

OPEN CALL

People empowered to have a say in their economic future: Can you share extraordinary or innovative examples?

IDS and the Open Society Foundations (OSF) are working together to **identify exciting economic alternatives: ways in which enterprises, communities and societies are including ‘ordinary people’s real voice to their economic decision making.** The key to the research is about understanding economic alternatives that have a strong **participatory element.**

In particular, we want to learn about participation in three areas:

- Alternative forms of economic management that enable anyone from workers, consumers, communities, farmers, for example, to have a voice
- Citizen voice in government economic policy-making
- Grassroots economic alternatives where people claim ownership over economic processes that affect their lives

In the past months we have been collecting well-known cases to understand how meaningful participation happens.

We are now seeking support to identify innovative examples in less familiar contexts.

Can you help us?

Are you aware of examples where people are empowered to have a say in their economic future?

Examples can fall within each of these three broad categories or themes:

Theme	Example
<p>1. Alternative forms of economic management that enable workers, consumers, communities, farmers, for example, to have a voice.</p> <p>Examples could include the participation of workers or consumers on company boards, self-managed/autonomous work teams, community involvement in the allocation of development funds or the management of infrastructure, or more collaborative value chains.</p>	<p>Gore-Tex’s workplace democracy. W. L. Gore and Associates is a privately-held multinational company founded in 1958, most famous for producing Gore-Tex. Since its founding, it has operated through a "lattice" system of employee self-management which is said to verge on true workplace participatory democracy. Key features include a flat hierarchy in which the CEO is elected, self-managed work teams with small team sizes to secure ownership in collective decision-making, and free information flow. “</p>

2. Citizen voice in government economic policy-making.

These examples might include participatory budgeting, citizens' economic councils or even campaigns and activism that influence economic policy decisions.

Participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre.

Participatory budgeting allows citizen engagement in policy making and represents an example of more equitable governance. Core to the model is a deliberative process in which citizens meet to discuss critical issues with each other and determine preferences, which then have a real impact on budget allocations. As a result, decisions have often been made to prioritise social justice over short-term economic gains, such as turning down a proposal for a five-star hotel in favour of a public park and convention hall.

3. Grassroots economic alternatives where people are not just waiting to be invited into processes led by others. Examples of this can be alternative forms of worker or consumer-owned enterprises, such as cooperatives, owned and managed by people for their own benefit. In addition, new models are emerging, often enabled by technology, in which people claim control over economic processes. These include local exchange networks and alternative currencies, for example.

Local Exchange Trading Scheme in Pumarejo

(Spain). The Local Exchange Trading Scheme (LETS) in the Pumarejo neighbourhood of Seville is one of many examples of solidarity economies rooted in alternative forms of exchange. Based on an alternative currency, the Puma, the scheme supports collective decision-making, localised consumption and the redeployment of under-utilised skills and competencies. Since no interest is paid on 'pumas', the system encourages exchange rather than accumulation and wealth maximisation.

We are calling on practitioners and other experts to contribute to the uncovering of examples and surfacing new learning. The overall aim is to shed light on these models and to learn from them, helping to frame future innovations.

HOW TO CONTRIBUTE:

IDS is inviting contributions of examples you know by filling in [this form](#).

Here's why you should participate in this process:

- It supports research, practice, grant-making and investment towards economies that promote social justice
- It's an opportunity to contribute to a shared understanding of what meaningful participation in the economic sphere looks like – with examples that will be publicised through IDS and linked to OSF, and to shape future thinking on this area.
- It is a chance to engage with others with shared interests and to keep in touch regarding the outcomes of the project.

Deadline for submissions: 31 May 2018

What happens with the information you submit:

All examples that meet our definition of participation in economic advancement (see below) will be included in an online collection of case studies and will be used to inform learning and practical guidance. This online collection will be updated periodically to share highlights of new examples received, and the final learning and guidance will be published at the end of the research. Highlights of the examples received may also be included in this published guidance. In addition, selected cases will be published through our partner Participedia (<https://participedia.net/>), a collaboratively produced and open-source catalogue of participatory processes around the world.

We will not necessarily contact you before your case is made public through our online collection, although we will let you know once the final research is published. In some instances, we may also contact you to seek clarifications or to explore further research regarding your example though you are under no obligation to provide any further information.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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The following pages provide more information on participation in economic advancement, as well as a few examples of the types of cases we are looking for.

CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS:

Participation in Economic Advancement: the involvement of people in economic policy formulation and economic decision-making in key arenas which affect their lives (Gaventa, 2006), such that economic activity better serves societal goals.

Spectrum of Participation: At a minimum participation means people are listened to and their concerns are acknowledged; although it may also take more substantive forms. Many have argued that there is a *ladder* or *spectrum* of participation, ranging from informing through to empowering. In order for participation to be meaningful and for people to be effective protagonists, one should strive for participation to collaborate or empower.



The spectrum of participation (adapted from the International Association for Public Participation)

Spaces for Participation: Participation can happen in many different spaces. These spaces fall into three categories:

Closed: Decisions are made by a set of actors behind closed doors. Economic authorities (bureaucrats, experts or elected representatives) make decisions and provide services to ‘the people’, without broader consultation or involvement. However, strategies to open these closed spaces may include:

- Transparency and accountability processes
- Citizen monitoring and ‘whistleblowing’
- Supporting the champions on the inside to support those on the outside
- Social movements and campaigns

Invited: Processes into which people are invited to participate by various kinds of authorities, be they government, private sector or NGOs. Examples include:

- Grant-making processes
- Policy making process (e.g. participatory budgeting)
- Investment decision making processes
- Alliances and partnerships

Claimed/created: Spaces that less powerful actors claim from or against authorities, or which are created more autonomously by them, and where they have power over the decisions that affect their lives. These spaces often emerge out of sets of common concerns or identifications. Examples include:

- Associations and organisations (e.g. cooperative leagues, organisations of rural workers)
- Alternative economic pathways (e.g. social and solidarity economy, LETS)
- Creative forms of expression

Whose participation? Due to practicalities, it is often the case that ‘representatives’ of certain groups or communities will be the ones to actually ‘participate’. However, it is important to define how those representatives have been selected/chosen and who they are claiming to represent. The idea of a ‘community’ or ‘civil society’ (or any large homogenous group) can be problematic, as within apparently cohesive communities/groups there will be differences in perspectives and experiences – between men and women, young and old, between ethnicities and religions, between classes.

Power: it is important to understand how power operates in these spaces and how it might affect who participates and who doesn’t. It is probably more common in economic decision making for spaces to be closed, as decisions get made through negotiations (e.g. investment decisions may be made during discussions between the government and private sector). This means that challenging the status quo can be a core element of economic advancement. In order to promote meaningful participation, or to support people to become effective protagonists in their own economic advancement, it is important to understand *how power works* – in particular economic power – and develop strategies to shift that power.

EXAMPLES:

See a [map of examples](#) collected so far.

FURTHER READING:

Gaventa, J. (2006) Perspectives on Participation and Citizenship. In R Mohanty & R Tandon (eds) *Participatory Citizenship: Identity, Exclusion and Inclusion*. New Delhi: Sage Press

Kabeer, N. (2016). ‘Leaving no one behind’: the challenge of intersecting inequalities’. In ISSC, IDS & UNESCO (Eds.), *World Social Science Report 2016, Challenging Inequalities: Pathways to a Just World*. Paris: UNESCO Publishing.

Pogge, T. & Rippin, N. (2013). ‘Universal Agenda on the Multiple Dimensions of Poverty’. *Background Research Paper Submitted to the High Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda*. Bonn: German Development Institute (DIE).

ONLINE RESOURCES:

- [Participatory Methods](#) website, maintained by the Institute of Development Studies.
- [Development Research Centre on Citizenship, Participation and Accountability](#)
- [PowerCube](#) website and resources
- Gaventa, J. and Barrett, G. (2010) [So what difference does it make? Mapping the Outcomes of Citizen Engagement](#) IDS Working Paper 347, Brighton: IDS