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Logics of Action

How state institutions may undergird or
undermine participatory development

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Box 711, SE 405 30 GÖTEBORG

March 2023

ISSN 1653-8919

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ISSN 1653-8919

Abstract

Participatory development has strong normative appeal. In areas with entrenched poverty and poor public service provision, participatory initiatives are predicted to empower otherwise silent members of a demos, improve public services, and engage community members as both stakeholders and customers in a way that ensures the sustainability of policy work. These expectations, widely held in the development community, rest on a number of assumptions regarding citizens behavior: that they will engage in such initiatives, that they will work to further the long-term interests of the community as a whole, and that they are willing to play the role of principals in accountability relations. Recent meta-analyses of participatory initiatives point to state institutions as a key determinant of their success or failure, though knowledge on which attributes of state institutions matter, and why, remains underdeveloped. Drawing on extensive interview and field-work data on a small-scale rural electrification project in sub-Saharan Africa, this paper seeks to identify more specifically how weak, or absent, state institutions shape the priors that citizens bring into development projects. We identify three specific logics – collective action logic, taxpayer logic and customer logic – integral to project success but which were not firmly entrenched in the community. The paper aims to lay the groundwork for both more theoretically founded research on participatory governance as well as more realistic efforts to involve poor citizens in community development.

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Introduction

Participatory development and related policy approaches such as co-governance (Ackerman 2004), or empowered participatory governance (Fung and Wright 2003), have strong normative appeal. Involving local communities in programs aimed at ameliorating poverty and expanding access to goods and services is argued to make them more likely to succeed both in terms of the suitability of the services provided and the sustainability of initiatives. Community involvement is presumed to strengthen local ownership of a project, which in turn fosters a commitment among community members to invest their own time and effort to ensure project success in both the short and long term. Moreover, involvement in and of itself is expected to enhance participants' capacities, self-confidence, and appreciation of potential of collaborative efforts (for an overview, see Boräng and Grimes 2021).

Ideational streams converge in their endorsement of participatory models of governance from quite different points of departure. From intellectual traditions that house a belief in individual choice and the power of market mechanisms, community involvement provides an arena to strengthen "client power," enabling citizens to behave as customers and either vote with their feet or express their dissatisfaction (Grandvoinnet et al. 2015; World Bank 2003). For those who seek redistribution and efforts to help marginalized populations, community participation instead offers a means to strengthen the voices of those often at the margins of the political process (Baiocchi and Ganuza 2017; Goetz and Jenkins 2005; Joshi 2013).

The currency of these ideas has led many policy actors to incorporate participatory elements into development projects, and empirical assessments of these initiatives has followed on cue. From an initial point of optimism and high hopes starting in the 1990s, empirical assessments of these initiatives have produced a more sobering picture. Unqualified success stories are few and far between, and participatory initiatives have proven susceptible to elite capture, lack of interest, and even serve to demobilize communities from seeking more meaningful social transformation (Alvarez et al. 2016). Most striking perhaps, an overview of 500 local participatory initiatives concludes that most efforts to involve citizens in community-driven development fail and that "...civic groups are often (erroneously) assumed to always work toward a common interest" (Mansuri & Rao 2013, 285).

Efforts to understand the factors that undermine the success of such initiatives have often offered the observation that certain contextual factors seem to either support or undermine participatory governance initiative (Fox 2015; Mansuri & Rao 2013). Factors such as a high prevalence of corruption and low degree of rule of law may obstruct efforts to empower citizens and enhance the quality of public goods and services.

While these observations are a useful starting point, references to the institutional setting, we argue, remain undertheorized. How, more specifically, might features of the institutional setting affect such participatory projects? This paper seeks to address this issue by theorizing how the institutional setting might affect what prospective participants bring to the participatory initiative in the form of expectations, beliefs and understandings of their own role in relation to other members in the community, to authorities, and to the development project. We propose that many participatory development efforts presuppose that prospective participants will bring with them certain priors which, in some settings, may be lacking. In doing so, the paper hopes to contribute to developing our understanding of the political economy of participatory development, and in particular how state institutions that are poorly functioning or in some cases barely present, may

contribute to making the grounds for building participatory development projects less solid than is sometimes presumed.

The paper offers an exploration of three key mechanisms through which government institutions may affect the priors of prospective participants. Participatory development projects often presume that participants can and will engage according to logics that, while quite straight forward in some settings, may be underdeveloped in other settings: the collective action logic, the taxpayer logic and the customer logic.

The empirical analysis then illustrates how one project succeeded due to the fact that members of the project leadership understood that these logics were underdeveloped in the setting, and deployed mechanisms to ensure that each was nurtured and, when needed, enforced. The paper investigates a small-scale electrification project in a rural area in sub-Saharan Africa. The various stages of the project offer cases within the case.

Common pitfalls in participatory projects

One of the more frequently noted challenges with development efforts backed by domestic governments or international development cooperation actors is that of elite capture (Mansuri and Rau 2013). Baird et al. (2013) examine a pro-poor community driven development program in Tanzania, in which communities applied to be included. Evidence revealed that it was communities with relatively higher levels of education and incomes that submitted applications, which the authors see as evidence of elite capture. Veronica Herrera (2017) documents how a highly successful non-partisan water board in Mexico was subsumed into municipal government solely for partisan gain. Additional evidence has emerged from, for example, rural Kenya (Rigon 2014; Sheely 2015), India (Bardhan and Mookherjee 2012), and Indonesia (Alatas et al. 2013; Warren and Visser 2016).

Two additional challenges often observed in development projects relate to the difficulty of fostering community ownership, and at times an underwhelming interest among members of the community to engage in participatory efforts (Mansuri and Rao 2013). Olken (2007) notes for example that while local communities in Indonesia were keen to monitor corruption with respect to payment of their own wages, mechanisms set up to detect corruption in building materials in road projects were less interesting for participants.

While previous research convincingly documents these challenges, we seek to understand *why* these occur. People everywhere may have the same proclivities to be contingent collaborators, but, we argue, many development projects expect much more of participants. In unpacking these dynamics, we hope to contribute to a better understanding of how state structures influence citizens' inclinations to participate and collaborate, toward what ends, and what might be needed develop needed logics of action to redress these challenges.

The institution-participant link: an error of omission in the literature

To the extent that others have acknowledged the importance of government institutions in the success of local participatory development initiatives, they often do so as an exogenous force that either supports or

does not support the effort. Fox (2015) reviews cases of social accountability, i.e. participatory initiatives intended to allow citizens to monitor government operations and to detect and bring to light any suspicious activity. Citizens face appreciable challenges in such initiatives due to the fact that they seek to hold authorities accountable for misdeeds. Corruption is after all perpetrated by those in power for their own benefit. If no external authority (e.g. national government offices) supports these efforts, citizens are in some sense appealing to the fox to sanction itself for misdeeds in the hen house. Fox advances the “sandwich model” as a necessary component for redressing corruption, by which local authorities are monitored and pressured both from below (citizen involvement) and from above (higher order authorities). Fox points specifically to a need for a free press and rule of law in order to better enable social accountability to work.

Others have made similar observations instead pointing to the importance of free access to information about government operations and legal protections of observers and whistleblowers (Goetz and Jenkins 2001; Verdenicci and Hough 2015). While these scholars acknowledge how the institutional context may shape the likelihood of success of local participatory processes, they tend to focus only on its direct effect. In other words, while they recognize that certain features of the institutional environment may affect the potential for a group of engaged citizens to succeed in holding politicians or service providers accountable, they do not systematically recognize the myriad ways in which institutions may affect the participants themselves, thus *indirectly* affecting the success of participatory development.

We argue that government institutions may affect the success of such initiatives precisely because they condition prospective participants, and that they do so in ways that participatory development projects may have to address in order to succeed. In the following section we develop this argument in more detail.

The political economy of bad institutions

Two, by now, landmark studies in the field of participatory development both strongly suggest that certain features of the institutional environment matter for the success of participatory initiatives (Fox 2015; Mansuri and Rao 2013). They do not, however, provide specific or convincing arguments for *why* institutions matter, leaving the field with the somewhat unhelpful conclusion that development efforts are least likely to succeed where they are needed the most, which is where government institutions are the most dysfunctional. They also do not provide concrete suggestions for how to move past this empirical and conceptual catch-22.

Since there can be no participation without participants, the approach we take in this paper is to view participatory projects from the perspective of citizens: What are the potential costs and benefits for the participants involved in various initiatives? According to which “logics” are participants expected to behave in the participatory project? And, fundamentally: how can the institutional environment be expected to influence which logics of action will exist, or alternatively be underdeveloped, in a specific context?

We argue that the meta-institutional environment, consisting of the institutions of the state, district and local governments, have a constitutive effect on what participants bring into a participatory project in terms of their expectations on others’ willingness to contribute, their expectations on what the state (or by extension development actors) might deliver, and their conceptualization of their own ability to voice complaints

and demands to authorities as well as the state's ability to act as an effective third party enforcer. The pre-conditions for successful collaboration may, in other words, be less than optimal. As we argue below, projects such as the small-scale electrification project studied here at times presuppose a number of priors in local residents. Failure to recognize the potential gap between the importance of these priors for the success of certain development projects on the one hand, and their actual existence in various empirical settings on the other, is an error of omission in research on participatory governance and local development efforts.

We present these priors in terms of “logics”, and focus in particular on three key logics: collective action logic, taxpayer logic, and customer logic. Below, we describe each of these logics and why we believe that they are presumed in many development projects to a greater extent than they may exist in many empirical settings targeted by such projects.

To understand why we can expect different logics to exist to various degrees in different contexts – which is key to understanding how the context may shape how participatory processes unfold – we first discuss how government institutions can shape norms, expectations and behavior of citizens.

How institutions undermine or build social trust

In many low-income countries, not least in sub-Saharan Africa, the state has a fairly low presence in rural areas. It is, however, not absent entirely. Both its absence and, where present, the characteristics and practices that permeate its organizations and operations, are likely to affect citizens in multiple ways. First and foremost, the prevalence of favoritism and corruption in government can affect citizens' trust for one another, and specifically generalized trust defined as trust for people outside the sphere of strong social bonds. Generalized trust, or alternatively social capital, has been pointed to as one of the most important determinants in a groups' ability to overcome collective action dilemmas and to undertake and succeed in collaborative efforts (Ostrom 1990; 1998). Social trust is a notoriously stable set of norms with a self-reinforcing dynamic. Where individuals trust one another, they dare to engage in collaborative endeavors, and the success of those endeavors further reinforces trust among individuals. By one well known account, trust therefore can be described as culturally formed and maintained, giving rise to – and continuously recreated through – associational life (Putnam 2000).

An alternative view instead points to the importance of government institutions in fostering, or alternatively undermining, social trust. In this view, the main institutional characteristic theorized to shape or undermine social trust is the extent to which institutions embody the principle of impartiality. Institutions characterized by a high degree of impartiality treat citizens in a way that is in accordance with the law, and thus in a way that is *not* informed by any other considerations, such as kinship, gender, ethnicity or willingness to provide side payments (Rothstein and Teorell 2008).

Government institutions act as one of the most important, though certainly not the only, sanctioning systems in society, and a well-functioning sanctioning system reduces transaction costs as well as risk in collaborative efforts. The effectiveness of any contractual arrangements, for example lending and borrowing money or starting a joint business venture, entail some element of risk, and a reliable, trustworthy and impartial third-party sanctioning system provides assurances, greatly mitigating this risk, much as good fences make good neighbors (Yamagishi 1986). Impartial institutions thus foster trust simply by virtue of absorbing some of the risk and sanctioning responsibility if one party breaches a contract.

In addition, government officials and functionaries serve as sources of information on how citizens can expect others to behave – a crucial element of social trust and willingness to collaborate. As government officials are more visible and by definition bestowed with some degree of authority, their actions carry more information about behavioral norms than that of ordinary citizens. Where officials are corrupt, people in general are likely to make inferences about what is common and, on some level, acceptable in terms of complying with rules and laws. Moreover, where corruption is prevalent, many citizens will themselves have paid a bribe or known someone has done so, which further informs perceptions of others' trustworthiness, likelihood of pro-social behavior and propensity to comply with rules (Rothstein 2011).

At the country level, levels of corruption and social trust correlate strongly and evidence exists to substantiate claims that the quality of government institutions has a causal effect on social trust (Dinesen and Sønderskov 2018; Rothstein and Stolle 2008). Evidence from experimental vignette studies indicates that a person's social trust drops when presented with a hypothetical scenario of bribe-soliciting behavior among doctors or police (Rothstein and Eek 2009).

Moreover, corruption affects citizens' willingness to engage politically. Exposing corruption, counter to theoretical expectations of principal-agent theory, which undergird electoral and societal accountability models, appears to depress rather than intensify citizens' willingness to become politically engaged. Chong et al. (2015) detect a drop in voter turnout of no less than 7 percentage points in districts where they distributed information, extracted from federal audit reports, revealing egregious corruption in the voter's own municipal government in Mexico. Similarly, Bauhr and Grimes (2014) find evidence that exposure of government corruption in a country is associated with lower levels of political interest and engagement among citizens. Rather than prompting indignation and greater involvement, as models of accountability might expect, the exposure of corruption may signal to citizens that they have few recourses to bring about change, and that attempts to hold officials to account would only incur costs on themselves without leading to change. Observing government corruption thus not only undermines trust for one's fellow citizens, but for the second-order institutions that should provide the means to sanction malfeasance.

Finally, corruption – and more specifically patronage and clientelism – also to some extent rest on norms of reciprocity and therefore further undermine people's willingness to take action against incumbents (Lawson and Green 2014). Recipients of rewards in conjunction with elections, however small, may invoke a sense of loyalty, obligation, or even complicity, weakening any sense of a social contract that is often assumed in democracy and even in local participatory development projects.

In summary, poorly functioning and particularistic institutions has consequences for trust in fellow citizens as well as in government institutions – and not least those institutions that, when well-functioning, can undergird collective enterprises by sanctioning breaches of trust. What, then, are the implications of institutional characteristics for the development of various logics of action?

Collective action logic

More often than not, participatory development projects depend heavily on collaborative efforts to succeed. Social trust is, as mentioned above, both the glue and lubricant of collaborative efforts. It enhances participants' willingness to contribute as they will trust that others will also contribute, and it also enhances their willingness to accept lapses in others' contributory levels as they trust that over time, most will do their part.

Widespread perceptions that others will not contribute quickly undermines most individuals' willingness to contribute (Sally 1995).

Collective action also presumes a number of other beliefs on the part of the prospective participants, however, which together constitute the collective action logic. First, prospective collaborators must see the value of the purported return on their efforts. Some goods will have immediate and obvious value to any human being anywhere, as for example access to fresh water for consumption or irrigation. Many other goods pointed to as conducive to well-being may, in contrast, not have obvious value, and this may include such things as electricity, vaccination or pre-natal care clinics, strict restrictions on fishing or wildlife habitat destruction, or agricultural market exchanges, to name a few. A collective action logic thus presumes that participants are buying what collaboration might be selling.

Many development projects thus rely on a collective action logic that implies that participants a) trust that the project will, in the end, bring valuable benefits to them, and b) trust that other participants will do their part in the collaborative effort to make the project succeed. If such a logic is not present, mobilizing for collective efforts will be cumbersome and the risk of free-riding will loom large.

Tax-payer logic

Often, local development projects – and in particular those with high ambitions in terms of democratic organization and accountability – presume that there exists what could be called a tax-payer logic, which is based on a sense of ownership of the project and stakes in its continued survival.

Such a logic should support at least two actions of key importance to project survival in the long run: First, a tax-payer logic entails a continued engagement with the project in order to demand accountability from the leadership when problems arise. Participatory efforts are a potential collective action dilemma, and for individuals to choose to engage requires that they put a value on accountability as a good in and of itself, an integral component of the tax-payer logic.

Second, in order to uphold an effective sanctioning system – to avoid system failure due to free-riding or other breaches of rules – it is important that collaborators are willing to monitor and sanction other participants, what is often called the second order collective action dilemma. When the resource generated through collaboration is difficult to monitor (e.g. fishing, cattle grazing), collaboration in efforts to monitor others greatly enhances the likelihood of success (Ostrom 1990). Yet observing and drawing attention to others' infractions also entails costs for the individual. Social relations may suffer, and sanctioning may result in retaliatory behavior.

How, more precisely, would a tax-payer logic help uphold engagement and sanctioning, and why would we expect that such a logic often will fail to emerge? Fiscal sociology suggests that taxation constitutes a key part of the social contract between a state and its citizens, and that historically, taxation has been perhaps the principal driver of citizens' desire and willingness to make demands on the state (Campbell 1993). A growing literature studies how well these theoretical arguments, which developed through the study of experiences of first-wave democracies in the West, travel to today's younger democracies and lower income countries. This research shows that even in these contexts, the state's ability to levy and collect taxes has important implications for citizens' expectations on and willingness to make demands on the state. Where state institutions cannot or choose not to collect taxes, such a logic is unlikely to emerge. Baskaran and

Bigsten (2013) show, for example, that increased taxation increases democratic accountability, decreases corruption, and, at the individual level, has a positive effect on attitudes to democracy. Broms (2015) examines the individual level further, comparing political interest among individuals in sub-Saharan Africa who do and do not pay taxes, and finds that taxpayers have significantly higher levels of political interest than non-taxpayers.

Interviews with residents in Uganda, an institutional setting not unlike the one in which our case is situated, further substantiate and illustrate the taxpayer logic (or lack thereof). Interview data reveals that more visible forms of taxation (such as income tax) in particular foster a sense of ownership of the state, and where such forms are absent, citizens are less motivated to scrutinize how government revenues are allocated and subsequently put to use (Persson and Rothstein 2015). One respondent succinctly captured the essence of the fiscal contract with the following statement:

[In the end, there] must be a form of responsibility that is created between what you pay with your taxes and what you demand from government. If more people were paying taxes here and it was biting on them they would demand something in return (Persson & Rothstein 2015, 237)

The general sentiment conveyed by Ugandan respondents was that money from donors was “not their money” and they therefore had no basis to demand how it be used. Taxation thus acts as the “sinews” of the state, by which citizens develop expectations on and reciprocal relations with the state. To assume that these bonds exist merely by merit of a person’s formal citizenship is a strong assumption indeed. They emerge when the state place demands on citizens, triggering demands for representation, accountability or services in return. In many contexts where development projects are implemented, such a relationship between the state and the citizens is absent. When citizens lack this relationship with the state, we find it reasonable to expect that they will be slower to develop such a relationship with development actors and effort as well.

In summary, a sense of ownership of the project is key for participants to a) continuously engage with, and pose demands on, the project and its leadership (the demand side of accountability efforts), and b) value and contribute to the project’s sanctioning systems.

Customer logic

Local development projects often contain an element of market mechanisms intended to increase the sustainability of the project, which in the longer term may aid in transferring ownership of the project to the local community once donors withdraw. Where transfers from higher levels of government cannot be counted on to sustain public goods and services, community contributions may be essential to continued operations, and the market provides an efficient solution. The customer logic is obvious to most readers and simply implies the exchange of money for some good, at a price that is the same for all and known to both supplier and all potential and actual customers.

While clear enough to most, this logic may not be well established in regions of the world that survive on subsistence farming, or among individuals whose livelihoods depend on activities largely outside the formal

economy. Prices may be highly elastic and subject to change based on social relations or social status. Payment may be deferred or waived depending on the circumstances. The strict quid pro quo of market transactions may not permeate life in such settings. This may be even more the case in projects with inherently mixed logics, such as development projects initially funded by an international NGO, developed and governed with quasi-voluntary contributions from the community, and maintained as a market operation funded by paying customers.

Compliance logic

It is important to note that another logic exists and while complex in its own right, will be presented here as straightforward. The villages examined all have traditional authority structures in which village leaders possess coercive power over other members of the village. The intricacies of this coercive power (regarding what areas in which it can be wielded, what attendant responsibilities or obligations this authority implies, all of which may vary from village to village) are outside the scope of this study. That power structures exist in the local setting is evident, however, and local leaders' power to induce or coerce local residents to engage in certain ways emerges in the data. We call this the logic of compliance, as local authorities have the capacity to induce or coerce members of the community to take certain actions and abstain from others, and members of the community comply.

In the following, we explain how we go about to study these logics in the context of a participatory development project.

Data and design

The setting for the participatory development project examined in this paper is a rural area, located in a sub-Saharan country, that can be characterized as one of weak or absent state institutions. The country is one in which corruption is quite prevalent, but in rural areas the state has quite a weak presence. Levels of tax-paying are low. There is a school and a simple, government run health clinic in the area, with the nearest hospital two hours' travel away. The state is far from the sole provider of services in the country and even locally. Religious organizations, and in particular the Catholic Church, as well as donors and international NGOs have been active in service provision. Most residents survive on subsistence farming and their livelihoods are thus outside the formal economy. For all intents and purposes, none pay income tax with the exception of those employed in the development project.

The electrification project examined in this paper was initiated two decades ago and has for the most part been a successful instance of sustained electricity provision and participatory governance. The electrification project can be said to contain a number of nested cases:

- 1) The first subcase encompasses the development phase, which began several years before electricity services started, and consisted of a series of community meetings to explain the potential value of electricity and the scope of the project, and to coordinate efforts to develop the physical infrastructure. This phase also includes the construction of the physical infrastructure, including the small-scale dams and construction of the grid (poles and power lines).

2) The second subcase encompasses the participatory forum at which users, through a system with representatives for each small local area, are invited to voice concerns, partake of information, and to deliberate issues related to the maintenance and expansion of the grid. The participatory forum meetings and sub-level meetings are supposed to take place several times a year. This subcase also includes maintenance work to ensure the continued functioning of the physical infrastructure, such as de-silting the dammed portion of the river, creating dirt mounds and clearing trees to protect poles and lines.

3) The third subcase refers to the distribution of electricity, the metering, modes of payment and collection of fees.

As the analyses below show, success in each case relied on the development of specific logics. The development phase required that residents followed the logic of collective action, the second subcase rested both on the collective action and tax-payer logics, and the third subcase required that residents understood and followed the customer logic.

These cases are nested and thus not independent of one another; the same individuals are involved. Thus, while one set of challenges that the project met and resolved related to developing these individual logics, another set arose from the fact that the logics can undermine one another. While the collective action logic expects individuals to contribute for a future good that benefits all, the customer logic instead implies quid pro quo, one-shot exchanges. As the analyses show, local residents sometimes assumed that the logic in one subcase applied in another. For instance, once the collective action logic had become a behavioral norm, some residents expected that they would then be entitled to free electricity. That said, we will present the subcases as somewhat discrete here in order to illustrate first that logics were not present at the outset and second, how they came to be induced. Examination of this case as a successful instance of public service provision illustrates the challenges that many such projects are likely to encounter, and the findings are thus instructive both for policy practitioners but also for our understanding of how state institutions of varying strength and presence, can have implications for what citizens bring to the public sphere.

The analysis is based on empirical work conducted by the authors for several months during 2013, with shorter follow-up visits the following years. The analysis is based on over one hundred qualitative semi-structured interviews, for the most part undertaken with the help of an interpreter, with people involved in the project (project staff, residents in the area, as well as local and district government officials). The analysis also relies on project documentation.

Empirical analysis

Case 1: The development phase: developing and juggling competing logics of action

In the initial phase of the project, people in the community were invited and expected to participate in numerous preparatory activities. As discussed above, however, it cannot be expected that a collective action logic of behavior is present from the outset in contexts characterized by high levels of government corruption and, relatedly, low levels of generalized trust. If such a logic is not present, voluntary mobilization for

collective efforts will be difficult to achieve and the risk of free-riding will always loom large. Apart from a lack of trust that other participants will do their part – which consistently reduces one’s own willingness to contribute – a lack of trust in the project itself, as a suspicion that the promised benefits will fail to materialize, would reduce the incentives to invest in the project.

Several interviews point to how people found it very difficult to believe in the project from the outset, and that a sufficient level of trust in the project took a long time to emerge:

It was really difficult to get people to collaborate on something that would take 3 years to get the benefit of electricity. People did not believe in it. When people started to see it, then they would participate. So it takes a long time.

Also, it is very difficult to get participation in electricity projects because it is so different from for example water projects, it is something so technical and difficult to explain how it works to people. For water it is much easier because people understand the idea of getting a water scheme in the village. But electricity is less tangible.

Due to this lack of trust in the project, it was not possible to rely on a collective action logic, spurring voluntary participation for a future common good. Instead, the project relied on a logic of action that was present from the outset: a logic of compliance.

Like doing development activities; you needed to have village leaders in every meeting you were holding because if they were not mobilizing people to go to do the development work it then wouldn’t be done.

This reliance on a logic of compliance is not something that comes easily to many development actors, for which the ideal is instead a bottom-up process. Rather it is seen as a necessary evil, based on the awareness that trust in the project, at this stage, is simply too low to form a basis for voluntary collective action. As a member of the development NGO expressed it:

[In the initial phase] I would say it was top-down, and I am not so fond of that. It was hard to have it otherwise because people in the villages didn’t know what electricity is, so then it is difficult to get a bottom-up process.

In the initial phase of the project it is also clear that what we term a tax-payer logic is absent – there is no expectation that citizens can successfully engage in demanding accountability from political leaders regarding promises they have made. In fact, when something is described as “politics”, that signifies an expectation that exactly nothing will materialize. Thus, people might find it difficult to believe in the project – thinking it is just “politics” – promises made for political reasons:

The situation, in the [first phase] we did not believe, thinking that it was politics. But after seeing that the poles have been brought and the wires have been connected we came to believe.

Past experiences with unfulfilled promises for future programs or infrastructure had led members of the community to distrust such promises more generally. Lacking trust in the credibility of exogenous actors

but also in the potential of collective endeavors both undermined the willingness to participate in and contribute to the electrification project.

The obstacles in the first phase, in the first villages that were connected, can be contrasted to nearby villages to which the electricity scheme was extended in a later phase of the project. There, as people had witnessed the successful development of the electricity project in the first villages, prior expectations had been updated. The higher level of confidence in the successful realization of the project spurred both a collective action logic (voluntary participation, trust) and a tax-payer logic (accountability demands).

...villages upstream benefited very much from seeing other villages nearby that were already connected; and this was demonstrated in terms of availability for participating in the activities, in appreciation, in demanding, in listening, in trust. When you go and try to transfer something that is totally new, there are forms of resistance that were fairly visible in downstream villages at the beginning.

Case 2: Continued participation

The project under study had high ambitions in terms of developing accountability structures. All community members, both users and those not yet connected to the grid, were welcome and encouraged to attend meetings of the utility association, to raise concerns and to discuss future efforts.

As illustrated above, the authority of village leaders – crucial for mobilization purposes – was seen as a necessary evil in the initial phase of the project. Clearly, such a reliance on traditional authority structures can imply challenges in subsequent phases of the project, since at the heart of many development projects is an ambition to alter existing power structures and empower the community at large. In such a process it is necessary that village leaders, while letting the project benefit from their authority, accept that they will *not* assume a position of authority in the development project. In other words, within the scope of the project, participants are supposed to move from a logic of compliance with local leaders, to a logic of collective action regarding activities in the project, and even to develop a tax-payer logic in which they make demands on the project leadership; that is *other* leaders than the local leaders.

[The utility association] also has relations with local leaders...But this is challenging, because the local leaders are maybe not happy that anyone in the village can become a member of [the utility association] and be chosen for the board, while the local leaders cannot be on the board and control [the utility association]. We want [the utility association] and local authority to collaborate, but they are not happy with it. There is dissatisfaction among local leaders.

It should not come as a surprise that, as leaders observe their lack of authority in the project and might even see their relative status decline in relation to people in leadership positions in the project, they become reluctant to stay engaged:

For the past three months, the participation of village government in meetings has not been so good...Actually, village government leaders are not the members but since they are leaders for the communities, and some activities need...the pushing of the village leaders, so it

was thought that they should be welcome to these meetings as observers, as people who can take action, who can mobilize the community to do development activity.

What has been noted in the literature – that participatory projects are vulnerable to elite capture – gets a more satisfactory explanation if we consider the logics that participation depends on. Collective efforts are necessary – but a collective action logic is often not present, when the surrounding institutions are poor. The necessity to rely on local leaders' authority for mobilization purposes forces the project leadership to strike a delicate balance between involving leaders and keeping them at arm's length. In this project, local leaders were excluded from formal leadership positions in the project, but over time this lowered their engagement with the project. If substantial efforts to induce other logics of action than compliance are not made within the project, and the project thus remains highly dependent on local leaders' mobilization ability for collective efforts, it is not surprising that projects tend to be "captured" by elites. To be able to work independently from local elites, new logics of action will have to emerge. If a project is stuck in a dependence on a compliance logic, the risk of elite capture will be constantly present.

As described above, a sense of ownership of the project – what we called a tax-payer logic – promotes a continuous engagement with the project, as well as a willingness to contribute to the project's sanctioning systems. In other words, people perceive that they have stakes in the project and are therefore prepared to work to defend it.

In this phase of the project, we also see that a tax-payer logic has begun to emerge, in the sense that people have engaged in sanctioning and enforcement when others did not contribute to grid maintenance. One respondent with a central position in the project points out that while the national electric company has problems with theft, this is not the case with the project under study, and continues:

The system is small but also there is a lot of social attention and sense of ownership. The manager of [project organisation] is being called all the time, in the night, if there is a cut or something strange going on. Participation and the sense of ownership protects.

The ownership is thus most directly related to the problem-solving side: situations that are successfully handled are for example those when someone has caused damage to the system (like felling a tree so that it damaged power lines) and this needs to be sanctioned.

One lady felled a tree in the village some months back; in three weeks the situation was completely solved and the damage reimbursed.

A taxpayer logic in terms of continued engagement and accountability demands has, however, not matured. Once village leaders lost interest in mobilizing members of the community to attend, interest in meetings began to fall. While attendance in the early stages could be secured through a compliance logic, village leaders either opted to not use their authority to mobilize villagers to attend, or their authority to do so had been undermined.

...nowadays in the village even if you call a village meeting not many people will attend.

Alternatively, the development of market may have undermined both collective action and/or compliance logics among residents.

It's much easier to gather people in a small area...than organizing a meeting of two villages because people are not walking very much, unless you are going to provide them [2.5 USD].

This brings us to a discussion of the market-based customer logic, which was necessary in the third phase of the project.

Case 3: Distribution, maintenance and payment

Central to the customer logic is the strict quid pro quo nature of transactions, and the fact that the only means of payment is money: social status or authority will not exempt one from payment of the bill. In the project this was a hard-learned lesson for many people, especially for persons of high social status who questioned the fact that they, like everyone else, should pay for electricity.

The designers of the project were aware that a customer logic was necessary to foster, and that it was not generally present, nor could it be expected to emerge automatically.

People central to the project – key persons in the administration – received copious training in how to approach customers according to this logic:

R1: First I managed to get knowledge on management which I didn't have before.... Being a leader of the project, I learnt how to live with the people in the society.

I: What do you mean by that?

R2: You know in the society everyone has his/her own behavior, so for him he learnt how to handle all of them equally.

R1: That is why sometimes [a high-status person] is insulting me on the phone but still I can live with him and provide the service to him. That is how customer care is supposed to be.

There is also some evidence of how what is required in one phase of the project, and the logics developed, have consequences for people's expectations during other phases of the project, when another logic might be needed.

There was a family...they had been disconnected for quite some time, they were not paying, I don't know what happened, actually I think they concluded in the family that "we are not going to pay the bill because we did so much work during the construction phase. We volunteered so much that why do they have to cut us? If we don't pay our bills, they should not disconnect us".

The remainder of the quote also exemplifies how there were continuous efforts to "teach" the appropriate logic for each phase: they were not taken for granted.

But when we talked to them they understood and they said "we will come to pay" and then they didn't come so the issue was taken to the ward executive officer, he called them as a family, and other people who resisted to pay, all of them with the collaboration from the

ward, they promised that we are going to pay and actually they paid, they paid their bills and they are reconnected.

Notably, the development of a customer logic comes with a (perhaps unexpected) price: the undermining of the collective action logic. While this logic was essential to the first phase in particular, collective efforts for maintenance were needed also in later phases of the project. As people had become more acquainted with the customer logic, however, the quid pro quo logic of action began to guide behavior that was previously guided by a compliance (or a collective action) logic:

Now a lot of customers are complaining. People don't want to do voluntary work. They only work if they are paid.

In some ways, a kind of market logic came to steer expectations about what should be expected from labor contributions. Not least, as described in the interviews, as people have noticed that money flows into the project (from the payment of fees and service charges) they are unwilling to contribute labor for free. In order to cover costs of grid maintenance, the project thus had to introduce an extra fee for milling, and those funds were put aside for development and maintenance purposes.

In sum, the interview data suggest that the development project made express efforts, and to a large extent succeeded, to develop the logics of action necessary to the success of the project. Despite these efforts, a tax-payer logic, by which members of the community saw the value in attending meetings to continue to monitor and deliberate the project, did not seem to emerge.

The project also did not fully succeed to negotiate the difficult task of developing collective action and customer logics simultaneously. That it attempted to do so was, as per the assessments of the development NGO, a necessity. Absent contributions in the form of labor, the cost of developing infrastructure would have resulted in electric fees that would have been prohibitively expensive for most local residents. Once power poles and lines were in place, however, the project was no longer able to induce people to contribute labor. A market logic had supplanted the collective action logic.

On this point, the project also committed a crucial error. In the initial phase, with the help of village leaders, the project requested that all members of the community contribute labor. Some portion of those contributing lived far from the grid, however, and they thus enjoyed no returns on their efforts, a fact that caused considerable dissatisfaction with the project.

Conclusions

That institutions matter for political behavior, democracy and economic growth is by now widely established. These insights have to only a limited extent been incorporated into the study of participatory democracy and participatory development. We argue that while several influential contributions in this field of work recognize that state institutions may limit the impact and sustainability of participatory initiatives, these authors do not extend these insights to understand how the institutional setting can influence participants themselves and what they bring into the participatory arena.

The project examined here suggested a number of logics that were required on the part of participants but which were, initially, not strongly rooted in the community. The project presumed that residents would readily attend planning meetings and contribute labor to the development of a local electric grid. It later assumed they would continue to attend meetings to voice complaints, partake of relevant information, and deliberate the continued expansion and maintenance of the grid. Finally, it assumed that users would pay for electricity without contest – irrespective of their status in the community and irrespective of their level of contributions of labor during infrastructure development – and fully understand if service were disconnected upon failure to make payments.

For each of these, the implementing actors understood that the prerequisite logics were in fact not in place and needed actively to be fostered. That they were lacking is, in light of the theoretical insights from research on the implications of institutions for social capital as well as political interest and engagement, not surprising. Institutions permeated with corruption and favoritism undermine trust among citizens and, somewhat paradoxically, even erode citizens' willingness to engage politically. And when state institutions are weak to a degree that they do not levy and collect taxes, citizens' interest in the affairs of government is unlikely to develop. This paper has synthesized and brought these insights into the study of participatory development in a way that explains why the project studied here was in large parts successful, and why many other participatory initiatives are not.

From a policy perspective, the implications are fairly clear. Induced participation is notoriously difficult to sustain (Mansuri and Rao 2013), and many development projects do not survive the departure of development cooperation organizations. Developing interventions that not only presuppose the existence of the necessary logics of action but instead actively foster those logics may enhance their likelihood of success.

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