

Towards Inclusion: Challenging Democracy, Challenging Governance.

Combat Poverty Agency Seminar,
December 12, 2008

Objective of the presentation

- To explore the role and relevance of looking at social exclusion / inclusion from a democracy and governance perspective

Poverty and politics

- Harriss (2007), suggests that there is a real danger that an exclusive, narrow focus on income factors which is not grounded in the realities of power will produce a depoliticised approach to social inclusion and will, in the process miss the systemic, structural and institutional factors that generate social exclusion in the first place.

A holistic starting point...

UNCDF offers an understanding of the causes of social exclusion that implies a more holistic approach.

Income poverty	Non-income / human poverty
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Unemployment / underemployment- Low productivity- Status of / access to welfare	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Poor access to basic services- Presence of conflict and insecurity- Disempowerment- Exclusion from decision-making

Implications

- Requires concepts of democracy to be explored
- Requires the notion (s) of governance to be challenged.
- In particular, it requires the role of the state and of those within it to be revisited.

Domain 1: About democracy

- It is a means of offering a protection against tyranny, either from autocratic leaders or indeed majorities
- It has the capacity to generate active citizenship and popular participation, offering all adults an equal opportunity to participate in political life
- It provides the basis for the redistribution of social and economic power and promote social justice
- It reinforces the view that all individuals are of equal worth and that this will be fully reflected in the institutions of democracy
- It Influences the generation of economic growth and wealth and the status of individual rights of private property and limits interference with the operation of the market (Przeworski & Limongi, 1993).

Democracy – insufficiently contested

- A brief perusal of democracy literature suggests that there are conceptual and ideological divisions, a spectrum of perspectives, that generate either more expansive or more restricted understandings of what democracy actually means.
- The dominant liberal democratic orthodoxy seeks to avoid “conceptual stretching” beyond existing patterns of elite control and protection of individual liberties (Collier & Levitsky, 1997:436).
- However, alternative visions emphasise the importance of conceptual differentiation in the direction of deeper participation and equality,

Formal and substantive democracy

- Broadly comparable distinctions have been drawn between notions of formal or procedural democracy and that of substantive democracy
- Formal democracy refers to the institutions, procedures or routines of democratic systems,
- Substantive democracy, on the other hand, refers to the redistribution of power and the degree to which an individual citizen is able to participate in the decisions which affect his or her life (Luckham *et al.*, 1999)

The reality of democratic participation

- There is however little doubt that not all participate or are facilitated to participate equally.
- Voter turnout is often seen as an indicator of democratic health and, accordingly, persistent decline in voter turnout in most established democracies is seen as just one symptom of liberal democracy’s fatigue in the face of growing societal complexity and challenge (Stoker, 2006)
- Moreover, representation and influence are not randomly distributed but systematically biased in favour of more privileged citizens – those with higher incomes, greater wealth and better education – and against less advantaged citizens” (Lijphart, 1997:1)

Crucially, even in pluralist outlooks

- It is acknowledged the better off participate more and “as a consequence, government decisions reflect and reinforce a structure of inequalities” (Dahl & Lindblom, 1976, as cited in Manley, 1983:378).
- Dahl (1985:162) actually reaches the point where he argues that capitalism generates “inequalities in social and economic resources so great as to bring about severe violations of political equality and hence of the democratic process”

- Already, we can begin to see how perspectives on democracy enable or restrict realisation of a holistic vision of social inclusion.
- However, in reality, our fundamental understandings of the meaning of democracy are rarely challenged.
- It can be argued that contemporary democratic practices are not particularly concerned to support transformation from limited, formalised processes towards more substantive experiences of participation and inclusion.

Domain 2: About governance...

- Surely, it might be argued, governance is about broadening democracy.
- Given that democratic practice as we know it is too unwieldy a tool to address participation deficits (??? Is it)
- Most especially, however the links between democracy and governance are rarely articulated.
- However, for a term as widely used as governance, there exists a surprising, though perhaps inevitable, uncertainty and ambiguity as to what exactly the term means.

For example...

- The World Bank sees it as
- “The traditions and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised for the common good. This includes (i) the **process by which those in authority are selected, monitored and replaced**, (ii) the **capacity of the government to effectively manage its resources** and implement sound policies, and (iii) the **respect of citizens and the state for the institutions** that govern economic and social interaction among them” (Nahem, 2004:2)
- This is very much a formal, procedural approach

By contrast, for UNDP, governance is...

- “The system of **values, policies and institutions** by which as society manages its **economic and social affairs** through **interactions** within and among the **state, civil society and the private sector**. It is the way a society organises itself to make and implement decisions – achieving **mutual understanding, agreement and action**. It comprises the mechanisms and processes for citizens and groups to articulate their interests, **mediate their differences** and exercise their **legal rights and obligations**”. (Nahem, 2004:2)
- This would appear to be a more substantive approach.

- So, it becomes clear that governance too can be seen as a more formal, procedural process or it can be envisaged as a more substantive articulation of democratic ambitions.
- Towards the substantive end of the governance spectrum, the notion of “humane governance” offers a particular perspective that most closely relates to a progressive social inclusion agenda.
- This locates concerns about poverty, exclusion and inclusion at the core of governance, rejecting in the process: “governance that is handed down from above by the elite” (The Mahbub ul Haq Human Development Centre, 1999:28).

- As such, it requires “decentralisation and deconcentration of power to afford people ample opportunities to participate in making decisions that affect their lives” and “accountability and transparency of elected representatives and public officials” (1999:32)
- Hence, governance processes cannot be seen only as the means to achieve certain ends, even if those ends have a social inclusion dimension, their very operation must be part of the social inclusion process itself.

Assessing governance...

- Thus, while governance may reflect some tempering of elitist tendencies in liberal democracies, most governance literature has not shown itself to be excessively concerned with issues of equality of access to participation or decision-making
- Moreover, like the concept of democracy, governance too needs to be seen not as a value neutral, but as ideologically driven and shaped.
- Understanding the values of different governance processes and the ideology behind them is crucial to appraising their capacity to promote social inclusion.

Domain 3: What about social exclusion / inclusion

- Many of the dominant approaches to social inclusion / exclusion ignore democracy and governance dimensions
- A variety of different ways have been presented to explain or theorise social exclusion.

- A discourse on redistribution dominated the 1980s and 1990s
- This was joined in the 1990s by two further discourses, one emphasising social integration, principally via paid work and the second
- Described as the moral underclass discourse or MUD, where the “socially excluded are presented as distinct from the rest of society” and where the main concern is with the behaviour of the poor rather than with processes within wider society (Levitas, 2004:44)

Other perspectives suggest...

- That social exclusion results from the “formation of group monopoly” and is maintained by institutional configurations and cultural distinctions, leading to situations where “those within delimited social entities enjoy a monopoly over scarce resources. The monopoly creates a bond of common interest between otherwise unequal insiders. The excluded are therefore simultaneously outsiders and dominated” (Silver, 1994:543)
- This resembles some of the more critical approaches to the highly popularised social capital concept.
- Or

- That social exclusion results from breakdowns in one or more systems of society: **the democratic and legal system to promote civic integration**; the labour market to promote economic integration; the welfare system to promote social integration and the family and community system to promote interpersonal integration (Berghman, 1995:19).

- As such, it presents the challenge to articulate a missing discourse on social exclusion, a democracy and governance discourse, that would enable Sullivan's concerns to be addressed:
- *[...]tackling social exclusion requires action on many fronts simultaneously. However to achieve social inclusion as a result necessitates a programme of reform that tackles the institutions of the powerful and the powerless. Unless changes are sought in the behaviours, structures and processes of those whose actions exclude, there is a danger that all that will result from policies to tackle social exclusion is a pathologising of the excluded. (Sullivan, 2002:507-508)*

- The emerging conclusion therefore, is that between democracy, governance and social exclusion domains, a space exists within which important theoretical and practical signposts for social inclusion can be located.

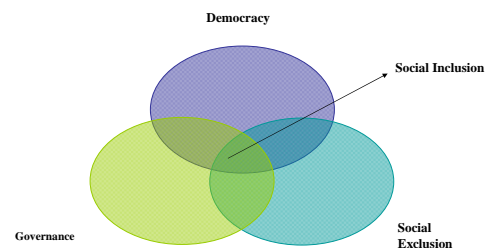


Figure : The space for social inclusion

The state as a key actor....

- Within the three domains of democracy, governance and social inclusion, the state is clearly a key actor.
- In looking at the democratic system the state is sometimes presented as a neutral referee between factions, a role that is often ascribed to them within governance models
- If this is not the case it has particular implications for the development of and operation of social inclusion strategies.
- it may also require the state to acknowledge pre existing biases and, in some cases, may require it to act in favour of those who are disadvantaged in society, potentially bringing the state into conflict with more powerful factions

The state's relationship with capital

- Miliband's analysis offers three important perspectives on how the state functions. He suggests the presence of a **"dominant or ruling class"** that owns the means of production, **has a close relationship with key institutions such as political parties and the media** and **"has disproportionate representation at all levels of the state apparatus"** (Held, 1987:207)
- The relationship can be best described as **"a partnership between two different separate forces, linked to each other by many threads"** (Miliband R., 1983:65).
- This emphasises the particular role of political parties and their relationship with business.

Because of these threads...

- It is necessary that government does not act in such a way as to pose a fundamental threat to the interests of capital, for if it did, undermining government might then become an objective of capitalist interests.
- This, according to Miliband, explains why, even when governments of a more left wing ideology come to power, they are unlikely to make dramatic changes to the economic system.

- Similarly, Offe & Roge, (1997:60) suggest that the relationship between the state and capitalist interests is informed by some fundamental tenets notably,
 - private capital as the basis for the economy;
 - dependence by the state on capital accumulation, which it does not control, as the means to generate taxation to enable it to function;
 - a resultant and inherent "self interest" in safeguarding accumulation processes as a means of protecting state revenues,
 - and the potential for contradiction between a reliance on elections for legitimacy and power while at the same time relying on private capital to generate resources (Offe & Roge, 1997:60-61).

- Consequently, it has been suggested that the state will **"tend to favour a compromise among powerful economic interests, a compromise that is all too often at the political and economic expense of vulnerable groups"** (Held, 1987:212).

- Contemporary democracy's seeming inability to address itself sufficiently to these broader questions of equality emerges therefore, as one of its principal weaknesses.
- In particular, it separates political equality from economic equality and appears unwilling to take the bold step of linking political equality with the redistribution of resources (Manley, 1983:377).

The role of public administration

In understanding the role of the state in locating and liberating the space between the three domains space, it is important to understand the role of :

- the nature of bureaucratic rationality,
- the ethical perspective of public officials
- and issues of state capacity

Competing rationalities

- State bureaucracy is often, though not always, associated with instrumental, functional rationality
- Civil Society (or part of it) leans towards communicative rationality (Kelly 2004).
- For less powerful civil society actors, resisting the controlling, instrumental impulses of the state has proven and proves difficult and challenging.

The influence of ethics

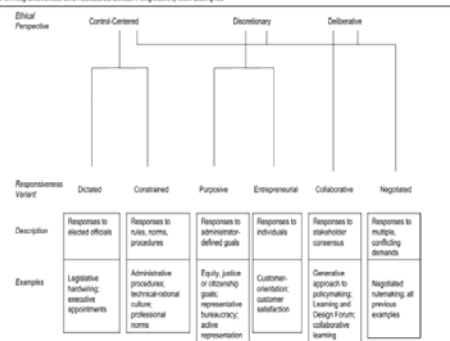
■ Along with this, the existence of different forms of ethical perspectives in public administration inevitably influences the experience of engagement (Bryer, 2007)

■ Ethical perspectives include:

- Control centred, based on rules and regulations, thereby dictating and constraining the responsiveness of public administration.
- Discretionary, indicating a greater freedom to act
- Deliberative, indicating a commitment to more collective approaches.

Confronting and adjusting ethics within public administration emerges as another key challenge of social inclusion ambitions.

Figure 1
Variants of Responsiveness and Associated Ethical Perspectives, with Examples



State capacity

■ Generally four types identified

- Transformative
- Relational
- Infrastructural
- Distributive

□ These are often seen as being strong in the sphere of economic development.

□ However, in Ireland at any rate, they are not particularly strong in the social sphere.

The Challenge of Inclusion

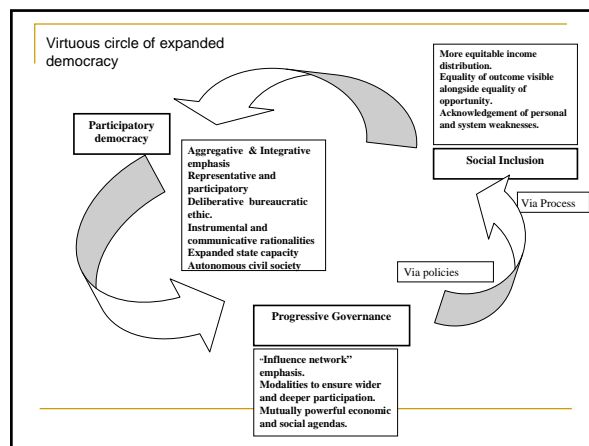
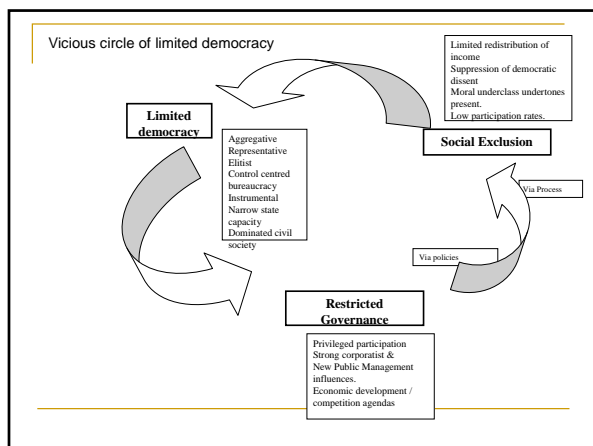
■ **Instrumental rationalities and control centred ethics**

Engaging with / Confronting

■ **Communicative rationalities and deliberative or discretionary ethics**

In the context of

Underdeveloped and economically oriented state capacity



Policy and Practice Implications - Bridging the gap

- Initiating a project of democratic renewal
- Governance arrangements located in a democratic environment dominated by elitist concepts of democracy are always likely to struggle to achieve parity of esteem, respect and inclusion, particularly for those from lower socio-economic groups.
- A popular initiative to reflect more deeply on the nature of democracy and to establish the role and validity of multiple democratic forms is more than overdue

Building from the local

- The appropriateness of local level action is justified by a number of factors:
 - consistently declining participation rates in local government elections;
 - the existence of at least some prior participatory successes at local level in Ireland and internationally; and,
 - on the basis of risk, given that the local level has limited power to act and thus, there are limited consequence of failures at the local level
 - addresses many of the impracticality charges levelled at participatory, deliberative approaches

Building capacities

- Progress towards the virtuous cycle is unlikely to be made unless significant attention is devoted towards issues of capacity, both state and civil society, as evidenced in the local case studies
- Moving towards the virtuous cycle requires that the state develop transformative capacity in the social as well as the economic field and that it is willing to devote equal effort to both – there are important examples of this happening, especially at local level.
- An additional element of relational capacity building is the need to resource processes of cultural change to enhance disposition

Recognising and Reinforcing Institutional innovation

- Narrowing the space between the vicious and the virtuous clearly requires a commitment to understanding processes of institutional change and innovation.
- This may be a particular challenge for bodies such as the NESF tasked with a specific social inclusion remit.

Conclusion

- It can be concluded that mapping a path towards genuine inclusion cannot be achieved without a more substantive and challenging focus on the nature of democracy and of governance.
- Within this, the nature of the state, politically and administratively needs to be challenged.
- In light of recent developments, it would appear that this is needed more urgently than we might have thought.