

OPEN CALL:

Participation of grassroots communities in their own economic advancement Can you share unusual and innovative examples?

IDS and the Open Society Foundations (OSF) are working to **identify exciting examples of grassroots participation in the economic arena** (economic policy-making, activism in this space, alternative business models). The key to the research is not only about understanding economic alternatives, but those that have a strong **participatory element**. In particular, we want to understand participation in three areas:

- What is meaningful participation of grassroots and marginalised groups in economic policy-making? What might it look like?
- How do marginalised people engage in investment processes that determine the allocation of resources, whether private or public, which affect their lives?
- What does it mean to support marginalised people to build their own economic alternatives?

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 marginalised communities participating in economic decision-making processes? Or would you recommend colleagues who might?**

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 interventions and to learn from them, helping to frame future interventions.

HOW TO CONTRIBUTE:

IDS would like to receive your cases/examples – please email us (below) or share an example at:
<https://goo.gl/forms/zgnWOT1hY7h22spJ3>

Here's why you should be participating 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 the linkages between participation and the economic arena – with examples that will be publicised through IDS and linked to OSF
- It is a chance to engage with colleagues with shared interests and to keep in touch regarding the outcomes of the project.

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.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS:

Participation in Economic Advancement: means engagement by currently marginalised people in economic policy formulation and economic decision-making in key arenas which affect their lives (Gaventa, 2006). Participation in economic decision-making may be hampered by the lack of adequate institutional structures to enable (meaningful) participation of economically marginalised groups, and a technocratic bias in economic policy discussions. It is also complicated in many cases by the lack of a central, formal decision-making authority, particularly in more liberal market economies, where decision-making may be diffuse across many actors, especially from the private sector.

Marginalised or economically disenfranchised: The World Bank calculates that there were 767 million people living below the international poverty line of US\$1.90 a day in 2013 (World Bank, 2016). At this level of income, people lack the minimum to meet their food and other basic needs, and have few assets and poor education. However, extreme marginalisation has multiple dimensions other than economic ones (Pogge & Rippin, 2013). Those who are very marginalised face *intersecting forms of exclusion* – vertical, horizontal and spatial. Vertical exclusion means that they have less wealth and income than others – and are located at the ‘base of the economic pyramid’. Horizontal exclusion arises because of the ‘group’ they belong to, which is identified – by others in society and possibly by the marginalised themselves – as being inferior to other groups. This discrimination may relate, for example, to gender, race, caste or disability status. Spatial exclusion arises due to remoteness and geographical isolation, particularly in rural areas or areas blighted by violence and lack of services, such as urban slums or areas of conflict. At the intersection of these different forms of exclusion, *those who are very marginalised are systematically left behind from the social and economic progress experienced by others in society* (Kabeer, 2016).

Spectrum of Participation: Participation can be interpreted in a number of ways, and many have argued that there is a *ladder* or *spectrum* of participation, from nominal through to transformative. In order for participation to be meaningful and for people to be effective protagonists, one should strive for participatory processes to be representative or transformative.

Form	What 'participation' means to the implementing agency	What 'participation' means for those on the receiving end	What 'participation' is for
Nominal	Legitimation - to show they are doing something	Inclusion - to retain some access to potential benefits	Display
Instrumental	Efficiency - to limit funders' input, draw on community contributions and make projects more cost-effective	Cost - of time spent on project-related labour and other activities	As a means to achieving cost-effectiveness and local facilities

Representative	Sustainability - to avoid creating dependency	Leverage - to influence the shape the project takes and its management	To give people a voice in determining their own development
Transformative	Empowerment - to strengthen people's capabilities to take decisions and act for themselves	Empowerment - to be able to decide and act for themselves	Both as a means and an end, a continuing dynamic

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. These spaces may be opened through greater public involvement, transparency or accountability. Examples include:

- Transparency and accountability processes
- Citizen monitoring and 'whistleblowing'
- Supporting the champions on the inside to support those on the outside

Invited: Those 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 we have created

Claimed/created: Supporting people in their own spaces for agency. Space claimed by less powerful actors from or against authorities, or created more autonomously by them. They emerge out of sets of common concerns or identifications.

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

Whose participation? Are they the marginalised themselves or their representatives? Due to practicalities, it is very likely that 'representatives' of certain groups or communities will participate. However, it is important to define how have those representatives been selected/chosen? Who are they 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. Are participants there to represent beneficiaries, stakeholders, intermediaries, investors, or specific marginalised groups?

Power: it is important to understand how power operates in these spaces and how it might affect who participates in that space 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 in order for more people to meaningfully participate in economic advancement, one needs to challenge the status quo and open up who participates in those closed spaces. Therefore, in order to promote meaningful participation in economic advancement, or 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 for to shift that power.

EXAMPLES:

Engagement of waste pickers organisations in policy making: the case of Belo Horizonte

An initially excluded and persecuted group, catadores (waste pickers) are now an organised sector, and their role within formal Solid Waste Management processes has been formally recognised. This process started in 1990 when the first **Association of Waste Pickers** was formed to promote their right to earn a living from recyclables, followed by signing of a formal agreement with the local government in 1993. In 2003 the **Waste and Citizen Forum** was created involving the local government, the representatives of catadores and local NGOs to discuss guidelines for the integration of catadores and to request financial resources and supporting activities.

Outcomes of participation strategies

- Catadores are formally recognised, with collective identity and greater self-esteem
- Participation in local economic decision-making relevant to sector
- New warehouses improve working and living conditions; safety and access to childcare support women's inclusion (up from 18 to 55%)

Lessons learned

- NGOs facilitated the organisation of catadores in a mobilised voice from which they voiced their own priorities and demands
- Sympathetic public officials were also key entry point
- Challenges: management capacity, low use of safety equipment



Context: Brazil, meso level

Whose voices?

Marginalised urban poor: waste pickers in Belo Horizonte. Most of them used to live on the street and were socially excluded – viewed as beggars or criminals

Who created the space for participation?

Initially the marginalised (facilitated by Pastoral da Rua) opened the space, then the local government created the forum as an invited space.

Local Exchange Trading Schemes (LETS): the case of Puma in Spain

In a Seville's working class neighbourhood of Pumarejo, an **alternative currency** called Puma was deployed in 2012. The movement started with a coalition of activists and local residents influenced by the economic situation of Spain and high unemployment rates. The movement aimed to build an alternative to the mainstream economy and change power relations, supporting sharing and solidarity rather than competition and individual accumulation. Starting with 20 participants who adopted the Puma (1Puma = 1Euro), it reached 800 people using the currency within 18 months.

Outcomes of participation strategies

- Collective autonomy over decision-making: Not tied to need of business and political elites to maximise wealth
- Economic solidarity: Promoting community development, mutual aid and strengthening social ties (cooperation)
- Redeploying skills and competencies; supporting micro-enterprises

Lessons learned

- Original members with high involvement in the steering committee were the ones who carried out organisational tasks, rather than those seeking income generation (exclusion within the movement).



Context: Spain (Sevilla), micro level

Whose voices?

Activists from Pumarejo's working class citizens, deeply affected by the economic crisis.

Who created the space for participation?

Local residents and activists, with influence from the social movement of De-Growth Seville.

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

Gaventa, J. and Barrett, G. (2010), *So What Difference Does it Make? Mapping the Outcomes of Citizen Engagement*. IDS Working Papers, 2010: <http://www.ids.ac.uk/files/dmfile/Wp347.pdf>

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).

KEY WEBSITES:

IDS project page: Linking Participation and Economic Advancement -
<https://www.ids.ac.uk/project/linking-participation-and-economic-advancement>

Participatory methods: <http://www.participatorymethods.org/>

Pathways of Women's Empowerment is an international research and communications programme:
<http://www.pathwaysofempowerment.org/>

Powercube.net resource for understanding power relations in efforts to bring about social change
<http://www.powercube.net/>

The Development Research Centre on Citizenship, Participation and Accountability (Citizenship DRC):
<http://www.drc-citizenship.org/>