people (Pare and Cortez 2006). Several cases focus on water issues, including how citizens in South Africa mobilise around dam-building and issues of water scarcity in South Africa (Thompson 2005a and b), and the struggles of indigenous communities in Mexico to claim their rights to resources and inclusion in relation to watershed management plans (Pare and Robles 2006). Others focus on health issues, including vaccines in the UK where parents mobilised around their conviction that measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccination had triggered autism in their children (Leach 2005); HIV/AIDS in South Africa, where activists have successfully campaigned for rights to anti-retroviral treatment (Robins 2005a) and in the UK, where the

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1 These cases derive from two DRC programmes – on Science and Citizenship and Accountability and Rights (see [www.drc-citizenship.org](http://www.drc-citizenship.org)). In the sections that follow the cases cited below will be referred to, but without subsequent citations.

'normalisation' of ARV treatment has shaped contrasting modes of citizen engagement (Robins 2005a and b); and in Brazil where mobilisations have resulted in the creation of new health councils, acting as 'intermediary spaces' between the popular and political (Cornwall *et al.* 2006). Citizen engagement with industrial and corporate actors is a central theme in other cases, including the garment industry in Bangladesh where women garment workers have engaged in local struggles at the same time as international campaigns have been waged around worker conditions (Mahmud and Kabeer 2006); oil development in Nigeria, which looked at the complex dynamics of movements, and their links to political parties, local elites and militias, in the Niger delta (Abah and Okwori 2006); asbestos mining in South Africa, which examined how certain towns became focal points for mobilisation which successfully brought international litigation against a corporate asbestos company (Waldman 2005); and several cases in India where citizens have mobilised to hold corporations to account for damage to health and livelihoods (Newell *et al.* 2006).

In different ways, these case studies have asked: who mobilises and who does not, how and why? What are the patterns of experience, profiles and identities of activists? How are activist networks constituted, and what diverse forms do they take? What forms of identity, representation and processes of inclusion and exclusion are involved? What forms of knowledge – including values, perceptions and experiences – frame these public engagements and movements? Within what spaces do debates take place, and what resources are drawn upon? How do citizens and 'experts' of various kinds interact in processes of mobilisation? This paper offers a synthesis of some of the major theoretical perspectives, lines of argument and issues emerging from the different ways the case studies have addressed and answered these questions.

The first part of the paper offers a brief summary of theories of social movements, drawing out four overlapping perspectives on processes of mobilisation. Engaging social movement theory with theories of citizenship, we show how each perspective highlights different dimensions of citizenship. Understanding the mobilisation processes in the case studies, we suggest, requires a combination of perspectives. This points towards an understanding of 'mobilising citizens' as knowledgeable actors engaged in a dynamic, networked politics, which involves shifting and temporary forms of social solidarity and identification through processes that are sometimes local or national but sometimes involve networks that span local sites across the world.

In particular, three key themes emerge from the cases which the second part of the paper explores in more detail. These in turn require the linking of further areas of literature with those more conventionally associated with theories of social movement and citizenship to encompass a fuller understanding of the on-the-ground dynamics of mobilisation in the contemporary world. First, the theme of knowledge and power emerges as key, raising issues of how the politics of knowledge affect the framing and dynamics of mobilisation, as well as the deployment of information in struggles over meaning and interpretation. While past work on social movements has engaged with the politics of knowledge to some extent, we show how literatures on constructivist

perspectives in science and technology studies help deepen insights and illuminate the processes involved.<sup>2</sup> Second, the theme of cultures, styles and practices of activism is highlighted, raising questions of how solidarities are formed and maintained. Literatures on social practice and performance enrich social movement theory in helping to comprehend these processes. A third theme highlights the increasing array and complexity of arenas in which citizens press their claims across local and global sites. Legal arenas for the pressing of rights claims amidst these other processes emerge as particularly significant, and literatures on legal pluralism and legal anthropology provide important insights; important too are media and internet spaces, where literatures from media and cyber-studies can enrich social movement theory.

In conclusion, the paper demonstrates the need to expand and enrich debates about social movements from a diversity of literatures if contemporary processes of mobilisation and their implications for citizenship are to be understood. It argues that today's dynamics of public controversy, debates about risk, and the forms of mobilisation and protest arising requires putting the politics of knowledge centre-stage in our attempts to recast democratic theory and notions of citizenship. The politics of knowledge become even more pertinent when encountering the interconnected and often globalised mobilisation networks around contemporary issues. However the diversity of case studies highlights that emergent patterns are far from uniform. Mobilisation processes emerge from and remain strongly shaped by political histories and cultures; both of citizens and of the public and private institutions they encounter. In particular, the conclusion highlights the dynamic tension between more collective forms of solidarity and citizenship identity, and more individualised forms of 'responsibilised citizen' emerging amidst cultures of neoliberalism.

## 2 Social movements and citizenship

Scholarship on social movements has a long and rich history, encompassing debates in sociology, political science and social geography, and with important analytical traditions having emerged from both northern and southern settings. There is no unified way of categorising the various strands of debate, and recent reviews have done this in very different ways (e.g. Tarrow 1998; Della Porta and Diani 1999; Edelman 2001; and Crossley 2002).<sup>3</sup> Here, we draw out four distinctive perspectives in the analysis of social movements, centred respectively on theories of resource mobilisation and political process, perhaps the most well-known tradition emerging in particular from US-based political science;

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2 See for example the discussions on citizenship, the politics of knowledge and science elaborated in an earlier phase of the DRC work contained in the book 'Science and Citizens', see Leach and Scoones (2005).

3 Two reviews undertaken for the DRC work (Fransman and Miroso-Canal 2004 and Lahitou 2005) provided useful syntheses and up-dates on this work.

theories of framing, emerging as an off-shoot of this, but with links to behavioural studies and psychology; theories of movement identity, with strong roots in European and also Latin American studies; and geographical and sociological theories that highlight the significance of space, place and networks.

## 2.1 Theories of resource mobilisation and political process

Emerging from seminal debates about the conditions for collective action (Olson 1965) and earlier discussions about collective behaviour (e.g. Park 1921) resource mobilisation theory focused on the balance of costs, rewards and incentives that provided people with the motivation to become involved in struggle. Early developments centred upon two elements. First, a rational actor model was employed, along with an economic focus on exchange relations in social life. This was linked with a structural 'network' model of social relations and social life as emergent from the rational actions and exchanges of individuals. Thus Oberschall (1973) showed that collective protest is more likely to be present where there is a strong organisational base, in a collectivity distinct from the rest of society. McCarthy and Zald (1977), who coined the term 'resource mobilisation' argued that the increased availability of expanded personal resources, professionalisation, and external financial support made possible the creation of professional movement organisations.

By the 1980s resource mobilisation theory dominated the study of social movements, especially in the United States, yet came under critique for three main reasons.<sup>4</sup> First, these theorists used the language of economics, but ignored how questions of ideology, commitment and values and, in particular, solidarity might motivate and draw together movement participants. Second, it was difficult to distinguish movements as defined in resource mobilisation theory from interest groups. Third the theory focused on professional movement organisations and particularly on the American context, ignoring the many grass-roots movements emerging in different parts of the world from the 1960s and 1970s.

One line of response to these critiques came to be known as 'political process' theory. While similarly emphasising movement resources and organisation, the political process approach seeks to explain mobilisation processes and their success or failure by reference to the political and institutional context. It stresses dynamism, strategic interaction, and response to the political environment and the 'political opportunity structures' made available. Historical work on political processes produced investigations of the forms of claims-making that people use in real-life situations, what has come to be called 'the repertoires of contention', which represent the culturally encoded ways in which people interact in contentious politics, sometimes within what was termed 'cycles of protest' (Tilly 1978; Tarrow 1998; McAdam 1982).

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4 This paragraph and the next draw heavily on Fransman and Miroso-Canal (2004).

With key strands of resource mobilisation theory premised on collective action emerging out of individual rational choice, a liberal version of citizenship is often suggested (*cf.* Marshall 1950). Citizens come together in collective action to highlight grievances or to press demands, which in liberal theory are usually in relation to the state. Citizens are seen as individuals who act rationally to advance their own interests, while the state's role is to protect and enforce their rights. Mobilisation emerges where the state fails to do this.

In the case study on environmental activism in Brazil, a political process approach was used which draws attention to how changes in political context – notably from dictatorship to democracy – have changed the opportunities and focus for mobilisation. The so-called environmental movement in Brazil, linked as it was to a wider global network of activists, gained ascendancy through a variety of influences, not least the Brazilian hosting of the 1992 environment and development summit. In the case of local housing struggles in Mombasa, Kenya, political contexts and connections were vital to tenant associations' organising (or activities. There are very few successes to report- that's the point of the article). Links to political parties, often with ethnic dimensions, and particular connections to local and national politicians and government departments were key in the mobilisation process. Key events, such as a national commission and a parliamentary enquiry, provide important spurs for building solidarities and focusing action. In Nigeria, the emergence of movements focused on oil exploitation in the Niger delta again have a long history linked to changing political contexts in the region. Diverse movements have emerged in response and opposition to the concentration of power and resources in the hands of a few – mostly the federal government and local elites in their pay. A lack of trust in government, and in elders and chiefs too, has meant that often small, uncoordinated and inward-looking movements have arisen, including youth-based militias who have seized the political opportunity for a more violent campaign of extraction and intimidation on the back of such discontent. In all cases, a longer term historical perspective on changing political conditions and opportunities (*cf.* Tilley 1978) has been essential in understanding the conditions – and particular moments – when solidarities emerge and mobilisations occur.

## 2.2 Theories of framing

Second, theories of framing (Benford and Snow 2000) emphasise how mobilisation takes shape around and actively involves the construction of, particular ideas, meanings and cognitive and moral constructions of a 'problem'. This may involve selecting from an available repertoire of concepts, explanatory schemes, or arguments in ways that fit the moment, perhaps reframing or redefining these. Mobilisation thus involves struggles not just to promote a given social or political agenda, but to establish and promote certain meanings and problem-definitions as legitimate as against those who would dispute them.<sup>5</sup>

Theories of framing echo some of the concerns of civic republican perspectives on citizenship. These recognise a diversity of interests within society and assume that citizens will form factional groups around these. Citizenship is thus related to a common civic identity based on common public culture, emergent from a deliberation around alternative framings (e.g. Habermas 1984, 1996). Whereas in Habermasian versions of civic republicanism collective agreements based on a notion of the common good are seen to emerge out of rational debate, our cases on mobilisation suggest that this is often not the case, and that mobilisation processes often involve protracted clashes between alternative framings which do not reach straightforward resolution.

For example in the case of the MMR vaccine in the UK, parents mobilised around their view that this had triggered a series of symptoms in their children, framing the problem in terms of individual vulnerability to vaccines and demands for treatment and further investigation of these specific causes. They met a counter-mobilisation from government and scientific communities concerned with maintaining population-level vaccination programmes who framed the issue quite differently in terms of whether or not a link between MMR and autism could be determined at a population level. These two framings spoke past each other, leading to polarisation and non-resolution of the controversy. In the case of debates around GM crops in the developing world, a similar polarisation of framings is evident between state, corporate and scientific communities who frame GM safety issues in terms of narrow technical questions of risk and networks of activists who highlight the broader issues of social and political control in a vision of agricultural futures dominated by multinational corporations. In both these cases, framings emerge from deeper moral and political commitments which shape the nature of mobilisation.

### 2.3 Theories of movement identity

Third, the identity-related aspects of social movements have been emphasised, especially as interest in 'old' social movements assumed to be class-based has given way to interest in 'new' social movements constituted around symbolic, informational and cultural struggles, and rights to specificity *vis-à-vis* dominant state and market forms (Evers 1985; Melucci 1989; see also Habermas 1996). Rather than assume shared identities amongst movement participants, recent approaches examine the sources and processes through which common identities are formed, and perhaps dissolved and reformed, through movement processes. Castells (1997) argues that 'in a world of global flows of wealth, power, and images, the search for identity, collective or individual, ascribed or constructed, becomes the fundamental source of social meaning'. Included here is attention to micro-contexts of common experience and to everyday move-

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5 Tarrow (1998) and McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly (2001), for example, usefully integrate framing with resource mobilisation and political process approaches in analysing social mobilisation. See also Crossley (2002).

ment practices and contexts for micro-mobilisation (Snow *et al.* 1986; McAdam 1988) in holding movement participants together, even if temporarily (e.g. Laclau and Mouffe 1985).

This suggests a perspective on citizenship centred on difference and identity. Many feminists and others associate citizenship with group identities based on specific forms and experiences of difference – such as those linked to gender, race, disability, locality and so on (Young 1989, 1990) – through a ‘politics of presence’ (Phillips 1993, 1995). A number of post-structuralist theorists argue that people have a multiplicity of overlapping subject positions, each more or less contingent. Group political identity is produced through identification with others who hold particular subject positions in common. Citizen action thus draws upon particular political identities at particular moments (Laclau and Mouffe 1985; Mouffe 1992, 1995). This gives rise to a fragmented and contingent notion of citizenship as realised in the enactment of political action or mobilisation (Ellison 1997). Furthermore, rather than being directed at a singular notion of the state, such action may be directed towards more diverse and dispersed sites and spaces.

For example, in the case of mobilisation around asbestos related diseases in South Africa, Griqua activists were united by their common experiences as ‘victims’ of mining activities, but mobilisation also interplayed with the complexity of Griqua identity and its links with the politics of race, place and gender. In the case of activism around antiretroviral treatment in South Africa, movement activists were united by a common experience of personal transformation from ‘near death to new life’ through HIV/AIDS treatment. Mobilisation also built on more deeply rooted forms of identity linked to the struggle against apartheid. In the delta region of Nigeria, disaffected youth formed militia in the struggle against state and corporate control over oil resources. However such groups used their power for personal or group enrichment, rather than focusing on the broader welfare of the delta peoples as their rhetoric claimed. Such limited, militarised social solidarities are borne out of a highly fragmented, divided and dysfunctional society, where unemployed youth based in towns and rural centres see no option but to focus on what Ellison (1997: 715) describes as more ‘fundamentalist solidarities’ based on ‘non-reflexive forms of interest based action’.

In these cases, then, processes of identification are operating at multiple levels, both through immediate contexts of interaction and shared experience and through more historically sedimented forms of solidarity and group identity. It is the interaction of these that serves to give mobilisation its strength and impetus.

## 2.4 Theories of space, place and network

A fourth dimension in the study of social movements acknowledges their embeddedness in space and place. Geographers, especially, have argued that social movements flow out of the interplay of space, power, framings and

resources, with an understanding of spatial location and context critical to seeing why the political processes of social movements unfold as they do (Miller 2000). The spatial context of contemporary mobilisations is frequently wide and diffuse, involving multi-layered forms of networking and alliance (Edelman 2001; Appadurai 2000) and ‘discourse coalitions’ between differently-framed agendas (Hajer 1995). Such movements may link participants in diverse local sites across global spaces, constituting forms of ‘globalisation from below’ (Falk 1993; Appadurai 2002). This contrasts with the more conventional focus of social movement theory on single organisations with a single, shared agenda. Indeed some theorists discount such forms of mobilisation as ‘movements’ at all, preferring to label them coalitions or networks (Fox 2000). New information technologies and media networks have been critical in enabling these forms of connection between spatially dispersed movement participants (Castells 1997).

In the cases of global mobilisations around large dams, GM crops and anti-retroviral treatment availability, an ostensibly global movement network is made up of a multiplicity of more localised movements which have emerged in specific contexts, and around more located concerns. Yet these add up to more than the sum of their parts: local mobilisation is able to draw aspects of framing, legitimacy and authority from the global, while the global can claim authenticity through its appeal to local embeddedness. This raises tensions and forms of ambiguity which are perhaps less evident in more singular local movements which were the inspiration for much social movement theory.

Others have advanced the notion of social movements as a necessary return to the local in a context of proliferating global initiatives and forms of development. Thus mobilisations are a focus for the articulation of local problem framings, needs and priorities, which emphasise the need to replace global knowledge and action with local thinking. Thus, Esteva and Prakash (1997: 47) argue:

Countless cases give ample proof that local peoples often need outside allies to create a critical mass of political opposition capable of stopping those forces. But the solidarity of coalitions and alliances does not call for ‘thinking globally’. In fact, what is needed is exactly the opposite: people thinking and acting locally, while forging solidarity with other local forces that share this opposition to the ‘global thinking’ and ‘global forces’ threatening local spaces.

The case of the Zapatista movement in Chiapas, Mexico is often referred to in this regard. Here a locally grounded movement – focusing on indigenous cultural, political and social rights, particularly around land – has emerged as a strong, armed force for local self-determination in the region. This has led to the creation of autonomous municipalities and councils, and pressure on state level legislation. The case of opposition to the Montes Azules biosphere reserve is illustrative of this local struggle for rights being pitted against a more globally conceived notion of biosphere protection.

What some have termed ‘post-development’ theorists construct in different ways a concept of local mobilisation and resistance to the entire development project (e.g. Escobar 1992, 1995; Ferguson 1990; Leys 1996; de Sousa Santos

1995; Crush 1995; Esteva 1992), very often reifying the power, potential and indigeneity of the local. But they also recognise that local movements can forge solidarity with each other, in alliances that transcend a simply local movement base. Whether such linked networks of local mobilisations add up to a 'global civil society' (Edwards 1999; Edwards and Gaventa 2001) remains a subject of intense debate, a theme picked up later in this paper.

Such perspectives on mobilisation highlight the relevance of communitarian perspectives on citizenship, centred on the citizen as a member of a socially and spatially embedded community (Santal 1998; Smith 1998). In communitarian thought, the emphasis is on the pursuit of local agendas, with the state appearing more distantly if at all. While some traditions of communitarian thought have focused on the local, a communitarian perspective also helps comprehend manifestations of what might be seen as 'global' citizenship, where local expressions of communitarianism incorporate global imaginations, captured in the expression 'think global, act local'.

## 2.5 Towards an integrative perspective

While we have drawn here on particular case study examples to illustrate different theories of mobilisation (and their resonances in citizenship theory), in each of the empirical cases it is a combination of all four theoretical perspectives that is necessary to understand the mobilisation processes at work. Such an integrated perspective on mobilisation in turn suggests a more integrated perspective on citizenship: one that understands socially and spatially located nature of the 'mobilising citizen', engaged in a dynamic, networked political interactions, drawing on a variety of resources, becoming part of shifting forms of social solidarity and identification. In a world increasingly influenced by the dispersing and fragmented effects of globalisation, there is a need to go beyond either state-centred or pluralist accounts of citizenship. People have, as we have seen from the cases, multiple memberships of different groupings, both in institutional and cultural terms. Such a multiplication of identities, affiliations and forms of solidarity, Ellison (1997) argues requires the dissolving of more conventional boundaries between the public and private, the political and social, and the situating of citizenship at least in part outside the standard political realm. This integrative vision of citizenship certainly resonates most effectively with the empirical realities described in the case studies. It in turn has important implications for how movements and mobilisations are seen. Thus as Ellison (1997: 712) comments:

'Citizenship' no longer conveys a universalist sense of inclusion or participation in a stable political community; neither does it suggest the possibility of developing claims organised around a relatively stable set of differences; nor, for that matter, can the term be made to conform easily to the living out of a series of socially constructed identity positions on the decentred social subjects. Instead, we are left with a restless desire for social engagement, citizenship becoming a form of social and political practice borne of the

need to establish new solidarities across a range of putative ‘communities’ as a defence against social changes which continually threaten to frustrate such ambitions.

Following earlier work (Leach and Scoones 2005; Nyamu-Musembi 2002), citizenship is thus redefined in more actor-oriented and performative terms, in effect, as *practised engagement through emergent social solidarities*. Such a perspective on citizenship which was earlier seen as necessary to understand citizen participation in more orchestrated arenas and invited spaces, becomes even more relevant when considering diverse mobilisation processes. These forms of engagement, involving new processes of social and political mobilisation, are, as Ellison emphasises, likely to be ‘increasingly messy and unstable’ (1997: 712). Reflecting on the array of cases, an initial impression is indeed one of messiness and instability. However, across the cases three key themes emerge. We now go on to explore these.

## 3 Emergent themes in contemporary mobilisation

While the cases have engaged with the more conventional elements of social movement theory, as discussed above, a number of emergent cross-cutting themes are striking. These in turn require extending the scope of literature on social movements and citizenship in several directions. Here we suggest how incorporating perspectives from constructivist science and technology studies enhance our understanding of the theme of knowledge, power and mobilisation. In the same way, anthropological literatures on practice, ritual and resistance enrich our understanding of movement cultures, styles and practices. And, finally, a focus on spaces for mobilisation today requires attention, for example, to studies of legal and media processes.

### 3.1 Knowledge, power and mobilisation

In all the cases, contests over knowledge were central to how the dynamics of mobilisation unfolded. Epstein (1996: 6) argues that:

Increasingly, science is the resource called on to promote consensus, and experts are brought in to ‘settle’ political and social controversies. Yet this ‘scientization of politics’ simultaneously brings about a ‘politicization of science’ ... political disputes tend to become technical disputes.

He goes on to argue that ‘Few studies ... have explored the role of movements in the construction of credible knowledge, and few sociologists of scientific knowledge have engaged significantly with the sociological literature on social movements’ (1996: 19).<sup>6</sup>

From the cases, we can see this tendency for social and political disputes to become technical disputes, and for conflicts around resources to be expressed in terms of conflicts around knowledge. For example in the disputes over water access described for the southern Veracruz watershed Mexico, urban-based government authorities have continued to define the problem in technical terms, offering short-term palliatives based on offering limited water rationing – together with some social and educational programmes – to the disaffected rural communities. But this did not tackle the root causes of the conflicts which were more fundamental and about basic rights for marginalised indigenous communities. Thus a 20 year pattern of conflict-negotiation-conflict has emerged, without substantive change, as the fora and formats for effective negotiation and deliberation were until recently unavailable. In other cases, mobilisation was, from the outset, about the terms of scientific debate and the ways in which risk and safety were constructed, whether in relation to vaccines, GM crops, or mining occupations. These mobilisations were about broader social and political issues and claims; yet as the dynamics unfolded, it was in the technical arena where contests became most acute – framed by the institution-alised practices of courts, regulatory procedures and scientific trials.

Epstein (1996) proposes four possible ways in which social movements might engage with science: (a) disputing scientific claims; (b) seeking to acquire a cachet of scientific authority for a political claim by finding a scientific expert to validate their political stance; (c) rejecting the scientific way of knowing and advancing their claims to expertise from some wholly different epistemological standpoint, and (d) attempting to ‘stake out some ground on the scientists’ own terrain’ by questioning ‘not just the uses of science, not just the control over science, but sometimes even the very contents of science and the processes by which it is produced’ (Epstein 1996: 12–13). The cases offer examples of each of these. Thus parental mobilisation around MMR did not just dispute scientific claims that there was no link between MMR and autism, but exposed the biases in the science producing claims of MMR safety, arguing that this was linked with political interests in mass-vaccination and commercial interests in selling vaccines. Parents contested mainstream epidemiological science through their own observations of MMR-caused disease in their children, forming alliances with supportive scientists who took a clinical perspective. In the case of mobilisation around GM crops, activists used all these forms of engagement, deploying them strategically depending on the setting. Whereas in the courts, they disputed scientific claims about GM safety, in the media they tended to reject scientific arguments about risk altogether in favour of a wider debate about corporate control, globalisation and livelihood futures. In the case of occupational health in India, activists have staked out ground on the scientists’ own terrain by conducting diagnostic tests and health assessments in attempts to hold corporations to account. TAC’s mobilisation around HIV/AIDS in South Africa was in part a response to Mbeki and the ‘AIDS dissidents’ attempt to

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6 Exceptional studies which have made these links include Petersen and Markle (1981), and, more recently, Jamison (2001).

acquire a cachet of scientific authority for their political claim that there was no viral cause of AIDS. At this time, the leadership of TAC drew on mainstream understandings of virology and disease causation to argue for investment in anti-retroviral treatments, vehemently rejecting any other more interpretative stance. However, at the same time, the wider TAC membership, who are experiencing both illness and treatment, often make sense of their condition by drawing on narratives that are simultaneously about science, religion and asserting rights (Robins 2005c).

Diverse forms of expertise are therefore at work in any mobilisation process, often simultaneously. In some cases, mobilisations draw on lay knowledge and forms of 'experiential expertise' (Collins and Evans 2002) that people have acquired in everyday life. For instance, cultural understandings of bodily and disease processes shaped movements around asbestosis in South Africa and occupational health in India; parental observation and experience of child health was central to mobilisation around the MMR vaccine in the UK; lay experiences of the dynamics of water resources and livelihoods influenced mobilisation around large dams in India; experiences of complex local agro-ecologies shaped opposition to GM crops; local knowledge and experiences around plant uses and biodiversity shaped opposition to bio-prospecting in Mexico, and local knowledge of the livelihood and pollution impacts of oil-shaped citizen mobilisation in Nigeria. In some cases, such experiential expertise became recast as 'citizen science' (Irwin 1995; Fischer 2000), in which people actively worked to produce new knowledge according with their own experiences.<sup>7</sup> Thus in India, NGOs have provided communities water testing kits to challenge the Pollution Control Board's own monitoring data. Activists have also facilitated community surveys of malaria incidence, and related this to the extent of stagnant water arising from industrial operations in the area. Such community-derived evidence has been compiled and presented as part of 'People's Development Plans' which are presented to local assemblies and government officials. Housing activists in Nairobi, Kenya also invested in their own data collection around land grabbing, documenting who was taking land and how much. Such data was unavailable to formal government commissions investigating the issue, who failed to uncover the extent of the problem because of the influential political interests involved. In the UK, MMR mobilisation, websites were used to survey and collate parental observations to build up a 'scientific' picture of MMR triggers for disease.

In many cases, citizens have enrolled accredited scientific experts sympathetic to their perspectives, forming alliances that give their claims greater strength and legitimacy (*cf.* Nelkin 1987; Hoffman 1989). Through these alliances, certain citizens may themselves learn new forms of scientific expertise: what Epstein

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7 In this respect, there are strong similarities with Epstein's (1996) account of AIDS activism in the United States, as well as with cases of popular epidemiology and patient/victim mobilisation around issues of environmental and health risk (e.g. Brown 1992; Petryna 2002; Di Chiro 1992).

terms the ‘expertification of lay activists’. At the same time, accredited experts confront their institutionalised and professional knowledge, reclaiming their role as citizens. Through these processes, boundaries between citizen and expert become much more fluid, and hybrids emerge. In some cases, activists themselves embody hybrid identities. Thus environmental activists in Brazil have complex career trajectories which have moved between practising science and engaging in activism, sometimes separately and sometimes together.

Clashes over knowledge are therefore central to mobilisation dynamics. However, the cases show how the oppositions involved rarely conform to simple views of ‘science versus people’ or ‘experts versus indigenous/lay knowledge’. Instead, differently-constructed discourses and ‘discourse coalitions’ (Hajer 1995) emerge. Thus in mobilisation around water, the key opposition is more between proponents of large dams (embracing particular types of engineer, large scale commercial agricultural interests, and urban consumers), and proponents of small-scale water interventions (including other hydrologists and engineers, small farmers and dam oustees). In mobilisation around MMR, the key opposition is less between ‘parents’ and ‘scientists’, than between clinical perspectives (uniting parents who believe their children vaccine-damaged with certain clinical scientists) and epidemiological perspectives (shared by other – epidemiological – scientists, public health policy-makers, and pharmaceutical companies).

Positions and perspectives also shift over time as debates unfold. For example in South Africa, the TAC leadership stuck firmly to a biomedical model and for a particular form of treatment access when mobilising against the government. However, following the success in the 2001 Constitutional court case, the deployment of expertise shifted. As Steve Robins puts it: ‘Now that treatment is available, TAC and its scientist allies are able to acknowledge that things are far more complicated. The political terrain has shifted with the implementation of the national ARV programme and the defeat of the AIDS dissidents. It is now possible to provide a more “balanced picture” and acknowledge the limits and vulnerabilities of ARVs and other AIDS interventions’.<sup>8</sup> As this case and others show, different forms of knowledge alliance are fundamentally linked to different and changing social and political interests, and interact with each other in highly politicised and power-laden processes.

Whatever the outcomes of such processes – whether or not citizens successfully press knowledge claims from which flow further material and political claims – such processes can lead to broader transformations in the ways issues are understood and debated in public culture. As Jamison suggests:

Out of the alternative public spaces that have been created by social and political movements has emerged a new kind of scientific pluralism, in terms of organisation, worldview assumptions, and technical application (2001: 136).

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8 Steve Robins, pers. comm., review comments, November 2005.

Following Epstein (1996, note 121, p373), then, we argue for productive engagement between social movement theory and science studies. This has been important in analysing the case studies, which have drawn out hitherto unexplored affinities between the conceptions of framing, resource mobilisation, and collective identity formation that have been developed in the study of social movements, and parallel concepts in science studies. Thus constructive perspectives which draw connections between scientific perspectives and their underlying social, political and institutional commitments helpfully extend social movement theory's perspectives on framing and identity (Franklin 1995; Wynne 1992; Jasanoff 2005). Insights from work in science studies on science-in-action and actor-network theory (e.g. Latour 1987, 1999) help illuminate the practices of science-related mobilisation; how both movement actors and their opponents create, consolidate and extend their claims by enrolling other actors and institutions into knowledge/power networks, and how particular events and fora shape the co-production of scientific and social, political or policy positions (Jasanoff and Wynne 1997).

With knowledge and struggles over information so central to contemporary mobilisation, we see from the cases how a deeper conceptualisation of the relationships between knowledge and power in mobilisation contexts requires us to put knowledge centre-stage as part of an understanding of resource mobilisation and political process, movement framing, identity, and – as Melucci (1996) emphasises – the holding-together of networks and solidarities, even as these stretch across globally-interconnected spaces.

### **3.2 Cultures, styles and practices of mobilisation**

The cases show a wide range of styles and practices of activism, associated with different micro-mobilisation contexts, both between mobilisations and even within particular movements themselves. Many of the movements discussed in the case studies have longer histories than the immediate mobilisations looked at. They may draw upon experiences of activists around other issues, bringing in particular ways of working and forms of protest that resonate with other periods or actions. For example, many activists involved in the emergence of the Brazilian environmental movement or the health councils in the north-east of the country had long associations with the wider democracy movement and struggles against the dictatorship. In South Africa, TAC activists brought in the imagery, songs and dances that had been part of their earlier experiences in the struggle against apartheid.

Contemporary movement activities thus often extend a performative repertoire, situated within a wider 'habitus' (cf. Bourdieu 1977), which became institutionalised earlier. Yet the cases also make it clear that novel repertoires may be created to provide new idioms for motivating activism or holding together collective identity. Thus in the South African case the notion of almost ritualised transformation of a person from 'near death to new life' which comes about through anti-retroviral therapies has come to unite and motivate activists in arguing for expanded treatment availability.

Not all movement participants, however, have this common, intense shared experience. Sometimes movements involve a diverse group, with different social backgrounds, educational profiles, and personal life histories. Thus for example, tenants' associations in Nairobi, Kenya include a core group of activists who are relatively homogenous in socio-economic terms, but have diverse ethnic and political connections. These differences have been accommodated, and sometimes used to good effect, in the umbrella movement organisation. However, outside the core grouping, others have been involved at particular periods only, becoming mobilised around certain crises or in response to particular attempts at relocation or land grabbing. As the cases show, the pattern of diversity, and its key axes, in movement participants clearly shape different interests in pursuing a particular cause. These may create tensions, but mean that the performative and ritualised moments of commonality – in protests, demonstrations, fasts, court cases – are all the more significant. Thus the anti-dam movement in India draws people from all walks of life to its high profile events and protests, including well known individuals on the international activist circuit. Where movements are made up of socially diverse participants, the roles and charisma of individual leaders in holding them together, or at least presenting a public face of a united movement, also become more significant.

Across the cases a wide diversity of mobilisation tactics has been pursued. Direct actions – including damage to property – have been a tactic of some. Thus for example, in Mexico several thousand indigenous people, armed with bows, arrows and machetes, closed the valves of the dam, cutting off water to the cities for several days. Direct action against oil companies in Nigeria has targeted pipelines, sometimes with violent consequences. Alongside overt, extravagant performances through protest, direct actions and engagements with the courts or media, movements may engage in more everyday resistances, deploying the 'weapons of the weak' (Scott 1985). Thus for example in the UK MMR case, parents engaged in strategies of non-compliance, refusing to respond to questionnaires about their children's condition or not attending appointments. In Bangladesh, the most common form of protest for women is to resist the demands of exploitative employers or simply to leave the job.

Acknowledging this diversity of resistances raises questions about the different degrees of engagement with a 'movement'. Some may not be aware they are part of a movement at all, but their practices – for example as a parent who does not take their child for MMR vaccination because they have been worried by reports in the press – serve to contribute to movement goals. Others, such as the large majority of tenants in Nairobi, may only 'join up' at key moments, being preoccupied with other issues at other times. In Bangladesh, only 1 per cent of women garment workers are signed up to a union outside the export zone areas, and are rarely engaged in collective action, beyond a few NGOs focusing labour rights with limited capacity and reach. And this despite a high-profile global campaign being waged on their behalf by a loose international coalition of trade unions, students, NGOs, living wage activists and consumers. Such cases draw attention to the relationship between movement cores and their wider social fields, and how movements gain legitimacy and popular

support for their actions (Edelman 2001). A number of the cases highlight the widening of social fields, linked to rise of trans-national activism, but also the dangers of fragmentation and disconnection that arise when local struggles are connected and extended into global arenas.

### 3.3 Spaces for mobilisation

A final theme from the cases, then, highlights this dynamic, sometimes fraught, connection between a multiplicity of spaces in contemporary mobilisations. Spaces for mobilisation range from the formal to the informal, from the spontaneous to the invited, from the popular to the top-down, and from the permanent to the transient (Cornwall and Schattan P. Coelho 2004). The cases emphasise again and again that it is the connection between spaces that is important in understanding processes of mobilisation, and the evolution of struggles over time. Thus for example in India, activist NGOs concerned with corporate accountability have engaged in multi-pronged strategies in all examples looked at, involving local awareness raising, media interventions, public interest litigation, engagement with government authorities – from the state Pollution Control Board, to local village assemblies, direct dialogue with companies and public hearings. As the Kenya case highlighted timing is key. In the mid-90s, public protests against land grabbing highlighted the plight of tenants with insecure tenure; in 1997 a high-profile media campaign thwarted the council's secret plans to relocate tenants and in 2000 tenants, having collected detailed information, presented a case before a presidential commission with a proposal for legal reform. The health council in Cabo in Pernambuco state, Brazil – a more formalised intermediary space – emerged from a much longer struggle of health activists involved in movement organisations from the 1980s. The council was thus shaped by these longer experiences, and became possible because of a combination of events in 1997 when a progressive government was returned in the state, and an energetic, radical reformer – with links to earlier movement struggles – became secretary for health. Understanding mobilisations therefore requires attention to the contingent interaction of spaces and places, people and networks, and events and moments. The uncertain, non-linear, dynamic nature of mobilisation is emphasised across the case studies, making simple structural explanations inadequate.

Whereas a dominant strand of social movement theory has focused on more conventional forms of protest in spaces established through face-to-face encounters, sit-ins, court cases, marches and demonstrations, contemporary mobilisations often link these spaces with more diffuse communication processes over multiple locales, including the use of both conventional mass-media and new information and communication technologies. Thus GM activism in Brazil, India and South Africa combined, at different times and by different groups, direct action against field trials, supermarket trolley dumping, protests outside facilities and research institutes, constitutional and public interest litigation cases, media campaigns on TV, newspapers and radio, internet-linked networks and resource materials, and e-mail protests. Activism against large dams has linked

marches and demonstrations with astute media interventions, multiple court cases and engagements in international deliberations on dams, complemented by e-mail networking and website publicity and connections. TAC activists in South Africa began in the locales of black townships, making use of local political forums, but then extended their movement into global spaces through forging connections around anti-patent law struggles in the spaces of international conferences, benefit concerts, media and internet debate. Through the development of such networks TAC has thus enlisted a wider and influential grouping, ranging from Nelson Mandela, Bono and Bill and Melissa Gates.

While mobilisations make use of – and in the process link – such diverse spaces, they also take on different characters within them. Across the cases, recurrent themes were the use of legal spaces on the one hand, and media (including cyber) spaces on the other. Here, we consider the ways in which mobilisations in the cases made use of these types of space and how this reflected different politics of knowledge and different forms of culture, style and practice.

In several of the cases, law became a site of politics in which courts acted as mediators. Paradoxically, movement participants sometimes see legal arenas as spaces where their concerns can be heard and deliberated in a neutral, objective manner, in contrast to what are perceived to be more politicised arenas elsewhere. Yet the cases illustrate how science and knowledge became tools in legal spaces, with the law constructing types of science which are either accepted as ‘evidence’ or labelled as ‘biased’. This illustrates the argument made in social and anthropological studies of law that law is not necessarily the neutral arbiter that it is sometimes made out to be (Falk-Moore 1978; Mertz 1994). Cases also illustrate arguments from science studies that ‘science’ and ‘knowledge’ come to be constructed (and legitimised and delegitimised) in particular ways when put to work as legal evidence (Jasanoff 1997). Thus parents’ proposed class action against vaccine manufacturers over MMR damage was ruled out at the pre-litigation stage because lawyers acting for the legal services commission which funded the parents’ case ruled that their scientific evidence was too weak and biased to stand up in court. In the case of asbestosis in South Africa, controversy over interpretations of medical evidence saw many people have their claims ‘medically downgraded’, and receive less compensation money as a result.

Nor are legal spaces singular. Different routes of legal redress are available and across the cases have been exploited strategically by activists in a process of ‘forum shopping’ (Benda-Beckman 1981), highlighting the pluralistic nature of the legal system (Merry 1998, 1992). In making use of different legal spaces, activists may frame movement concerns in different ways – and this can in turn lead to debate within movements themselves. In the case of the campaign for anti-retroviral treatment in South Africa, activists operated across multiple legal jurisdictions, engaging both at the international level around patent provisions and at the national level. Different types of court at a national level also offer different types of opportunity for legal argument, with constitutional courts – for example in the GM case – offering some opportunity to elaborate oppositions in terms of rights, justice and broader livelihoods, with other courts and

the public interest litigation route being more specifically focused on legally-specified procedures and regulations, thus constraining the scope of claims that can be made.

Putting forward a court case is no minor task. Small activist organisations often have to link up with others to do so, while links between more diverse individualised claims may be strengthened through putting together a class action. The forms of coordinated action involved in turn shape the collective nature of movement identity in particular ways. Thus, for example, in the case of TAC in South Africa, engagement in court cases around patents drew the South Africa based treatment movement into a wider collective identity associated with the anti-globalisation movement. Legal action also requires high levels of resource mobilisation, not just of funds but of expertise including legal expertise and scientific ‘expert witnesses’. Thus seeking legal redress requires movements to extend their networks, enlisting specialist expertise in mobilisations, often with attendant tensions.

Litigation efforts may, as Wendy Brown (1995) argues, have a tendency towards individualising and depoliticising, but the court can also be a site for other forms of activist mobilisation. The court room drama – or even its prospect – can be created as an event which may occasion high-profile demonstrations and stunts outside the court room, bringing associated media coverage. Thus for example in Brazil the frequent court cases around the GM issue always provided an opportunity for Greenpeace or other activists to stage performative protests, ranging from unfurling banners on buildings to dressing-up in biosecurity suits. In the UK, the calling-off of the parental class action against the manufacturers of MMR was itself sufficient to trigger major media commentary, which parent-activists and sympathetic journalists were able to use to publicise other dimensions of their struggle.

As these examples make clear, while legal spaces may be effective routes for movements to pursue certain types of rights, as specified in (national or international) law, or to hold governments or companies to account in relation to particular statutes and regulations, they are only one, insufficient element in the broader struggles for justice, including cognitive justice (Visvanathan 2005) that mobilisations are seeking. Today, the mass-media and new information technologies provide another important set of spaces.

The use of mass-media was important across all the cases. Access to broader public debate through the media was essential for all movements, making use of mass-media’s great potential as a site for contestation (Spitulnik 1993). However engagements with the media, as activists recounted in interviews during the case studies, presented a number of challenges. As many media studies commentators have pointed out, the genre and style of media coverage tends to construct a particular kind of storyline: David vs. Goliath, goodies vs. baddies, and so on (Lowe and Morrison 1984; Hargreaves *et al.* 2002). Social movement stories are often easily presented in this mould, making them appealing subjects for media coverage. Activists can often gain access to such coverage despite their small size and limited budgets by the desire of the media to present ‘two

sides of the story' or 'a balanced picture' – for instance to counter dominant state or corporate interests. In the process of turning mobilisations into media storylines, subtleties of their framings are often lost. The science and knowledge claims involved may also be reconstructed – as several commentators on the MMR debate argued, for instance, media coverage gave the impression that scientific evidence was weighted 50:50 between the parental and government sides of the debate (Science Media Centre 2002, Hargreaves *et al.* 2002). This entirely missed the point that the types of evidence each side was using were differently-framed and in effect non-comparable.

The cases highlight that there are multiple forms of media which offer different spaces with different implications for movement access and framing. In all the case study countries there is notionally a free press, yet this comes in many shapes and forms. Thus in some outlets, advertising revenues might be jeopardised by anti-corporate perspectives, making certain activist approaches unattractive. Some media outlets have long-established affinities with particular political interests or parties, shaping their receptivity to particular mobilisations. Some newspapers have had sympathetic journalists who take up a particular activist cause and may publicise it over several years, through a combination of headlines and detailed features – as in the UK *Daily Mail's* strong coverage of the parental movement around MMR in the UK. In such cases, journalists become, in effect, enrolled as movement activists. There are also important distinctions between the spaces offered by national media outlets, and local ones, such as local and vernacular language newspapers, and community radio stations. In the latter, movement storylines and framings may be constructed differently to appeal to locally-relevant concerns. The use of different media spaces by activists is, in some respects, akin to forum shopping in plural legal spaces. This also enables appeal to different audiences who might lend popular support to a movement as part of its wider social field. Yet while messages may be presented differently in different media outlets, there is often what post-modern media studies refer to as 'intertextuality' at work – when images appear in different media and create meaning across them, or one media presentation promotes another (Fiske 1987; Taylor and Willis 1999: 82) – with such intertextuality contributing to movement strength.

Increasingly, media networks are based on internet connections through websites, e-mail lists, blogs and so on. The degree to which the mobilisations in the case studies made use of the internet is varied, depending not least degrees of internet access and connectivity. Thus the internet was more important for local mobilisation in the UK than in South Africa or rural Nigeria, but even these cases activist leaders used internet networks to forge links with movements elsewhere. These cyber spaces provide many resources for mobilisation, enabling movement participants to have rapid access to information and connection with each other without the need for face-to-face encounters. This has implications for movement identity, which may become broader, more diverse and inclusive – but less cohesive. Thus, Baumann (1999: 130) argues that 'cyberspace, the site of postmodern intellectual practice, feeds on fragmentation and promotes fragmentation', thus not producing the kind of social solidarities capable of

producing a collective political vision capable of changing the world. However, in the cases discussed here, cyberpolitics was one element of a diverse set of movement engagements, with internet networking being one layer in a more complex whole. Moreover as Miller and Slater (2000) emphasise, people access the internet from located sites in which culture and history shape styles of use – suggesting that internet practices need to be seen as part of micro-mobilisation contexts.

The politics of knowledge also become mediated in different ways through cyberspace, for instance as movement participants gain direct access to scientific research papers posted on movement websites or sent out to e-mail lists. However, such access is not unmediated: just as Monsanto and its regionally-based outposts have their own websites with links to news articles and scientific papers on the benefits of GM crops, so do global anti-GM campaigners, linking to different articles that stress the risks. Perhaps the most novel dimensions of the spaces opened up through the internet are the ways in which they connect local and global sites and forms of knowledge, both giving localised movements access to global debates and information sources, and global campaigns, sources of local experience and forms of legitimacy. Cyberspace also enables localised mobilisations to connect with each other, sometimes resulting in a sharing of styles and practices of activism, as well as a sharing of framings. Such ‘globalisation from below’ (Falk 1993) can contribute to the strength and claims of local movements, although it can also reduce the specificity of localised citizens’ concerns in favour of appeals to a global civil society. The most effective mobilisations have been those that have moved strategically between these different spaces, adjusting framing and styles accordingly.

## 4 Conclusion

The case studies we have brought together in this paper have crossed northern and southern settings, and many link locales across the globe. Cases have included mobilisations that have emerged among the poor, as well as those more associated with middle class concerns. This diversity of case settings emphasises the need to broaden debates about social movements, encompassing different literatures – from science studies to the anthropology of ritual and practice to geographies of space and place. As the sections above have highlighted, contemporary processes of mobilisation suggest some important implications for our understanding of citizenship.

The cases highlight an array of forms of citizenship which are brought to bear and enacted through mobilisation processes. In some cases it appears to be communitarian notions of citizenship which are to the fore – for instance where tight forms of collective action emerge around an issue or where geographic communities resist state or corporate action. In some cases, collective solidarities emerge in a more temporary and shifting way, bringing together more diverse groups in coalitions around particular framings of an issue, with

particular micro-mobilisation contexts providing important sources of cohesion. These collective solidarities sometimes extend to the global as emergent forms of trans-national activism make claims about global citizenship as resources to link diverse movements across multiple local sites. In some other cases, mobilisation reflects the emergence of 'responsibilised' citizens who join forces to articulate individualised rights and lifestyle choices in relation to the public goods and regulations proposed by state and international systems. This phenomenon, particular evident in the northern settings (as in the case of HIV/AIDS and MMR activism in the UK), is broadly in line with neoliberal ideologies of self-governance which Baumann (1999) suggests as underlying the emergence of many citizens groups around health and lifestyle issues (see also Barry *et al.* 1996). The individualised values at work here might be seen as rather different from those reflected more collective forms of protest and movement organisation where community, livelihoods and lifestyles are under threat from external sources. Mobilisation processes therefore emerge from and remain strongly shaped by political histories and cultures, as the case studies have shown.

Central to the understanding of any of these forms of citizenship is the politics of knowledge. As we have seen, knowledge politics interplay with the politics of struggle around material resources, and socio-political claims. They are central to movement framing, to resource mobilisation and the use of different spaces, and to the creation and sustenance of movement identities. As Sheila Jasanoff argues:

Contemporary societies are constituted as *knowledge societies* ... important aspects of political behaviour and action cluster around the ways in which knowledge is generated, disputed, and used to underwrite collective decisions. It is no longer possible to deal with such staple concepts of democratic theory as citizenship or deliberation or accountability without delving into their interaction with the dynamics of knowledge creation and use (2005: 6).

Critical to this extension of democratic theory, this paper argues, is a more comprehensive consideration of the politics of knowledge in mobilisation and social movement theory. This appreciation of knowledge-politics needs to go hand-in-hand with the notions of citizen agency which have underlain both recent developments in social movement theory, and in theories of citizenship (Nyamu-Musembi 2002). The result is a notion of mobilising citizens as creative, knowledgeable actors engaged in political processes, which involve contestations between knowledge claims linked respectively to particular political and social commitments and cultures. In short, we argue, contentious politics today is more often than not the politics of knowledge.

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